

## Statement on the Mass Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue

*Women for Afghan Women condemns the violence that took the lives of 11 innocent victims*

(New York, NY) October 31, 2018 – With sorrow, [Women for Afghan Women \(WAW\)](#) condemns, in the severest terms, the prejudice and violence that ended the lives of 11 innocent Jewish worshippers on October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

WAW is deeply disturbed by the ignorant and discriminatory climate that spurred this heinous attack. Following a spate of bombs mailed to what one man conceived to be his political “enemies,” as well as the racially-motivated killings of two African Americans in Kentucky, the community at Squirrel Hill now mourns this tragedy propagated by yet another man’s hate crimes. WAW denounces the inane belief that one race, gender, ethnicity, or religion is superior to another. The recent rhetoric and hate speech against Jews, Muslims, immigrants, refugees, the LGBTQ community, women, and additional “others” has led to this fateful day, and too many others before it.

WAW mourns the loss suffered by the Jewish community at large and the Squirrel Hill community, specifically, as the country is shaken, once again, by the harsh politics of fear that has sought to divide us as Americans and led to an incredible, senseless loss of life.

As the victims are being laid to rest, we pray for the victims’ families. We hope for the kind of leadership that will guide us out of the web of phobias and prejudice that is threatening the soul of this country and this democracy, and will work to ensure that this massacre will not further tear us apart, but rather, bring us closer together.

Today, WAW sends its condolences to all our staff and friends in the community and across the country that have been profoundly touched by this loss, and specifically to our partners:

- HIAS, founded in 1881 as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, this non-partisan, refugee protection organization to which the Tree of Life donated funds and thus made it a target of the perpetrator of the Pittsburgh massacre, has helped WAW, the Afghan, and other marginalized communities with its refugee resettlement program, computer workshops, job training programs, and advocacy work;
- The Jewish Y Center of Queens, which sends volunteers every week to help teach WAW’s citizenship classes for women;
- The Jewish Community Center of Coney Island, which generously funds WAW’s English-as-a-Second Language classes that help empower our immigrant women;
- The Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee, a member of Coalition X, which WAW is leading;
- The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, an unyielding supporter to and partner with our community, which has manifested in numerous ways throughout the years; and
- The Hebrew Free Loan Society, which provides invaluable assistance with education and to small businesses for WAW’s community, as well as myriad other underserved communities.

Today, we take this solemn opportunity to thank the Jewish people for all that they have done for our community and this country, and to send our deepest regrets. Today—and every day—we stand in resolute solidarity with the Jewish community as they mourn their loss. We take solace in knowing that this anti-Semitic, anti-refugee, and hateful act will be met with proclamations of love, freedom, and unity. We will remain strong as we refuse to divide ourselves up into factions based on our differences, but rather celebrate them. We stand together with our Jewish sisters and brothers, and all Americans, united as one people.



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Women for Afghan Women (WAW) is a grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to securing and protecting the rights of disenfranchised Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan and New York, particularly their rights to develop their individual potential, to self-determination, and to be represented in all areas of life: political, social, cultural, and economic. WAW advocates for women's rights and challenges the norms that underpin gender-based violence wherever opportunities arise to influence attitudes and bring about change.