

# *On-line white supremacist groups continue to increase in U.S.*

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Atlanta, March 23 (RHC)-- The number of white nationalist groups in the United States has increased, despite a small decline in the overall number of hate groups in 2019, a new report reveals.

Entitled "Year in Hate and Extremism," the report by The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) identified more than 155 white nationalist hate groups currently active, representing a 55 percent increase in such groups since 2018.

"White nationalism poses a serious threat to national security and pluralistic democracy. It's a virulent and profoundly authoritarian ideology that infects our political system with hate, fear, and resentment," the writers of the report warned.

"As this report demonstrates, the threat of increased violence is very real. A growing sector of white supremacists, who call themselves 'accelerationists', believe mass violence is necessary to bring about the collapse of our pluralistic society."

SPLC spokesperson Lecia Brooks observed that the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has boosted far-right hate groups since 2016 when his campaign for president "energized whited nationalists." Brooks added that many extremist groups are organizing online "instead of joining formal hate groups ... they're using the internet to network, fundraise and recruit."

The August 2019 shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, that killed 22 people was one example of the spread of online hate.

The report also revealed that white nationalists were not the only category to see an increase in their numbers, as anti-migrant groups increased by 18 percent. Although both groups can be mistaken for each other because of anti-migrant rhetoric is mainly aimed at racial minorities, the SPLC, however, make a clear distinction between the two hate groups.

On the other hand, with the coronavirus current crisis, many have reported an increase in attacks against Asians. The Executive director of the Western States Center Eric Ward, a rights group based in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, observed an increase in white nationalist discourse "linking [Asians] to the coronavirus pandemic."

Donald Trump has been heavily criticized after repeatedly referring to the coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus." Critics and anti-racism groups warned that the president is fueling racism and putting U.S. citizens of Asian descent at risk.

Trump's provocations came after tensions between China and the U.S. rose with each country blaming the other over the origins of the virus, despite the World Health Organization's warning not to link the disease to a particular area or community in order to avoid stigmatization.

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