



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2009

Contact: Jennifer Hutchison
Jasculca/Terman & Associates for
Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center
312-573-5468 office / 630-258-8752 mobile

EXTREMISM IN AMERICA: A STATUS REPORT

Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center and Anti-Defamation League Give Update, Assessment of Current U.S. Extremist Activity at Inaugural Golder Family Community Forum

SKOKIE, IL - Area law enforcement officials today joined with the leadership of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center and Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for an expert panel discussion and assessment of the current state of extremism in America at the inaugural Golder Family Community Forum. Entitled "Extremism in America: A Status Report," the event, held at the new Museum, drew several hundred members of the Chicagoland community who were eager to learn about the recent increase in extremist activity across the country and what is being done to combat it.

"It is critical that we all do our part to combat hate and prejudice in all its forms," said Richard S. Hirschhaut, Executive Director of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. "Hate-fueled extremism is experiencing a resurgence in the U.S. and perpetrators have found their way onto the Internet as a way to grow their base. We cannot allow them, with impunity, to engender fear, poison communities and seed future generations with ignorance and hate. We must empower ourselves and our youth with the knowledge and courage to stand up to adversity and embrace diversity. That is the mission of this Museum and it is the reason we are here today."

"In just the first six months of this year, we have witnessed a shooting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., the murder of a provider of abortion services at his church in Kansas and a foiled plot to attack two synagogues in New York," said Lonnie Nasatir, ADL Regional Director for Greater Chicago and the Upper Midwest. "Extremist activity is on the rise in the U.S., so we felt it was important to take this opportunity to update the Chicagoland community on current activity and what we at the ADL, as well as others, are doing to deter these actions."

Moderated by Hirschhaut, the event's expert panel explored topics including the current state of extremism in the U.S., an overview of prominent extremist groups and individuals being monitored, and an analysis of how extremist activity in the Midwest compares to other regions of the country. Community members were also updated on current efforts to curtail online activities as more groups turn to the Internet to spread messages of hate and offered community-based strategies for combating these groups. Panelists included FBI Chicago Special Agent in Charge Robert Grant, Village of Skokie Deputy Police Chief Tony Scarpelli, Anti-Defamation League Director of Investigative Research Mark Pitcavage and Anti-Defamation League Director of Development and former Midwest Civil Rights Counsel Daniel Elbaum.

(more)

EXTREMISM IN AMERICA: A STATUS REPORT
PAGE TWO

The first in a series of programs to be held at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, the Golder Family Community Forums will offer opportunities to address timely and topical issues of concern to the greater Chicago and Midwest community.

“Our family is excited to have this opportunity, through events such as today’s status report on extremism, to inform our neighbors so that they may have an impact on issues affecting not only our community, but the world today,” said David Golder. “Through these forums, we hope to not only contribute to the mission of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center by remembering those lost to the horrors of genocide, but also by moving forward to help grow interfaith and intercultural understanding.”

Likely the last international institution of its kind built with the active participation of Holocaust survivors, the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is the largest facility in the Midwest dedicated to preserving the memories of those lost in the Holocaust and to teaching current generations to fight hatred, indifference and genocide in today’s world.

For over 90 years, the Anti-Defamation League has fought against bigotry and anti-Semitism by exposing and reporting on hate groups and other extremists who seek to harm perceived enemies and to undermine our democracy. Today, ADL’s Center on Extremism continues this mission to expose and document the groups and individuals whose ideologies and activities perpetuate hatred and extremism. To this end, its Center on Extremism has created many resources and served as a guide to government officials on prominent extremist movements, groups, and leaders in the United States.

###