



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Executive Department

### Executive Directive Six (2023)

#### COMBATING ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY AND PROTECTING THE FREEDOM TO WORSHIP IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, I hereby issue this Executive Directive to combat the increasing incidents and threats of antisemitism and anti-religious and ethnic-based bigotry and violence in the Commonwealth.

#### **Importance of the Initiative**

Following Hamas' barbaric and deadly terror attacks on October 7, reports of antisemitism have significantly increased in the Commonwealth.

Street protesters in Richmond have voiced antisemitic slogans and called for the extermination of the Jewish community in Israel.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, individuals at the Virginia Commonwealth University have destroyed tributes and memorials to those captured children held hostage by Hamas.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, Jewish students at William & Mary have faced verbal abuse for expressing their faith and grieving the loss of loved ones.<sup>3</sup>

As Governor, the safety and security of all Virginians is my paramount concern. Virginia is the birthplace of the Freedom of Religion in America, and protecting the community centers and house of worship of the Jewish people is paramount. But this commitment extends to all religions, including those of the Muslim faith, who are increasingly concerned about backlash.

Immediately following the October 7 terrorist attack, I directed the Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security to initiate an inter-agency strategy involving the Virginia State Police, Department of Criminal Justice Services, and other federal and local law enforcement agencies. I have also made it a priority to personally meet or have senior administration officials meet with numerous ethnic and religious groups across Virginia to address hateful violence targeting their communities.

On Day One of my Administration, I created the Commission to Combat Antisemitism with the mission to formulate policies and recommendations to safeguard the welfare of Virginia's Jewish community. Our commitment to protecting all religious and ethnic communities must be ongoing.

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<sup>1</sup> Glagola, J., Shi, S., & Kerley, A. (2023, October 18). Richmond community members, students rally in support of Palestine. *The Commonwealth Times*.

<sup>2</sup> McCabe, N. (2023, October 24). Video: Young Man at Virginia Commonwealth University Tore Down Flyers Depicting Israelis Hamas Kidnapped. *The Tennessee Star*.

<sup>3</sup> Millet, J. (2023, October 10). Jewish William & Mary students say other students verbally assaulted them due to war in Israel. *WAVY*.

While responding to the attacks and threats on the Jewish community, this strategy encompasses the comprehensive protection of all ethnic and religious communities in Virginia. Hate has no home in Virginia, and it is critical that we protect Virginia's religious and ethnic communities from persecution and violence.

### **Directive**

Accordingly, pursuant to the authority vested in me as the Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth, and pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and the laws of the Commonwealth, I hereby direct my administration to implement the following measures in order to confront and combat antisemitism and other forms of anti-religious bigotry and ethnic-based violence.

#### **Public Safety & Homeland Security**

1. The Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security shall designate a chief coordinating officer to oversee a "situation room" focused on enhancing our comprehensive efforts to protect houses of worship and religious affiliated institutions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The chief coordinating officer will continue to collaborate with the Virginia State Police and engage with local law enforcement agencies, including local police, campus police, Sheriffs' departments, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and U.S. Attorneys, to enhance the safety of those individuals and institutions who are confronting threats on the basis of their religious beliefs or ethnicity.
2. The Secretary of Public Safety & Homeland Security shall further collaborate with and offer resources and training on combating antisemitism and other religious and ethnic-based violence to public and private campus police, administrators, and other safety officers.
3. The Department of Criminal Justice Services shall use all administrative discretion to expedite the disbursement of \$2.7 million of available grant funds to individuals or institutions who are confronting threats on the basis of their religious beliefs or ethnicity to support hardening activities, security services, critical technology infrastructure, and screening systems. The Department shall make local governments and community and faith leaders aware of the availability of such funds and any relevant application processes.
4. The Virginia Fusion Center is hereby directed to maintain a heightened state of alert in identifying and addressing antisemitism and other anti-religious bigotry, as well as threats against houses of worship, religious schools, and community centers.

#### **Education**

5. The Secretary of Education shall coordinate with public and private college and university presidents to promote the safety and provision of resources for Jewish and Muslim students, including mental health resources, and all other students subject to or at risk of religious or ethnicity-based violence.
6. All public institutions of higher education that host residential student populations are hereby requested to submit promptly an updated comprehensive safety plan dedicated to the security of their students, including Jewish and Muslim students, and the specific system for the reporting of incidents, on their respective campuses to the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety

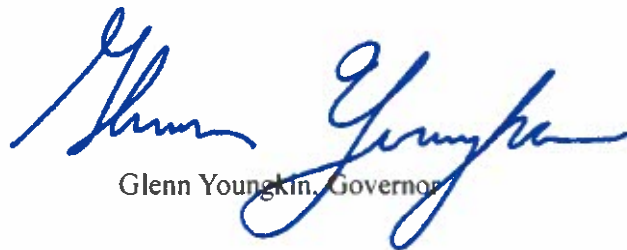
(VCSCS) pursuant to § 23.1-805 of the Code of Virginia.

7. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall collaborate with local school division superintendents to promote awareness of and access to resources promoting the safety of their students, including Jewish and Muslim students.
8. The Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety shall incorporate measures addressing incidents of antisemitism, anti-religious bigotry, and ethnic violence among the items to be reviewed and evaluated in school safety audits pursuant to § 22.1-279.8 of the Code of Virginia.
9. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall ensure that school divisions are duly informed about Virginia's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism pursuant to Chapter 471 of the Acts of Assembly of 2023, including the contemporary examples of antisemitism set forth therein, to serve as a tool and guide for the purposes of training, education, identification, and the proactive prevention of antisemitism and discrimination.

**Effective Date**

This Executive Directive shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order or directive. Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 31<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2023.



  
Glenn Youngkin, Governor

Attest:



Kelly Gee, Secretary of the Commonwealth