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8 Shevat 5783
January 30, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem S. Jeffries
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Jeffries,

We write to urgently request that the House of Representatives follow through on Mr. McCarthy's pledge that, as Speaker, he would remove Congresswoman Ilhan Omar from the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. This is not a political matter, but one of moral conscience, and a necessary step to quell the rising tide of antisemitic speech and violence now impacting Jewish communities across America.

On three separate occasions, we wrote to the previous Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, to make this same request. We were ignored all three times, while antisemitic hate crimes became ever more common in this country.

Upon learning of the appointment of Rep. Omar to the Foreign Affairs committee, we [wrote](#) to express our "alarm, dismay and outrage," given that even before her election to Congress, Ms. Omar had repeatedly used antisemitic tropes. We warned that "to allow this appointment to stand is tantamount to saying that anti-Semitism is acceptable to the United States House of Representatives."

Less than a month later, we [renewed](#) our request after Rep. Omar showed that her bigotry was unabated. She employed, among others, the classic trope of Jewish disloyalty, and implied that House colleagues who supported Israel had been bought off. As she wrote, "it's all about the Benjamins." We said that Speaker Pelosi must act "clearly and forcefully to declare such statements beyond the realm of civil discourse," and asked, "are you tolerating this hatred in the Democratic party?"

Two years later, we secured the signatures of over 200 rabbis across the country for yet a [third letter](#), after Rep. Omar asserted that Israel committed "unthinkable atrocities" while defending its citizens against the openly-genocidal aggression of the Hamas terror organization. We wrote that removing her was a necessary step "to protect Jewish Americans and, moreover, safeguard the integrity of the House Foreign Affairs Committee."

It is important to note that in that third instance, twelve of Rep. Omar's Democratic colleagues, all Jews, condemned her "offensive" remarks and the

“false equivalencies” in which she engaged. She responded by claiming that she, a daughter of a Somali noble clan, “knows what it feels like to experience injustice” in ways that those twelve, several of whom descend from Holocaust survivors, did not. She even said they had not been “partners in justice” with her, apparently as she obfuscated the genocidal efforts of Hamas and demonized defense of Jewish lives. And, disgracefully, the Congressional Progressive Caucus responded by accusing her critics of targeting her for her race, rather than her rhetoric.

David Duke did not praise Rep. Omar for being Black, or Muslim, or a refugee, much less as a woman. He praised her for the ways in which she echoed his own antisemitic, hateful views. But the accusations of the Congressional Progressive Caucus were not merely ludicrous. They reversed bigot and victim, which is profoundly threatening.

In an [address](#) to the House of Lords of the United Kingdom, Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks pointed out that “Antisemitism, or any hate, become dangerous when three things happen. First: when it moves from the fringes of politics to a mainstream party and its leadership. Second: when the party sees that its popularity with the general public is not harmed thereby. And three: when those who stand up and protest are vilified and abused for doing so.”

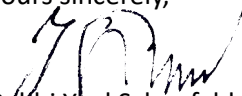
All three of these things transpired in Congress over the previous four years. After repeated antisemitic outbursts, Rep. Omar was rewarded with a “reprimand” so devoid of actual substance that she was able to portray it as a victory, and rises in rank in the one committee in which an antisemite can best target the world’s only Jewish-majority country, magnify anti-Jewish bias, and endanger Jewish lives.

A study of hate crimes in New York City from 2018 to 2022 [reached](#) three dramatic conclusions: first, that hate crimes against Jews had surged, exceeding those against all other minority groups combined. Second, that the vast majority of perpetrators were from [other minorities](#), and thus unlikely to be motivated by white supremacy. And third, that the vast majority of victims, 94 percent, were visibly Orthodox Jews.

As Orthodox rabbis from that targeted demographic, we would be happy to explain the connection between Rep. Omar’s odious speech and the fact that Grafton Thomas [searched](#) for “Zionist Temples” before invading a Chanukah celebration at the home of a (non-Zionist) Chasidic leader in upstate New York with a machete, injuring several and murdering Holocaust survivor Josef Neumann. The link is unmistakable, and it is clear that the failure of Congress to dissociate itself from Rep. Omar’s bigotry helped create the environment of hate now evident in New York and across the country, precisely as Lord Rabbi Sacks warned.

We believe that to remove Rep. Omar from the Foreign Affairs committee is the only morally responsible choice for a Member of Congress who opposes racism, bigotry, and antisemitism. We implore each and every member to demonstrate their concern for all of America’s minorities, by acting against hatred directed against those most frequently targeted.

Yours sincerely,


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