

Members of US Congress on “Foreign White Supremacist Extremist Groups” Letter to Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

By [Max Rose](#), [Eliot L. Engel](#), and [et al.](#)

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Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to ask why the State Department has failed to include certain overseas violent white supremacist extremist groups on the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list.

The recent attack in Halle, Germany, which killed two innocent people, is just the latest example of white supremacist terrorism. Like the previous shooter in Christchurch, New Zealand, the attack in Halle was livestreamed and the killer posted a hateful anti-Semitic manifesto, in this case to a German message board (Kohlchan, the German 4chan equivalent). As SITE Intelligence Director Rita Katz's stated: "the similarity between this video and New Zealand attacker's underscores that these are not isolated attacks by people merely holding similar beliefs. Today's attack is another installment from a global terrorist network, linked together via online safe havens much like ISIS." The spread of anti-Semitic, white supremacist terrorism from Pittsburgh to Poway to Halle is a global threat spread by foreign groups who have free reign to recruit Americans over the internet.

Today, if an American citizen swears allegiance to the Islamic State (or another Foreign Terrorist Organization on the list) and spreads their message of terror, there are several resources available to the Federal government to counter the threat. However, if that same American citizen swears allegiance to a violent white supremacist extremist group based overseas and spreads their message of terror, the Federal government does not have access to the same tools.

Terrorism is terrorism. On September 10, 2019, the Committee on Homeland Security received testimony regarding the nexus between white supremacists in the U.S. and foreign organizations. On September 18, 2019, the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence & Counterterrorism and the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism received further testimony detailing the transnational relationships among white supremacist extremists.

As you know, the State Department's criteria for inclusion on the FTO list are simple: be a foreign organization, engage in or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorism, and threaten the security of US nationals or the national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests of the United States. There are numerous examples of foreign white nationalist groups that fit these conditions. The American people deserve an explanation as to why these groups are not included on the FTO list.

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For example, the Azov Battalion is a well-known ultranationalist militia organization in Ukraine that openly welcomes neo-Nazis into its ranks. The group is so well-known, in fact, that the 115th Congress of the United States stated in its 2018 omnibus spending bill that “none of the funds made available by this act may be used to provide arms, training or other assistance to the Azov Battalion.” The United Nations has chronicled human rights abuses and incidents of torture in this group’s relatively short history. Despite these facts, Azov has been recruiting, radicalizing, and training American citizens for years, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Christchurch, New Zealand massacre was a turning point for counterterrorism efforts. In his manifesto, the shooter claimed he had trained with the Azov Battalion in Ukraine, and he routinely wore a neo-Nazi symbol associated with them. Both the Poway, CA and El Paso, TX shooters said they were directly influenced by the terrorism committed at Christchurch. The link between Azov and acts of terror in America is clear.

The Trump Administration’s National Strategy for Counterterrorism, released in October 2018, mentions two neo-Nazi groups, the Nordic Resistance Movement and National Action, whose “use of violence and intent to destabilize societies often puts American lives at risk.”

As you know, our allies are taking steps to address the threat posed by transnational white supremacist extremists. In 2016, the United Kingdom designated National Action as a terrorist organization. National Action has links to American neo-Nazi groups, including the group James Alex Fields belonged to when he drove his car into protestors in Charlottesville in 2017, killing Heather Heyer. Canada also recently added international neo-Nazi groups to its federal list of outlawed terror organizations. Law enforcement agencies may go after assets of the listed groups, and it becomes a crime to support the listed groups financially or otherwise.

This is not the first time Congress inquired about the State Department’s treatment of overseas terrorist organizations. On March 20, 2019, House Foreign Affairs Chairman Eliot Engel wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to make addressing the global threat of white nationalist terrorism a foreign policy priority and suggest the State Department develop a list of white nationalist terrorist groups to designate as FTOs.

It is imperative that we understand how the State Department is evaluating the threat posed by violent foreign white supremacist groups and why these groups are not included on the present FTO list. Given that the threat picture has evolved substantially over the past 18 years since the September 11th attacks, and as we learn more about connections between certain overseas white supremacist groups and domestic terrorists, it is time we take the threat of violent white supremacist extremists more seriously.

We respectfully request a response no later than November 4, 2019.

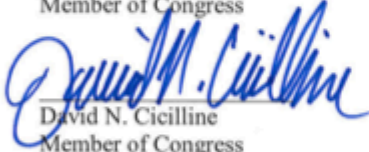
Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



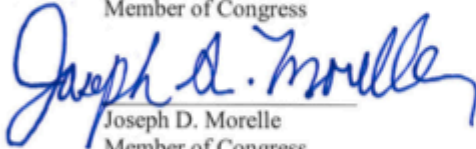
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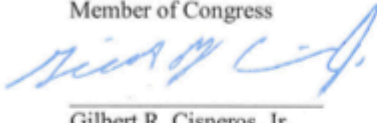

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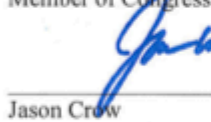

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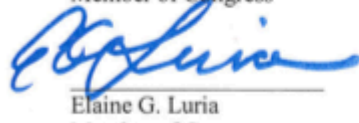

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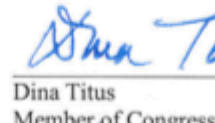

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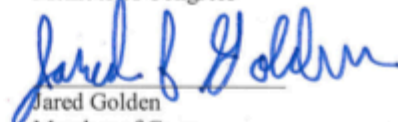

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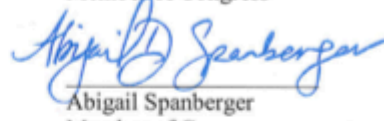

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