

We, the Anti-Defamation League (“ADL”) Cleveland Regional Board and staff (serving Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Western Pennsylvania), call on President Trump to clearly and forcefully denounce white supremacists now, in light of his comments during the first Presidential debate in Cleveland Tuesday night.

During the debate, when the moderator asked President Trump “Are you willing tonight to condemn white supremacists and militia groups and to say that they need to stand down and not add to the violence?” Trump responded, “Proud Boys, stand back and stand by.”

The Proud Boys—a violent, misogynistic, racist, antisemitic, Islamophobic, and anti-immigration group—could barely contain their excitement at Trump’s comments. Almost immediately, a Proud Boys leader posted “That’s my president!” and “Standing by sir,” and t-shirts featuring the Proud Boys logo with the new slogan “Stand Back Stand By” appeared online.

President Trump’s comments are unacceptable for any leader of the United States of America. In the context of the dramatic rise in white supremacist violence nationally, President Trump’s comments contribute to a growing threat to our national security. In 2017, ADL tracked a total of 503 white supremacist incidents nationally. To date in 2020, ADL has already tracked 3,395 white supremacist incidents (find the data [here](#)). Over the last decade, right-wing extremists have been responsible for 76 percent of all domestic extremist-related murders. President Trump’s own FBI director recently said that “the most lethal of all domestic extremists since 2001” have been those who are racially and ethnically motivated—largely white supremacists. By all measures, white supremacy is skyrocketing, and it is a serious threat to people’s lives.

Rather than acknowledging this truth, the President of the United States of America chose to tell the Proud Boys to “stand by.” As a country, we are better than this. We must strive to be more than the worst impulses of our leaders. We are asking everyone reading this to learn more about the growing threat of extremism (learn about why the Proud Boys are a problematic group [here](#), and read ADL’s blog post about the President’s comments [here](#)) and take action to fight hate today. Whether it be supporting a local or national group fighting extremism or making an extra effort to be kind and seek to understand people who may look or pray differently from you, we must choose to be our best selves every day and demand the same from our political leaders.

Sincerely,

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