

To Dwight D. Eisenhower

13 Oct
1958

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Atlanta, Ga.

Just hours after the bombing of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation on 12 October, Eisenhower condemned the attack while speaking at a cornerstone-laying ceremony for a church center in New York City: "I think we would all share in the feeling of horror, that any brigand would want to desecrate the holy place of any religion, be it a chapel, a cathedral, a mosque, a church or a synagogue. . . . we will not countenance the desecration of any edifice that symbolizes one of the great faiths."¹ King commends the president's statement and renews his request for an interracial White House conference to "help recommit our nation to the peaceful settling of differences."

THE PRESIDENT
THE WHITEHOUSE

WE HEARTILY COMMEND YOUR PROMPT ACTION IN CONDEMNING THE COWARDLY SUNDAY MORNING DYNAMITING OF THE HEBREW WELFARE CONGREGATION IN ATLANTA AND IN CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION BY THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION STOP THIS BOMBING IS BUT ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF THE VIOLENCE BEING PERPETRATED AGAINST RACIAL MINORITIES IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY AND APPEARS TO BE A PART OF A MASTER PLAN OF DEFIANCE OF LAW AND ORDER STOP SURELY IT IS CLEAR THAT THE FUTURE OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW IS AT STAKE STOP TODAY IT IS A NEGRO HOME OR CHURCH, A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE OR AN INTEGRATED PUBLIC SCHOOL BUT TOMORROW, IF THIS MENACE IS NOT CHECKED, AMERICANS MAY WELL HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN RULE BY DEMOCRACY OR RULE BY DYNAMITE STOP THE IMAGINATION INTELLIGENCE AND COURAGE THAT IS EXPECTED OF AMERICAN LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT THE WORLD MUST BE BROUGHT TO BEAR UPON OUR NATIONS NUMBER ONE DOMESTIC PROBLEM—RACIAL ANTAGONISM STOP THEREFORE THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, MANY OF WHOSE LEADERS HAVE HAD THEIR CHURCHES AND HOMES DYNAMITED OR HAVE PERSONALLY ENDURED PHYSICAL ATTACKS URGE AND IMPLORE YOU TO IMMEDIATELY CONVENE A WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE OF NEGRO AND WHITE LEADERS AS SUGGESTED BY THE FOUR NEGRO LEADERS WHO MET WITH YOU LAST APRIL STOP² SUCH A MEETING OF MINDS COULD DRAMATIZE AND REVIVE FOR THE CITIZENS OF OUR COUNTRY AND THE FREEDOM LOVING PEOPLES OF THE WORLD THE GREAT AMERICAN HERITAGE OF JUSTICE LAW AND ORDER AND COULD HELP RECOMMIT OUR NATION TO THE PEACEFUL SETTling OF DIFFERENCES WHICH IS THE ONLY METHOD CONSISTENT WITH CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY STOP

RESPECTFULLY
THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
REV MARTIN L KING JR PRESIDENT
208 AUBURN AVE NORTHEAST ATLANTA GA

PWSr. WCFG-KAbE: Box 423.

1. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower* (1959), p. 732.
2. King refers to his 23 June meeting with the president.