

# FBI reports surge of anti-Muslim incidents

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Although Jews remain the most frequent victims in America of hate crimes based on religion, the number of incidents against Muslims surged in 2015, according to newly released data from the FBI.

Hate crimes against Muslims spiked 67 percent from 2014 to 2015. That represents 257 anti-Muslim incidents.

Robert McCaw, government affairs director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said the jump in anti-Muslim incidents continues to rise and even accelerated after the Nov. 8 election.

The FBI data show 664 incidents against Jews and Jewish institutions motivated by anti-Semitism—an increase of about 9 percent.

“We are troubled that the FBI’s annual hate crimes report revealed an increase in the number of reported hate crimes—including an increase in the number of race-based crimes, crimes directed against Jews and against the LGBT communities—and a significant increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes,” said Marvin D. Nathan, national chair of the Anti-Defamation League.

“It is essential not to just assume a direct connection between these reported hate crimes and the inflammatory and divisive presidential election campaign. However, community climate matters, and we have documented an unprecedented amount of bigotry and intolerance on the campaign trail,” he said.

The FBI, which collects data on hate crimes leveled at victims because of

their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, reported 5,818 incidents in 2015 overall, an increase of more than 6 percent from the previous year.

Of those crimes, about 20 percent were categorized as crimes rooted in religious bias. In the previous year, such crimes accounted for about 17 percent of the total hate crimes.

The new FBI data confirm CAIR's own report of an unprecedented number of incidents targeting mosques in 2015.

Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt and other experts on bigotry noted the FBI report, although it represents the best data available on hate crimes, underestimates the problem.

"Despite the extraordinary outreach and enforcement work by the Justice Department, it is disturbing that at least 85 police agencies in cities over 100,000 in population did not participate in this report—or affirmatively reported that they had zero hate crimes. ... Data drives policy. And the FBI's annual report is the most important national snapshot of the hate crime problem in America."

The largest group of hate crimes, the report shows, is motivated by racial or ethnic hatred—accounting for nearly 60 percent of incidents. Of those, more than half targeted black Americans.