

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE INITIATIVES TO PREVENT AND COMBAT HATE CRIMES UNDER ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER

The Department of Justice Civil Rights Division enforces federal hate crimes statutes. These statutes allow the department to prosecute certain crimes that are committed based on the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of any person. Under Attorney General Eric Holder, the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division has ramped up its efforts both in prosecuting hate crimes as well as conducting trainings and workshops to prevent hate crimes from happening in the first place.

Prosecuting, Tracking and Preventing Hate Crimes

- Over the past six years, the Justice Department has charged 222 defendants with hate crimes offenses, a 31% increase in hate crime defendants, and 14 % more hate crime cases than in the previous six fiscal years (2003-2008). The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 (HCPA) provided a valuable new tool in this effort. Between fiscal years 2009 and 2014, the Justice Department used the HCPA to indict 65 defendants in 28 hate crimes cases with 47 convictions to date.
- To better assess the scope of hate violence, in January 2015 the FBI added a number of categories in its tracking of hate crimes, including offenses committed against Sikh, Hindu and Arab individuals as well as Buddhist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness and Orthodox Christian.
- Since 2001, the Justice Department has investigated over 1,000 incidents involving acts of violence, threats, assaults, vandalisms and arsons targeting Arabs, Muslims, Sikhs, South Asians and those perceived to be members of these groups. The Justice Department has brought federal prosecutions against 61 defendants in such cases, with 52 convictions to date. Additionally, Justice Department attorneys have coordinated with local prosecutors in numerous state-level criminal prosecutions, providing substantial assistance in many cases.

Trainings

- Since 2009, the Justice Department has conducted dozens of hate crimes identification training programs for law enforcement and community groups, reaching thousands of law enforcement agents and hundreds more community members. In 2015, in commemoration of the Fifth Anniversary of the HCPA and to further these collaborations, the Justice Department is planning a series of five regional trainings on hate crime prevention and prosecutions in California, Kansas, Florida, Mississippi and Oregon.
- The Justice Department has conducted workshops internationally on combating religious discrimination, including hate crimes legislation, prosecution, prevention and data collection, in Indonesia, Bosnia and Greece in 2013 and 2014.

Examples of the department's recent hate crime prosecutions include:

- ***Ozark, Alabama*** – An Alabama man was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment for his role in a May 2009 cross burning at the entrance to an African-American neighborhood.
- ***Jackson, Mississippi*** – Ten people in Mississippi pleaded guilty for their roles in the racially motivated assault and murder of an African-American man in June 2011. Three men—Deryl Paul Dedmon, John Aaron Rice, and Dylan Wade Butler—have been sentenced to 600, 220, and 84 months imprisonment, respectively. The other seven conspirators are awaiting sentencing.
- ***Toledo, Ohio*** – An Indiana man was charged in October 2012 with intentionally defacing, damaging and destroying religious property by setting fire to the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo because of the religious character of that property.
- ***Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*** – A Pennsylvania woman and three co-defendants were charged in January 2013 with racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, hate crimes, sex trafficking, forced labor, theft, fraud and other crimes for targeting victims with mental disabilities as part of a scheme to steal disability payments from the victims and the Social Security system.
- ***Springtown, Texas*** – A Texas man was sentenced to 183 months in prison in November 2014 for kidnapping a young gay man after luring the victim to his home and brutally assaulting him because of his sexual orientation.