



Joint Statement from South Orange Village and Maplewood Township

South Orange and Maplewood have long stood together as welcoming, diverse, and inclusive communities where people of every faith, background, and identity are valued, respected, and able to live openly without fear. On behalf of the elected officials of both municipalities, we are united in condemning the disturbing removal of an Israeli flag from the exterior of the Oheb Shalom synagogue in South Orange.

Whoever was responsible chose to trespass onto a house of worship at approximately 2:00 a.m., under the cover of darkness. That cowardly act is unacceptable and is now the subject of an active police investigation. Whatever the motivation, if its purpose was to intimidate, provoke fear, or divide our community, it will accomplish none of those things.

We condemn antisemitism in the strongest possible terms. It has no place in South Orange, Maplewood, or anywhere else. To our Jewish neighbors, please know that you are valued, you belong here, and you have the unwavering support of both of our communities.

Every person should be able to enter a house of worship, display symbols of their faith and identity, and participate in religious life without fear of intimidation, harassment, or acts of hatred. Houses of worship should always be places of peace, reflection, and community. An act that causes members of our Jewish community to feel targeted or unsafe is something we take seriously, and we are committed to ensuring that our communities remain places where everyone feels secure and supported.

South Orange and Maplewood have always drawn strength from the diversity of our residents and the mutual respect we show one another. We reject efforts to sow fear, division, or hatred in our communities. Our differences are not our weakness; they are one of our greatest strengths.

We encourage anyone with information related to this incident to contact the South Orange Police Department at 973-763-3000 x7797. We are grateful for the professionalism of our law enforcement partners and appreciate the coordination with the Essex County Prosecutor's Office.

As elected officials, we reaffirm our commitment to the safety and inclusion of our Jewish neighbors and to fostering neighborhoods where people of all faiths can worship freely, where every resident feels they belong, and where hate has no home. We will continue working together to ensure that South Orange and Maplewood remain communities defined not by acts of intolerance, but by compassion, respect, and our unwavering commitment to one another.

South Orange Village

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Councilmembers

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