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## Your Voice

# **Hate crimes, gun violence and Jewish values**

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On June 12, we witnessed the largest mass shooting in U.S. history at Orlando, Florida's Pulse nightclub – an attack targeting the LGBTQ community, claiming 49 precious lives and wounding over 50 more.

The National Council of Jewish Women joins with all who deplore gun violence and hate crimes in unequivocally condemning the horrific mass shooting in Orlando. We mourn with the families and loved ones of all who were killed and our prayers for recovery go out to all who were injured.

NCJW urges Congress to pass sensible gun violence legislation. And we must all act to combat the homophobia and transphobia in our midst. As details of the Pulse nightclub case unfold, we must keep in mind that extremists who use Islam as justification for their heinous acts of terrorism do not dictate the character of the entire religion.

In truth, we are all wounded by the fear engendered by gun attacks on civilians and by the menace of prejudice that too often endangers individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer and that also threatens members of the Latino community.

NCJW is guided by Jewish values, including the Talmudic teaching that for “one who takes one life it is as though that person has destroyed the universe, and an individual who saves one life is as though that person has saved the universe.” We must all renew our efforts to stop the epidemic of gun violence in this country.

*Susan Schesnol is the president of the Arizona Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.*