Civil Rights Department
Commission on the State of Hate
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Minutes
Commission on the State of Hate Meeting
June 9, 2026, 9:00 am

Commissioners Present

Chair Brian Levin
Commissioner Andrea Beth Damsky
Commissioner Russell Roybal
Commissioner Bamby Salcedo
Commissioner Erroll Southers
Commissioner Ehsan Zaffar

Civil Rights Department (CRD) Staff Present

Kevin Kish, Director
Julia Parish, Deputy Director
Alec Watts, Assistant Deputy Director
Rebecca Goodsell, Research Data Specialist
Kevin Thomas, Research Data Specialist
Adrian Bacong, Research Data Specialist
Zelene Molina, Staff Services Manager
Yvonne Hsu, Deputy Director
Shilpa Ram, Assistant General Counsel

Others Present

An estimated 46 members of the public attended virtually.

I. Welcome

A. Call to Order
B. Establishment of a Quorum
C. Review of the Agenda

- Chair Levin welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained the closed captioning process. After confirming a quorum through roll call, Chair Levin reviewed the meeting's agenda.
    - Commissioner Roybal requested that agenda item VI be discussed during the June 24th, Commission meeting when the members of the Subcommittee on Community Forums will be present for the discussion. Commissioner Damsky supported the request of tabling the discussion until the next Commission meeting. Chair Levin noted that this

item would remain on the agenda, as he had brief remarks to make, but a more extensive discussion would take place at the next meeting.
    - Chair Levin announced that agenda item number eight was removed, and that agenda item number five would be discussed at the next Commission meeting.
- After reviewing the changes to the meeting's agenda, Chair Levin explained the process for public comment.

II. Informational Presentation: Imam Taha Hassane, Director of the Islamic Center of San Diego

Chair Levin invited Commissioner Zaffar to introduce Imam Taha Hassane. Commissioner Zaffar stated the following:

- Imam Taha Hassane has led the Islamic Center of San Diego (ICSD) for more than 20 years.
- Imam Hassane was trained at the Institute of Islamic Studies at the University of Algiers and holds a Master of Theology and Islamic Studies from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana.
- Imam Hassane is part of several interfaith coalitions in San Diego, is the Chair the Muslim American Advisory Board of the San Diego Police Department and serves as a volunteer chaplain.

Summary of Presentation

- Imam Hassane stated the following:
    - The attack that took place at the Islamic Center of San Diego on May 18, 2026. He recounted the morning of the attack.
    - Hate acts against members of the Muslim community are common and often not reported. When hate against members of the Muslim community is reported, it is often miscategorized. There is a need for more accurate classification and the creation of a specific category for the Muslim community.
    - Faith leaders and congregations from across local, national, and international communities have shown their support, love, and solidarity following the attack.
    - There is a need to provide protection for places of worship.
    - Invited the Commission to host a community forum at the ICSD
    - Suggested that the state Legislature develop policies that address hate against the Muslim community in California.

<u>Commission Discussion</u>

- Commissioner Southers expressed his gratitude for the Imam's presentation and asked if he was aware of any legislative best practices in other states related to consequences for hate incidents and hate crimes.
- Commissioner Salcedo expressed gratitude and solidarity with the community in San Diego. She also stated that experiences of hate bind vulnerable communities.
- Commissioner Roybal expressed gratitude for the Imam's presence and for Commissioner Zaffar and Chair Levin's statement. Commissioner Roybal shared a need for understanding that hatred is interconnected across many communities. He also stated that the requests that were made and the information shared during the meeting would be discussed in the Community Forum subcommittee meetings.
- Commissioner Damsky expressed appreciation to the Imam for sharing his experience and his suggestion on accurate reporting of hate incidents and crimes against the Muslim community.

Commissioner Damsky suggested that the Commission engage in a discussion on whether it would be appropriate to host a forum in a house of worship.
- Chair Levin shared brief statistics related to anti-Muslim hate crimes. He also noted that anti-Muslim crimes are undercounted.

Public Comment on Presentation

- There were 5 comments from members of the public addressing various topics including CA vs Hate, anti-Muslim hate, the importance of education, and future community forums.

III. Statement on the Attack of the Islamic Center of San Diego
Chair Brian Levin and Commissioner Ehsan Zaffar

- Chair Levin's statement on the attack of the ICSD focused on solidarity with the Muslim community. He described the contributions of Muslim Americans, the impact they continue to have in the country, and addressed the dangers of divisive rhetoric against the Muslim community.
- Commissioner Zaffar shared remarks of his personal experience growing up in a Muslim family in the United States. He also noted that hatred against the Muslim community has been happening for years and emphasized the importance of classifying these incidents and crimes accurately. He also expressed support for hosting a forum at the ICSD with other interfaith communities.

