Rubio touts bipartisan commitment to fighting anti-Semitism, defending Israel

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Florida Senator Marco Rubio sought to assure a crowd at the Anti-Defamation League’s annual summit on Tuesday that there is bipartisan commitment on Capitol Hill to combating anti-Semitism and defending Israel at the United Nations and other international forums.

The former Republican presidential candidate spent much of his keynote address at Washington’s Mayflower Hotel ticking off Senate resolutions and letters signed in recent months that address the recent uptick in anti-Semitic attacks worldwide.

“As you can see on this front, the news is good, in a sense — that there is a strong bipartisan commitment,” he said. “Every single one of these measures I just read to you is bipartisan, includes the leadership of both parties and, in many cases, enjoys the unanimous support of our members.”

Since January, nearly 150 bomb threats have hit JCCs, Jewish day schools and other institutions, causing the evacuation of dozens of Jewish community centers and [prompting some parents to remove their children](http://www.timesofisrael.com/as-bomb-scares-persist-parents-begin-pulling-kids-out-of-jccs/) from JCC programs.

Most were found to be the work of an Israeli-American teen from Ashkelon, who has been [charged with making thousands of bomb threats](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-files-massive-indictment-against-jcc-bomb-hoaxer-for-thousands-of-counts-of-threats-extortion-fraud/) over the last two years.

Rubio cited a letter he signed with all 100 of his Senate colleagues urging Department of Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, Attorney General Jeff Sessions and FBI Director James Comey to take more action on the trend of bomb threats that were being called into Jewish institutions.

“The fact, by the way, that every single member of the senate joined in that effort, I think is proof that this issue need not be, should not be, and has historically not been, a partisan one,” Rubio said.

Drawing on that, the Florida lawmaker said it would be a priority in the upcoming budget battle in Washington to ensure federal agencies like the Justice Department have “the resources to help Jewish community centers and prove their physical security and to deter threats, and have the ability to work with local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute these anonymous cowards who are spreading fear and anxiety, often impacting the lives of young children.”

Rubio, 45, went on to cite other anti-Semitic incidents that have taken place over the last several months, including a Jewish student in Georgia who received a note from another student with a swastika that said “Hitler did the world a favor.”

“The threat of anti-Semitism remains alive,” he said, “and the world has already witnessed less than a century ago the horrible price to be paid when it is not challenged, no matter where it begins or who it comes from.”

Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, also stressed the bipartisan Senate stance on the UN’s treatment of Israel.

“The United States cannot stand by and allow the sole democracy in the Middle East and one of our strongest allies on the planet to be targeted, discriminated against or held to a different standard than any other UN member state,” he said.

He cited a letter that was [signed by all 100 US senators](http://www.timesofisrael.com/all-100-us-senators-to-un-end-unacceptable-anti-israel-bias/) last month to UN Secretary-General António Guterres calling for an end to the world body’s “unacceptable” bias against Israel.

Rubio also called a [UNESCO resolution passed last week](http://www.timesofisrael.com/on-independence-day-unesco-okays-resolution-ignoring-jewish-links-to-jerusalem/) that indicated Israel has no sovereign claim to Jerusalem “shameful.”

“These days, as you probably are well aware, it’s difficult to find much that everyone can agree on in this city, but the one issue where you will find a united voice on Capitol Hill is the need to eliminate discriminatory behavior against Israel at international organizations,” he said.