



# *Community Safety Pledge*

JEWS FOR  
RACIAL AND  
ECONOMIC  
JUSTICE

Whoever destroys a single life is considered to have destroyed the whole world, and whoever saves a single life is considered to have saved the whole world. Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5

After the horrific attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh last Saturday, more Jews than ever around the country are asking—how can we protect our people? How do we ensure that the choices we make prioritize everyone's safety and keep our values and humanity intact?

Our institution/organization/community \_\_\_\_\_ pledges to develop a community safety plan that aims to honor all who come through our doors. We know that safety and danger mean different things to people given our varied and layered experiences of oppression. We will continue to seek out best practices to further develop this plan, knowing we may not yet have all the answers, but this effort is sacred and essential.

We know that antisemitism is a pillar of white supremacy, and as white supremacy bares its head more brazenly, so does antisemitism. In recognizing the very real need for safety in synagogues and Jewish communal spaces, we must be skeptical of calls made by Trump and others to increase police presence in our community spaces.

Investing in increased police presence and security will militarize our community spaces. It will make synagogues and Jewish communal spaces less safe places for Jews of color, trans Jews, Jews with disabilities, and other beloved members of our communities. This type of investment is also a barrier to our allies and comrades in Muslim and immigrant communities and communities of color entering our spaces. Our community spaces should be places of refuge for us all.

People targeted by state-enforced violence in our country have had to do this work for centuries, and we are grateful to learn from the wisdom that's been built. The strategies include interfaith collaboration or crisis de-escalation, as well as long-term interventions such as creating alternative safety teams, rapid response networks, and broader cultural education around antisemitism and white supremacy. Increasing police presence, bringing guns into our spaces, and expanding formal security forces will likely increase tensions and issues, not lessen them, in many cases. We don't have all of the answers and systems that we need yet, but we are called to have unending creativity about what they could look like. We are committed to building these alternatives alongside community partners and allies who have deep experience building systems of safety and communal protection beyond police.

# STEPS WE AIM TO TAKE

1

Start or deepen conversations with your community about what safety can look like beyond the narrow confines of police and militarization. Browse this list for some broad and deep reading put together by SURJ Faith to prepare.

Guiding questions for communal conversations about safety

What does safety mean to you on a personal and communal level? When do you feel most safe or safe enough? Who's around you, what type of space are you in, what are the conditions? When do you feel least safe or scared?

Who do police actually protect? What are the realities of police protection both historically, and in our present moment? Here's a [Forward](#) article that discusses some of these issues, with helpful links.

How does antisemitism fit into the broader framework of white supremacy? How can we mobilize together with other impacted communities for our collective safety? See this [Atlantic](#) article for a good starting point.

2

Reach out to neighboring communities and organizations—particularly Muslim communities, Black communities, including churches, immigrant communities and other communities of color who have had to navigate their own safety outside of a police framework. Check out Hate Free Zones, based in Queens and Brooklyn. Also, check out this guide from Mijente. White allies are also doing this work— see [Showing Up for Racial Justice \(SURJ\)](#)—and have shown up for our communities. This is an important step for our communities because we are often encouraged to isolate ourselves from others instead of trusting and reaching, and asking directly, for support or solidarity.

## Examples

Jewish/Muslim patrols outside of masjids during Jummah and outside of synagogues during Shabbat services; Mijente's creation of Community Defense Zones; SURJ members providing access to space for Jewish ritual practices and providing on-site support and protection

# 3

Draw up a plan that accounts for scenarios that you might assess as low, medium, or high risk, using creative and multiple solutions beyond calling the police, especially for situations that are inconvenient or uncomfortable rather than unsafe, require mediation, or medical assistance.

- Create a building safety plan that people are trained on how to enact.
- Identify who is in charge of calling for an evacuation in case of a bomb threat, fire, etc.
- Identify the person to call emergency services (and not just 911 – we don't want police responding to a medical call if we can avoid it) and liaise with them if needed.
- Plan what we do after an evacuation (like making sure we have pre-printed a list of registrants and their contact info so we can account for people/follow up.)
- Have trained de-escalators who will take lead on a disruption and who know what to do when someone is in emotional distress.
- Above all, have a small team that knows they need to take lead in an emergency and has some plans and training for response, and communicating in words and actions to congregants that we have that team looking out them is most important.



This pledge was compiled by Jews spanning organizations and synagogues who have used these tools, in partnership with our allies in the NYC police accountability movement.