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Congress of the United States
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CHAIR, DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND
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CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ANTITRUST, COMMERCIAL
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM
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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY, AND
THE ENVIRONMENT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST,
NORTH AFRICA, AND INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

October 13, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington D.C., 20520

Dear Secretary of State Pompeo:

I understand that the State Department plans to host a virtual conference on combatting anti-Semitism later this month. This is an important initiative, and I urge you to be comprehensive in your approach. I urge you to ensure that the conference covers the following:

- QAnon, a conspiracy theory whose followers President Trump praised as patriots “who love our country.” QAnon has been condemned by the House for “fanning the flames” of anti-Semitism, and it has reportedly fueled recent death threats against a Jewish lawmaker in California as well as against my colleague Tom Malinowski here in the House. Researchers have tracked QAnon groups spreading from America to at least 70 other countries, with one German QAnon channel alone on the messenger app Telegram boasting over 100,000 members, according to VOA.
- The Proud Boys, a violent vigilante group whose members recently celebrated online when President Trump encouraged them to “stand by.” The group’s founder reportedly published an online video titled “10 Things I Hate about the Jews.” According to the New York Times, the Proud Boys claim to have chapters in a half dozen countries, and “Facebook and Twitter have at times cracked down on the Proud Boys,” leading them to migrate to other online platforms.
- InfoWars, a conspiracy website whose host President Trump commended, saying “your reputation is amazing.” It reportedly hosts online articles accusing Israel of perpetrating 9/11 and claiming the Rothschild family starts “endless wars” for a “Luciferian” agenda. InfoWars allegedly republished over 1,000 stories in past years by the Russian propaganda outlet RT. According to sources cited by McClatchy, InfoWars was also heavily promoted in 2016 by Russian bots on social media.

- TruNews, a Christian nationalist website previously given press credentials by the Trump White House. Its host has said that “the way the Jews work” is by being “deceivers,” and TruNews has accused prominent Jewish Members of Congress such as Chairmen Adam Schiff and Jerrold Nadler of committing “Jew coup” against America by means of impeachment. Both Schiff and Nadler were subjected to death threats in 2019 as a result of vitriol targeted at them during impeachment. Nonetheless, TruNews announced from Davos, Switzerland this January that “We want to thank President Trump and the White House for extending the invitation to be here.” When TruNews was banned by YouTube the following month, it had 185,000 subscribers and 17 million views.
- Online conspiracy theories demonizing George Soros, which the President himself repeatedly fueled. A man who allegedly sent 16 bombs to prominent liberals – including to both George Soros and to my colleague Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz – reportedly “was ‘connected’ to hundreds of right-wing Facebook groups. Many of these groups promoted various conspiracy theories and, more generally, the idea that Trump’s critics were dangerous, unpatriotic, and evil.” The week after the suspect was arrested, Britain’s FT noted that the demonization of Soros for political gain originated in Hungary but now demonstrates “how anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories have spread from the fringes to the political mainstream, in both Europe and the US.”

Notably, a new ADL report documents a “deluge” of problematic content on Twitter directed at the Jewish American Members of Congress currently running for reelection. The vast majority of these messages either draw on false conspiracy theories regarding George Soros or attack the loyalty of Jewish American lawmakers, for example alleging they are secret Communists or attacking them for partnering with Muslim Americans or for supporting the U.S.-Israel alliance.

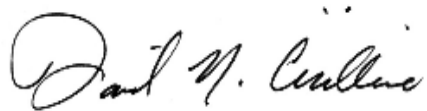
I particularly urge you to highlight in your remarks to this summit the importance of national leaders fighting the intersection of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant scapegoating, a xenophobic scourge that has inflamed our nation's politics in recent years and also afflicted many of America’s allies.

Indeed, a gunman perpetrated the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in America’s history because he believed hateful lies about Jewish Americans like George Soros and about Jewish American groups. He reportedly used the social media site Gab to post or share messages asking, “Why are Jewish groups using their trucks to transport invaders to our border?” and proclaiming “It’s the filthy EVIL jews Bringing the Filthy EVIL Muslims into the Country!!” Reuters just exposed that accounts allegedly linked to Russia’s Internet Research Agency are increasingly active on platforms such as Gab, apparently to target American voters before our election.

Anti-Semitic cyberhate is a serious global challenge, and we must consider how all leaders – including our own – must do better to ensure that they are part of the solution.

I hope you will utilize your platform at the State Department's international summit this month to highlight – and seek solutions to – these specific challenges, which I believe comprise a major part of what fuels anti-Semitism today, both online and ultimately in the physical world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David N. Cicilline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a small "N".

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress