



March 7, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
Executive Chamber  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Eric Adams  
Mayor of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Honorable Alvin L. Bragg, Jr.  
Manhattan District Attorney  
One Hogan Place  
New York, NY 10013  
bragga@dany.nyc.gov

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20535

Contacts:

Liz Berney, Esq. - [liz@zoa.org](mailto:liz@zoa.org)  
Susan Tuchman, Esq. - [stuchman@zoa.org](mailto:stuchman@zoa.org)  
Mindy Stein - [mindymstein@gmail.com](mailto:mindymstein@gmail.com)

Re: Serious Consequences are Needed for Brutal Anti-Jewish Hate Crime

Dear Governor Hochul, Mayor Adams, District Attorney Bragg, Attorney General Garland and Director Wray:

The undersigned American Jewish organizations and our numerous friends and members are deeply concerned about rising antisemitic attacks in the United States. In 2022, 263 anti-Jewish

hate crimes were reported in New York City alone (more than double the amount reported two years ago), and thousands of such crimes occurred throughout the country.<sup>i</sup>

In order to stem this avalanche of anti-Jewish hate crimes, law enforcement must ensure that perpetrators suffer serious consequences for these brutal, frightening crimes. We are thus outraged by the six-month plea deal that District Attorney Bragg's office reportedly offered to unrepentant anti-Jewish hate crimes perpetrator Waseem Awawdeh. Six months is a wholly insufficient response to Awawdeh's savage crimes (described below), which we understand warrant a much lengthier sentence. There is reportedly a hearing on March 9, 2023. We urge you to ensure that the six-month plea deal is scuttled, and that you insist on Awawdeh receiving the maximum sentence.

We also urge the Department of Justice to prosecute Awawdeh for civil rights violations.

Failing to impose severe consequences here would send the dangerous and unacceptable message that Jews can be brutally attacked with impunity.

On May 20, 2021, a Jew-hating gang, including alleged perpetrators Waseem Awawdeh,<sup>ii</sup> Faisal Elezzi,<sup>iii</sup> Mohammed Othman,<sup>iv</sup> Mahmoud Musa and minor "K.A.", viciously assaulted Joey Borgen, a Jewish accountant wearing a yarmulka who was simply walking to a pro-Israel demonstration in mid-town Manhattan.

Awawdeh and his gang knocked Borgen to the ground; beat him with a metal crutch, signs and fists; kicked Borgen in the ribs, stomach and all over his body; and burned Borgen's face with mace and pepper spray. During this brutal attack, Awawdeh was caught on video beating Borgen with the metal crutch, calling Borgen a "dirty Jew," and threatening: "F—k Israel. Hamas is going to kill all of you." Borgen was hospitalized with a concussion and severe injuries that required surgery.<sup>v</sup>

After his arrest, Awawdeh vowed: "*I would do it again*" and "*I have no problem doing it again.*"<sup>vi</sup> After Awawdeh was released on \$10,000 bail three days later, he was celebrated as a hero by fellow antisemites.

Also on May 20, 2021, Awawdeh was part of a gang of six keffiyah-clad Jew-haters, who drove through 47th Street in Manhattan, while standing on top of a truck (followed by another similar truck), screaming antisemitic epithets (such as "Jews, suck my d—k") and launching fireworks at passing Jews.<sup>vii</sup> The fireworks burned a Jewish woman, causing her to be hospitalized.

Awawdeh also spat at a female police officer who was attempting to maintain a barricade. In other incidents, Awawdeh has been arrested and charged with reckless endangerment, resisting arrest, weapons possession, and driving without a license.

Awawdeh has also led chants for Israel's annihilation at "Within Our Lifetime" ("WOL") rallies, and participated in demonstrations calling "Intifada" (terror wars to murder Jews) "the only solution."<sup>viii</sup> WOL's "unity" platform calls for "*resist[ing] the zionist occupation by any means necessary.*" WOL and its chairperson Nerdeen Kiswani have "mapped" Jewish groups'

locations and called for targeting Jews and Jewish organizations in New York. Kiswani has called every Jewish organization on her list “a legitimate target.”<sup>ix</sup> We thus also urge your offices to take action to stop WOL’s dangerous targeting of Jews for violent attack.

Please do everything you can to ensure that justice is done and that Awawdeh receives the harsh punishment he deserves. Particularly at this time of surging antisemitism, it is imperative that government leaders send a clear and forceful message that attacks on Jews will not be tolerated.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Americans Against Antisemitism (AAA)	Americans for a Safe Israel (AFSI)
Americans for Peace and Tolerance (APT)	American Friends of Ateret Cohanim
AMIT Children Inc.	Atlanta Israel Coalition
Coalition for Jewish Values (CJV)	Conference of Jewish Affairs (CJA)
Emunah	End Jew Hatred Movement
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)	NORPAC
One Israel Fund (OIF)	Rabbinical Council of America (RCA)
The Lawfare Project	Save the West
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME)	StopAntisemitism.Org
Students Supporting Israel (SSI)	Yom Hashoah Mobilization Committee
Young Jewish Conservatives (YJC)	Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)

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<sup>i</sup> “Police Data Shows Antisemitic Incidents in NYC More Than Doubled Over Last 2 Years,” by Luke Tress, *Times of Israel*, Jan. 10, 2023, at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/police-data-shows-antisemitic-incidents-in-nyc-more-than-doubled-over-last-2-years/>

<sup>ii</sup> For further information on Waseem Awawdeh, see [https://canarymission.org/individual/Waseem\\_Awawdeh](https://canarymission.org/individual/Waseem_Awawdeh)

<sup>iii</sup> For further information on Faisal Elezzi, see [https://canarymission.org/individual/Faisal\\_Elezzi](https://canarymission.org/individual/Faisal_Elezzi)

<sup>iv</sup> For further information on Mohammed Othman, see [https://canarymission.org/individual/Mohammed\\_Othman](https://canarymission.org/individual/Mohammed_Othman)

<sup>v</sup> See n.2.

<sup>vi</sup> “‘I Would Do It Again’: Suspect Accused of Pummeling NYC Jewish Man Shows No Remorse,” by Andrew Dedinsky and Melissa Klein, *New York Post*, May 22, 2021 at <https://nypost.com/2021/05/22/no-remorse-in-nyc-pummeling-of-jewish-man-da/>; and “Family of Anti-Semitic Attack Victim Rips Alvin Bragg for Doing ‘Nothing’,” by Khristina Narizhnaya and Evan Simko-Bednarski, *New York Post*, Jan. 26, 2023, at <https://nypost.com/2023/01/26/family-of-nyc-anti-semitic-attack-victim-rips-da-alvin-bragg/>

<sup>vii</sup> See video at <https://twitter.com/elizabethkanter/status/1395583576616411139>

<sup>viii</sup> See n.2.

<sup>ix</sup> See further discussion regarding the dangers of WOL, with citations, in June 4, 2022 [Letter](#) to Hon. Merrick Garland and FBI Director Christopher Wray, from ZOA President Morton Klein, Director of Research/Special Projects Liz Berney, Esq., and Director of Center for Law & Justice Susan Tuchman, Esq.