



April 14, 2021

Amnesty International USA urges a vote “YES” the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act (S.937) and the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act (S.2043, H.R.3545)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA, we urge you to vote YES on the **COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act (S.937)**, sponsored by Sen. Hirono, and the **Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality (“Jabara-Heyer NO HATE”) Act (S.2043, H.R.3545)**, sponsored by Sen. Blumenthal. The Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act is being offered as an amendment to the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. Amnesty urges you to support both pieces of legislation.

COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act (S.937)

The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act addresses the surge in violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander (“AAPI”) communities by assigning a point person at the Justice Department (“DOJ”) to expeditiously review hate crimes reported to law enforcement. The bill also provides resources for AAPI communities to come together and fight intolerance and hate.

We have seen the horrifying consequences of racist and demonizing language in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic as AAPI individuals have been assaulted, beaten, bullied, and harassed since the onset of the pandemic. Since March 2020, there have been nearly 4,000 reported incidents of discrimination and physical, verbal, and online attacks against AAPI individuals, including against AAPI health workers.

The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act focuses specifically on the rise in AAPI hate crimes during the pandemic and directs DOJ to:

- Designate a DOJ employee to assist with expedited review of COVID-19 hate crimes reported to federal, state, and/or local law enforcement agencies;
- Provide guidance for state and local law enforcement agencies to:
 - establish online reporting of hate crimes or incidents, and to have online reporting available in multiple languages;

- expand culturally competent and linguistically appropriate public education campaigns, and collection of data and public reporting of hate crimes; and
- Issue guidance detailing best practices to mitigate racially discriminatory language in describing the COVID–19 pandemic, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the COVID–19 Health Equity Task Force and community-based organizations.

We appreciate, in particular, the linguistically accessible outreach and reporting provisions in the bill and urge you to vote “YES” on S.937.

Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act (S.2043, H.R.3545)

The Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act would improve hate crime statistics and promote a better response to hate crime within our communities.

As we have seen demonstrated in the last few years, some of the most high-profile hate crimes, such as the 2016 murder of Khalid Jabara in Tulsa, Okla., and the 2017 murder of Heather Heyer in Charlottesville, Va., can go unreported in federal hate crime statistics. Mr. Jabara and Ms. Heyer were killed exactly one year apart, on August 12, and although their murders were prosecuted as hate crimes, they are not included in the existing national data.

Both Republican and Democratic members of Congress have raised these concerns about inaccuracies in federal hate crime statistics. Now is the time to act. The Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act will improve our hate crime statistics and promote a better response to hate crime in our communities. Specifically, the bill would

- Help law enforcement agencies transition to a modernized form of crime reporting, provide grants for state-run hate crime hotlines;
- Encourage law enforcement agencies to adopt policies and programs that would improve reporting, to include effective engagement with communities targeted for hate and hate crimes training for personnel;
- Require DOJ to conduct research on hate crime reporting and data collection;
- Allow courts to require certain hate crime offenders to participate in community service or education programs as a condition of supervised release.

These provisions would address the many factors that contribute to inaccuracies in the existing federal hate crime statistics. Furthermore, they would improve the response to hate crime within law enforcement and the criminal-legal system, and reduce barriers to

receiving support or assistance that many hate crime victims experience. Money that has already been authorized to DOJ can be reappropriated to fund these provisions.

Passage of the **COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act (S.937)** and the **Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act (S.2043, H.R.3545)** is a critical step to ensure the U.S. justice system has the people and resources to effectively account for and mitigate hate crimes. We strongly urge you to vote “YES” on S.937 and S.2043.

For more information, please contact Joanne Lin 202/281-0017 or jlin@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joanne Lin'.

Joanne Lin
National Director
Advocacy and Government Affairs
Amnesty International USA