

Hate in the Sunshine State: Extremism & Antisemitism in Florida 2020-2022

Executive Summary

The past two years have seen a significant increase in extremist-related incidents both nationwide and throughout the State of Florida. These incidents have been driven, in part, by widespread disinformation and conspiracy theories that have animated extremists and fueled antisemitism. The result: unrest and violence, from the January 6 insurrection to white supremacist activity to a spike in hate crimes.

Antisemitism and extremism have been promulgated by groups of varied political and ideological backgrounds.

Since 2020 in Florida, new white supremacist groups have formed, while some existing neo-Nazi and accelerationist groups have broadened their audience through both online and on-the-ground activities. Other extremist groups have shifted their strategies to focus on the local level, disrupting school board meetings and even running for political office. In some cases, these groups work together to distribute hateful propaganda and terrorize communities.

While the vast majority of extremist incidents are tied to white supremacist and far-right extremist groups, anti-government and Black Nationalist extremist groups have also been active in Florida. Although ADL is not aware of any violent Islamist extremist organization active in Florida, foreign terrorist groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda have occasionally received material support from Florida residents.

KEY FINDINGS

- **PROPAGANDA:** From January 2020 to August 2022, the ADL Center on Extremism (COE) recorded over 400 instances of white supremacist propaganda distribution in Florida.
- **JANUARY 6th:** Florida is home to 90 people charged in relation to the January 6 insurrection - the most of any state. The COE has found that more than 1/3 of them have maintained ties to extremist groups, including Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and Three Percenters.
- **ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS:** Florida has seen a dramatic rise in antisemitic incidents, according to ADL's annual Audit of Antisemitic incidents – with a 40% rise in 2020 followed by a 50% rise in 2021.
- **HATE CRIMES:** Hate crimes continued to rise in Florida over the last several years. In Florida, hate crimes against Jews accounted for 80% of religiously-motivated incidents in 2020, and antisemitic hate crimes have risen 300% since 2012.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To combat the extremist threat landscape, a whole-of-society approach is necessary. ADL Florida recommends the following steps to combat extremism and build a safe, inclusive Florida:

1. CONDEMN HATRED:

Elected officials and community leaders must all strongly and consistently condemn antisemitism and extremism, whenever and wherever it occurs.

2. PASS AND ENFORCE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES:

Our leaders must pass and enforce legislation, including a comprehensive hate crimes bill and a state Non-Profit Security Grant Program.

3. PROTECT FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS:

Both elected leaders and community members must advocate for election systems that are accessible to all voters and are protected from violence.

4. DISRUPT HATE AND EXTREMISM THROUGH APPROPRIATE LAW ENFORCEMENT MEASURES:

Law enforcement agencies should dedicate resources to hate crimes units, and receive training on how to recognize and document hate crimes, antisemitic incidents, and other bias-motivated incidents – training that ADL can provide.

5. PRIORITIZE ANTI-BIAS AND HOLOCAUST EDUCATION:

Students need to be empowered to develop both an accurate understanding of historical events, such as the Holocaust, and be engaged in purposeful opportunities to learn about and explore bias with a goal of helping them become productive citizens.