News



A makeshift memorial stands outside the Tree of Life Synagogue in the aftermath of a deadly shooting at the in Pittsburgh, Monday, Oct. 29, 2018. (AP/Matt Rourke, File)

by Associated Press

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President Joe Biden on Sunday marked the sixth anniversary of a gunman's deadly attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue and called out what he called an “appalling surge

of antisemitism” amid the war in Gaza.

The 2018 attack claimed the lives of 11 worshippers from Dor Hadash, New Light and Tree of Life congregations, which shared space in the synagogue in Squirrel Hill, the heart of Pittsburgh’s Jewish community. Two worshippers and five responding police officers were also injured in the attack, the deadliest act of antisemitism in U.S. history.

Biden said in a statement that the attack “shattered families, pierced the heart of the Jewish community, and struck the soul of our nation.” But he said that in the years since, the Jewish community “has also shown the country how to courageously turn pain into purpose” launching “a global initiative to counter hate and hate-fueled violence.”

Biden noted that the remembrance of the Pittsburgh synagogue attack comes weeks after the anniversary of the Oct. 7 attack in Israel “during which Hamas killed more than 1,200 people, took another 250 hostage and committed horrific acts of sexual assault.”

He said the trauma and losses of Oct. 7 are made worse by “the appalling surge of antisemitism against Jews in America and around the world.”

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The attack sparked a war between Israel and the militant group Hamas and has resulted in widespread destruction and civilian deaths in Gaza.

Biden said his administration was implementing a national strategy to counter antisemitism, including securing $1.2 billion for security of nonprofits such as synagogues and Jewish community centers and day schools. He also cited the Justice Department's investigation and prosecution of antisemitic hate crimes and said his administration had “put colleges on notice that antisemitism is discrimination” and barred under laws protecting civil rights.

Vice President Kamala Harris also cited a rise in antisemitism in a statement marking the anniversary of the Pittsburgh attack.

“I will always work to ensure the safety and security of Jewish people in the United States and around the world, and will always call out antisemitism whenever and wherever we see it,” she said.

The Pittsburgh attacker was sentenced to death last year after being convicted on 63 counts, including hate crimes resulting in death.

In June, ground was broken for a new complex on the Pittsburgh site that is to include a cultural center, sanctuary, educational center and museum along with a memorial to the slain worshipers from three congregations.

This story appears in the **Gun Violence** feature series. View the full series.