

April 20, 2021

Re: Indianapolis FedEx Mass Shooting - Supporting the Sikh community

Dear <MEMBER>,

Like you, we are deeply saddened by the senseless act of deadly violence at the FedEx facility in Indianapolis where eight people were viciously murdered, including four Sikhs. On behalf of the Sikh Coalition, the nation's largest Sikh civil rights organization, we write to urge your action in support of the investigation and to outline longer-term recommendations that can help ensure the future safety of the diverse communities across the United States.

By way of background, Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion, with over 25 million followers. Sikhs began settling in Indiana more than 50 years ago, and the community established its first gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in 1999. We estimate that there are at least 8,000 - 10,000 Sikhs who currently live in Indiana. In the last two decades, the Sikh population in greater Indianapolis has experienced significant growth. As a community that has proudly been a part of the Indiana fabric for generations, Sikhs deserve to be safe in their workplaces, homes, schools, and houses of worship –without hate and bias.

We recognize that a motive has not yet been established by law enforcement; however, the attacker's knowledge of the demographics of this workplace and who he was targeting, as well as his personal history must be taken into account in order to acknowledge the impact of hate, bias and white supremacist activity affecting our communities. Based on public reporting, the shooter allegedly had a propensity for violence -- something his mother had previously warned law enforcement about. On March 3, 2020 Brandon Hole's mother went to the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) after her son had purchased a shotgun. She warned law enforcement that her son might commit "suicide by cop." At this time, [FBI agents stated that they did not identify Hole as espousing a racially motivated ideology](#). However, [according to April 20, 2021 media reports](#), when IMPD officers went to the family's home, one of the officers went upstairs to seize the shotgun and "observed what through his training and experience indicated was white supremacist websites" on Hole's computer. At the time, officers also reportedly notified the criminal intelligence unit about what was observed on Hole's computer and took the shotgun to the police department's property room with "seized by dangerous person" written on the inventory sheet. To that end, the Sikh Coalition strongly urges both the IMPD and the FBI to fully investigate Mr. Hole's attack on the Indianapolis FedEx facility, including all bias motivating factors which may be at play.



It was no accident that the shooter targeted this particular FedEx facility where he had previously worked and knew was overwhelmingly staffed by Sikhs. This was not a crime of convenience or a spur-of-the-moment attack; it was one of methodical planning and selection. As such, we implore your office to help ensure that there is an unfettered investigation into motive, without leaving any stone unturned regarding bias as a motivating factor. We also ask that your office ensure that these concerns are not prematurely dismissed.

The most recent available FBI data shows that 2019 was the deadliest year for hate crimes. Sadly, Sikhs were once again among the top five faith groups targeted on the basis of religion. As members of a religious minority who have been frequently targeted in violent attacks, often motivated by bias, we remain deeply concerned about how bias, bigotry and the resulting backlash impact all of our communities.

To address these broader concerns, we request that your office stand in solidarity with the Sikh community and other minority communities and pledge action that will ensure the safety of your constituents by supporting the policy goals shared below:

1. **Unequivocally demand that local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation into the shooter's motive including accurately identifying any nexus to white supremacist ideology** based on the shooter's personal history. Doing so would signal to your constituents that no one should be targeted because of their race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability.
2. **Improve hate crime reporting by passing the recently re-introduced Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act [H.R.2383 / S.1086] and ensuring that all law enforcement agencies are required to report hate crimes.** This should be part of a larger initiative that prioritizes data collection, a key component of civil rights enforcement and ensuring compliance with federal hate crime and nondiscrimination laws.
3. **Close the loophole that limits federal prosecution of mixed-motive hate crimes by reintroducing and passing the Justice for Victims of Hate Crime Act.** To effectively combat hate crimes, law enforcement and advocates need the tools to hold offenders accountable and ensure our justice system protects all Americans. This important change addresses a split in federal courts on the interpretation of the motive requirement in the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 that currently leaves many victims without justice.



4. **Reintroduce and pass the Disarm Hate Act to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of dangerous individuals.** Shooters opening fire on houses of worship, community centers, and other soft targets are becoming far too common. More than 10,000 hate crimes in the U.S. involved a firearm. Anyone who has been convicted of a misdemeanor hate crime should not be allowed to jeopardize the peace of communities.

5. **Request state and federal funding for 360-degree victim assistance services** that include language accessible hate crime reporting, mental health services, comprehensive trauma-informed support, and technical assistance and advocates for victims and survivors of hate crimes and mass casualty incidents such as these.

We are also happy to provide resources, sample social media messaging, information on the Sikh community, and guidance on how to support the aforementioned recommendations. **If you would like us to keep you informed about vigils or other ways to support the Indianapolis Sikh community, please let us know and we will make sure to share those with you.**

We thank you for your efforts to help protect the communities we serve and look forward to working with your office to move these important policy priorities forward.

Sincerely,



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