Hundreds of US synagogues receive bomb threats as spree continues despite arrests

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Hundreds of synagogues and Jewish institutions across the United States received bomb threats by email this weekend, in a substantial acceleration of a months-long spree of hoax threats.

The Secure Community Network, which coordinates security for Jewish institutions nationwide, said early Sunday that it had tracked 199 threats over the past 24 hours, with nearly 100 in California and 62 in Arizona. Synagogues in at least 17 states plus Washington, D.C., were affected, according to local media reports.

None of the threats were deemed credible after local investigations. But some of them caused significant disruption: A Boulder, Colorado, synagogue evacuated its Shabbat morning services on Saturday, for example, while a congregation in western Massachusetts canceled its Sunday religious school.

In Alabama, the state’s only Jewish lawmaker, Philip Ensler, posted a video to social media showing the moment that the Torah reading at his synagogue was interrupted and everyone in attendance was ushered outside. ‘This is exhausting,’ he tweeted. ‘I pray for the day that we can worship and live in peace.’

Ensler, who is also executive director of the Jewish Federation of Central Alabama, later said in a federation statement that six of seven Jewish institutions in his area had received the threats.

The surge in threats comes at a time of high anxiety for American Jews amid a spike in reports of antisemitic incidents amid Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza, triggered by the terror group’s October 7 massacre in Israel, in which thousands of terrorists killed some 12,00 people, mostly civilians slaughtered amid brutal atrocities, and took about 240 hostages of all ages.

It also follows multiple arrests of people who have been charged with sending bomb threats targeting Jewish and other institutions, including a minor in California last week and a man in Peru in September.

Hundreds of synagogues have received bomb threats since the latest spree began over the summer, including during the High Holidays. The arrests do not appear to be blunting the threats.

‘Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that this nationwide trend will continue in the foreseeable future,’ the Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey told community members in an email on Sunday afternoon sharing news of at least five threats in the area.