

Rabbis Forgo Annual High Holy Days Call with President

August 23, 2017

The High Holy Days are an opportunity for reflection and introspection. As the leaders of major denominations in American Jewish life, we have been deeply engaged in both, considering the events of the Jewish year that is ending and preparing spiritually for the year to come.

In so doing, we have thoughtfully and prayerfully considered whether to continue the practice in recent years of playing key roles in organizing a conference call for the President of the United States to bring High Holiday greetings to American rabbis. We have concluded that President Trump's statements during and after the tragic events in Charlottesville are so lacking in moral leadership and empathy for the victims of racial and religious hatred that we cannot organize such a call this year.

The President's words have given succor to those who advocate anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia. Responsibility for the violence that occurred in Charlottesville, including the death of Heather Heyer, does not lie with many sides but with one side: the Nazis, alt-right and white supremacists who brought their hate to a peaceful community. They must be roundly condemned at all levels.

The High Holy Days are a season of t'shuva for us all, an opportunity for each of us to examine our own words and deeds through the lens of America's ongoing struggle with racism. Our tradition teaches us that humanity is fallible yet also capable of change. We pray that President Trump will recognize and remedy the grave error he has made in abetting the voices of hatred. We pray that those who traffic in anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia will see that there is no place for such pernicious philosophies in a civilized society. And we pray that 5778 will be a year of peace for all.

Central Conference of American Rabbis
The Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism