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PRESS RELEASE

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Hate Crimes in Los Angeles Increase 24%, the Largest Number Since 2011

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (LACCHR) today released its annual account of hate crimes reported throughout Los Angeles County in 2015. After trending downwards for seven years hate crimes rose 24% from 390 to 483, the largest number reported since 2011. By comparison, during this same year the CA Attorney General's office reported a much smaller state-wide increase in hate crime of 10% during the same year.

There were increases across the board in crimes motivated by race, sexual orientation, religion, and gender/gender identity. As in past years, the largest number of hate crimes targeted African Americans who represent only about 8.3% of County residents but were 58% of victims of racial hate crime. A significant factor driving the over-representation of black hate crime victims are racially-motivated attacks by street gangs, mostly those with ties to the prison-based Mexican Mafia gang.

Hilda Solis, Chair of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors, said, "This is troubling news that confirms the need to protect our residents of this County who deserve to live free of prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence." She added, "Under my leadership, our Board of Supervisors took action to address Islamophobia earlier this year, and I will continue to make it a priority for the County of Los Angeles."

Hate crimes targeting many other groups rose in 2015. Anti-Latino crimes jumped 69%. There were also increases in bigoted attacks on Jews, gay men, lesbians, Muslims, Asian Americans, Armenians, and transgender women. Anti-Muslim and Middle Eastern crimes spiked in November and December after the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino. Consistent with previous years, transgender women experienced the highest rate of violence. All 18 of these crimes were of a violent nature. 84% of crimes targeting gay men and lesbians were violent, the highest percentage since 2003. By comparison, 68% of racial crimes and only 21% of religious crimes were of a violent nature. The overall rate of violence rose slightly from 62% to 63% and there were three attempted murders.

“We are extremely concerned that reported hate crimes increased dramatically in 2015,” said Robin Toma, LACCHR Executive Director. “The disturbing rise in bias-motivated crime indicates that despite the gains made by historically marginalized communities, bigoted attacks are still a daily occurrence and that is unacceptable.”

“The over-representation of African Americans as victims of racial hate crimes, the high rates of violence experienced by LGBT victims and the spike in anti-Muslim and Middle Eastern hate crimes at the end of 2015 are reminders that our work is far from over,” said Commission President Isabelle Gunning.

Hate crimes occurred throughout the variety of regions of Los Angeles County, but the largest number of hate crimes took place in the San Fernando Valley, followed by the Metro region that stretches from West Hollywood to Boyle Heights. The highest rate of hate crimes occurred in the Metro region, followed by the western part of the county that includes a number of affluent cities. The western region was the site of a large number of anti-Jewish vandalisms.

L.A. County Sheriff’s Executive Officer Neal Tyler added, “Since taking office, Sheriff Jim McDonnell has made outreach to all communities a priority, in part to ensure that trust is continuously fortified between Sheriff’s personnel and the people who are targeted victims of hate. Sheriff McDonnell remains passionate about combatting hate and all forms of bigotry. He is well aware that hate crimes victimize each of us in the same way terrorism threatens our peace of mind, even for those not specifically targeted. The LASD will continue our outreach efforts, our trust building, our investigative and enforcement activities, and our hate crime prevention undertakings, such as educating our youth through our ‘SHARE Tolerance’ program.”

To view the complete report including hate crime maps, graphs and tables, visit www.css.lacounty.gov or www.lahumanrelations.org.

About Community and Senior Services

Community and Senior Services (CSS) is committed to providing services which have positive impacts on the lives of the citizens of Los Angeles County. We provide employment services to adults and youth. We work with employers in times of hiring and downsizing. We offer mediation services to avoid court filings. We investigate abuse claims against our older adult and disabled population. We provide nutrition and other life-enhancing services to older adults. Our Human Relations Commission is dedicated to fostering positive inter-group relations.

About the Human Relations Commission

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations is one of the oldest and largest agencies of its kind in the United States. The Commission works to foster harmonious and equitable intergroup relations, empower communities and institutions, engage in non-violent conflict resolution and promote an informed and inclusive multicultural society.