IV. Discussion and Action regarding the 2025-2026 Annual Report of the Commission

Chair Levin introduced Assistant Deputy Director Alec Watts, who along with other CRD staff, provided the following information about the 2025-2026 Annual Report of the Commission:

- The report includes updated data from the 2024 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), which includes data about adults and teens who experienced or witnessed an act of hate.
- The report includes a section on patterns and trends in hate against specific communities in California and highlights hate in public institutions. It specifically discusses how political rhetoric and hate from public officials impact communities. It also includes information about hate and harassment directed at public officials.
- The report discusses resources and supports for victims of hate and includes interim recommendations.
- The report includes a section on improving law enforcement's responses to hate and research related to hate crime sentencing enhancements, which was a collaboration with the Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley. Research on the characteristics of hate crime offenders, which was conducted in partnership with UCLA's Initiative to Study Hate, is also included.
- The report highlights recommendations for hate prevention strategies. The report also presents research that was conducted on bystander intervention trainings.

Commission Discussion

- Alec Watts reviewed options for how the Commission can proceed with the report.
- Commissioner Zaffar commended the staff for their work. He provided comments on sentencing enhancements and requested a paragraph in the report on the high victimization rate of MENA people. Commissioner Zaffar also suggested a revision to clarify that "anti-Muslim" refers to an individual, while "anti-Islamic" refers to a faith-based group.

Commissioner Southers expressed appreciation to staff and raised questions about groups of people committing hate acts and whether there have been any amendments to open meeting laws in response to politically related hate.

- Commissioner Damsky thanked the staff for the report and noted its readability. Commissioner Damsky asked questions and provided feedback on various topics, some of which included: the impact of witnessing hate, data on bias motivations of hate due to political ideology, data for specific groups, recommendations related to civic education on civil discourse, and antisemitism in healthcare.
- Commissioner Salcedo expressed gratitude to the staff and the Commissioners for their feedback. Commissioner Salcedo moved for the Commission to delay the vote on the report until the next meeting to.
- Chair Levin also commended staff for their work on the report and provided feedback. His feedback included adding content related to the attack at the ICSD, red flag laws, violence in the homeless community, and offenders with psychological distress
- Alec Watts responded to some of the questions posed by the Commissioners.

Public Comment

- Two members of the public provided comments related to antisemitism and CHIS data.

Action by the Commission

Motion: Commissioner Salcedo moved to delay voting on the report until June 24, 2026, Commissioner Damsky seconded.
Ayes: 3 (Commissioner Damsky, Commissioner Salcedo, Commissioner Southers)
Nays: 1 (Chair Levin)
Abstentions: 1 (Commissioner Zaffar)

V. Chair and Subcommittee Updates

A. Subcommittee on Patterns, Trends, and Prevention
B. Subcommittee on Resources, Support, and Response
C. Subcommittee on Community Forums
D. Chair Brian Levin

Agenda items A-C were skipped. Chair Levin described CRD resources available for victims of hate, such as CA vs Hate and the Community Conflict Resolution Unit. He also recognized several observances and holidays that were celebrated in the month of May and June.

There were no public comments on this agenda item.

VI. Discussion on Speakers on Anti-Semitism

Chair Levin explained that a more thorough Commission discussion on this agenda item will be held in a future meeting. He reviewed data on anti-Jewish hate.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Zaffar commented on the need to explore the rise of hate on online platforms.

- Commissioner Damsky commented that the rise of antisemitism is accompanied by a rise in desensitization.

Public Comment

- Five members of the public commented on potential speakers and CA vs Hate.

VII. Approval of the Minutes: April 22, 2026, Commission meeting

Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Damsky showed appreciation for the inclusion of compassion and deep listening as tools for addressing hate.
- Chair Levin requested that the number of attendees listed in the minutes be reviewed.

Action by the Commission

Motion: Vice Chair Damsky moved to approve the minutes with the review and possible correction of number of attendees. Commissioner Southers seconded.
Ayes: 4 (Chair Levin, Commissioner Damsky, Commissioner Southers, Commissioner Zaffar)
Nays: 0

VIII. Coordinating Responses and Analysis Regarding Extremist Attacks in California

This agenda item was removed.

IX. Discussion of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Chair Levin shared his concern about the Federal Department of Justice and plans with respect to hate crimes.

There was no Commission discussion or public comment on this item.

X. Commission Member Announcements

- Commissioner Damsky shared that a member of her community was detained by ICE when she showed up for her immigration hearing and is being threatened with deportation. Commissioner Damsky explained that the targeting of specific communities by ICE is an example of institutionalized hate.

There were no public comments on this item.

XI. Future Agenda Items

There was no Commission discussion or public comments on this item.

XII. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

The Commission may not discuss or act on any matter raised during the public comment section that is not included on this agenda, except whether to decide to place the matter on the agenda of a future meeting.

There was no Commission discussion on this item.

Public Comment

- Four members of the public commented on various topics, including CA vs Hate, the California voter guide, and anti-Hindu hate.

XIII. Adjournment of the Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 pm.