



**Statement from the South
Orange Board of Trustees and
Maplewood Township
Committee Regarding
Antisemitism**



We are proud to live in and serve the South Orange and Maplewood communities. The diversity of our towns add to their richness and, for many of us, was one of the reasons we were drawn to these communities. Living in diversity brings with it not only blessings but also responsibility. We have not been immune to the increased bias and hate that has taken root in our nation in recent years. We are grateful that time and time again, when those who seek to sow seeds of hate by targeting one group or another, we have lived our responsibility to make clear that "**Hate Has No Home Here**".

When transgender patriots serving our military were the focus of discrimination, we gathered to hoist a transgender flag in the center of town.

When violence against people of color reared its ugly head, we joined in solidarity to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

We stood in solidarity with the Muslim American community, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, and any other group being targeted.

In recent months, we have seen a surge in antisemitic incidents across our nation including a hateful hashtag celebrating the Holocaust. To our dismay, the vitriol on social media has been accompanied by a marked increase in antisemitic incidents as well. A [recent study](#) by the Anti-Defamation League noted that antisemitic incidents more than doubled in May 2021 vs May 2020 and that trend has continued in the months since.

This rise in anti-Jewish hate coincided with the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas. In the weeks since, some have attempted to link, and even justify, the increase in anti-Jewish rhetoric and behavior in America to this period of violence. In communities as diverse as ours, there will be and are a variety of perspectives on the conflict. We acknowledge the differing perspectives as part of our diverse communities, and we recognize that the emotions surrounding it runs deep. For many in our towns, particularly those of us who support Israel's right to exist in safety and security and those of us who are committed to supporting the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, this conflict is personal.

That noted, we roundly reject any attempt to justify hate that is directed toward any members of our community – full stop. Events in the Middle East deserve our attention but in no way do they justify hate and violence directed toward any resident of our town.

Therefore, we affirm that we, the undersigned elected officials of South Orange and Maplewood:

- Unequivocally stand in solidarity with the Jewish community and condemn antisemitism in all its forms, without exception.
- Call for all local, state, and federal authorities to investigate and prosecute all criminal instances of antisemitism whenever they occur.
- Encourage everyone, especially our leaders, educators, community organizations, and houses of worship to work to understand and oppose antisemitism.
- Reaffirm our commitment to building a peaceful and vibrant communities, where all forms of diversity are embraced as a strength.
- Call on all people to share their concerns and perspectives with respect.
- Recommit ourselves to doing everything possible to make our towns the models for diversity, respect, and peace.

When our two towns gathered virtually for the Holocaust Remembrance Service this past spring we heard the phrase, “**Help us to stand up, speak out and protect the vulnerable**”. We are committed to living what we say in every way possible.

In peace and solidarity,

Village President Sheena Collum

Trustee Bobby Brown
Trustee Donna Coallier
Trustee Bill Haskins
Trustee Karen Hilton
Trustee Summer Jones
Trustee Bob Zuckerman

Mayor Frank McGehee

Deputy Mayor Dean Dafis
Committeewoman Nancy Adams
Committeeman Greg Lembrich
Committeeman Victor De Luca