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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN & CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS CONDEMN JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER BOMB THREAT & HATE CRIMES

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today joined with the Anti-Defamation League and the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights to condemn yesterday's bomb threat against a Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Lake Zurich.

The JCC Chicago reported that an employee of a JCC daycare facility in Lake Zurich received a telephone bomb threat Tuesday, resulting in an evacuation of staff and children at the facility. Authorities are investigating the incident and whether it is connected to similar incidents at JCC locations across the country in recent weeks, including over a dozen bomb threats against JCC facilities on Tuesday alone, according to media reports.

"Illinois law does not tolerate crimes fueled by hate," Madigan said. "A threat against any person based on hate or bias is a threat to the safety of our communities and our country's values."

"We believe all threats must be taken seriously, including the calls received by the JCC of Lake Zurich, and although law enforcement has not determined that there is any physical danger or that there are explosive devices at the location, these threats are deeply troubling and are making a detrimental impact on the Jewish community," said Lonnie Nasatir, the Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League's Greater Chicago and Upper Midwest Area.

"What makes Chicago strong is its racial and ethnic diversity. Caucasians, African Americans, and Latinos each make up roughly a third of our city's residents, and our Asian-American and Arab-American communities are growing," said Bonnie Allen, Executive Director of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. "Hatred and intolerance will not thrive here. Our legal team stands ready to act on these threats, and our civic and elected leaders must come together to provide support and protect vulnerable people from hate crimes. These incidents are often underreported and they are intended to send a message and perpetuate fear. We cannot give any ground to bigotry and intolerance in our city."

Under Illinois law, it is a felony to commit a variety of offenses such as assault or disorderly conduct because of a person's actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability or national origin. Penalties are even stronger when the offense occurs in or near a place of worship, school, cemetery or park. Illinois law also empowers victims to sue perpetrators of hate crime for damages independent of any criminal prosecution.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 90 reported hate crimes in Illinois last year.

Illinois residents who experience or witness what they believe to be a hate crime should call their local police department or can also contact Madigan's Civil Rights Hotline at 877-581-3692. Madigan urged residents to contact their local police department if they believe they are in immediate danger.

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