



**The Georgia Democracy  
RESILIENCE NETWORK**

September 17, 2025

Dear Friend,

The last week has left many Americans feeling fearful, angry, and confused. The Georgia Democracy Resilience Network is working to bring people together in this difficult moment in our country's history.

### **Charlie Kirk's Murder: A Time For Action**

Immediately following news of the shooting of Charlie Kirk, the DRN issued the following [statement](#):

The Georgia Democracy Resilience Network unequivocally condemns the recent shooting at Utah Valley University targeting conservative commentator Charlie Kirk. Political violence, in any form, is unacceptable and has no place in our democracy. The strength of our democracy relies on Americans being able to engage in political discourse without fear of violence, harassment, or intimidation.

We call on elected officials, community leaders, and citizens in Georgia to join us in condemning this egregious act of violence. As we await further details, we urge members of the network to demonstrate moderation and calm. Our thoughts and prayers are with Charlie Kirk, his family, and the UVU community during this time.

This tragedy comes closely behind a long list of others, including most recently the killing of a [Minnesota lawmaker](#). But Kirk's assassination feels different. As the media and social media spotlights and fuels partisan responses on the extremes, the vast majority of Americans understood, first and foremost, the senseless tragedy of the killing.

Charlie Kirk's murder should not be the reason to further harden and escalate our divisions. It should be a time to reflect on our direction as a country and for us and our leaders, especially, to stand up and say "enough" to the increasingly dangerous demonization of left and right.

These murders shows us what our country will look like if we don't push back against the politics of division and blame. But it has also shown us **courageous and bi-partisan leadership**.

Leaders as different as [Gov. Spencer Cox of Utah](#) and [Sen. Bernie Sanders](#), whose statements were highlighted by conservative radio broadcaster Erick Erickson, are calling for us to turn down the heat, not turn it up. Here in Georgia, state and local leaders have condemned the killing and political violence of any kind. A compelling statement by Georgia faith leaders is below. Members of this network have been publicly and privately condemning the killing and reminding us of where anger can lead.

We received a powerful note from one member who agreed that we could share some of the hard won wisdom from his father, a member of the greatest generation. It is a reminder that we have lived through division and violence before and of the values that united us.

The last few days have reminded me of when I was eight years old sitting at my mother's restaurant and hearing people talk about the King assassination which had happened a few years before; "too bad but he brought this on himself." I was parroting those words back to my dad, trying to make sense of it all. My dad said, "these people do not know what they are talking about, they are wrong." My dad was a soldier. He had seen death, cleaned up death, told people of death. He was a combat soldier. He never glorified violence.

I have seen the result of violence up close and told people their loved ones were dead. I have been surprised and disappointed at what I've heard people saying. I said yesterday in church "murdering people is wrong. Full stop." I am saddened that I have to say that.

As a network, we are committed to using our voices to prevent violence, promote truth, and support our democracy.

Sincerely,

Senator Don Balfour and Dr. Rashad Richey

Senior Advisors to and Co-Leads of the Georgia Democracy Resilience Network

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## **RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE**

1. **Focus on your response.** Each of us has a choice in this moment. Can we resist the urge to assign blame to entire groups for the actions of one individual? Do we escalate the rhetoric, or do we lower the temperature? This starts with how we speak, how we listen, how we show up online and in our communities.
2. **Check on your people.** Reach out to young adults, students, neighbors and friends. Ask how they are navigating and understanding the unfolding event. Let them know you care and that they are not alone.
3. **Recognize our shared values.** We all value freedom of expression. We all value family. We may disagree on many things but we can agree that the death of a young father is tragic and that no one should be killed for sharing their opinions in a public forum. Let's build on those shared values and commitments.
4. **Seek reliable information.** It can be painful to wait for information after a tragedy. Those who profit from our political divisions sometimes fill the void with misinformation and calls for retaliatory violence. We can be patient as additional details from authorities are released and try to not make assumptions about the circumstances and motives.

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### **Faith Leaders Across Georgia Condemn Political Violence Following Shooting of Charlie Kirk**

**Atlanta, GA – September 10, 2025 —** Faith leaders in Atlanta and across the state of Georgia stand united in condemning the shooting and assassination of conservative voice Charlie Kirk in Utah. As leaders grounded in moral conviction and civic responsibility, we affirm that at no point is political violence warranted or acceptable. Violence only begets more violence and erodes the very foundation of our democracy.

At a time when our nation faces profound political and social challenges, violent actions like those witnessed in Utah are grossly un-American. They are a direct assault on the principles of civility, free expression, and peaceful debate that sustain our republic.

Rabbi Peter Berg of The Temple in Atlanta said of the violent attack, “We are called, across our faith traditions, to uphold the sanctity of life and the dignity of every person, regardless of their political beliefs. Attacks on individuals for their views are attacks on all of us, and on the freedoms we cherish.”

Parminder Singh, a community leader in Atlanta’s Sikh Community added, “This event was heart-breaking and we condemn such acts of violence and terror. We stand in complete solidarity with our fellow Americans.”

The undersigned leaders urge all faith and civic leaders to speak with clarity and conviction: acts of political violence, and the rhetoric that fuels them, must be rejected in the strongest possible terms. True leadership demands moral courage, restraint, and an unwavering commitment to resolve our differences through dialogue rather than destruction.

As Georgians, and as Americans, we call upon our communities to model a better path—one rooted in respect, civility, and the enduring promise of our democracy.

- Rabbi Peter Berg, The Temple
- Rev. Jennifer Butler, Faith in Democracy
- Pastor Micah Fries, Multi-Faith Neighbors Network
- Rabbi Josh Hearshen, Congregation Or Veshalom
- Monica Mainwaring, Rector, St. Martin in the Fields Episcopal Church
- Wesley Myrick, Ga Interfaith Public Policy Center
- Rabbi Ellen Nemhauser, President, Interfaith Atlanta
- Pastor Randy Rainwater, Grace New Hope Church
- Parminder Singh, Sikh Community of Atlanta Leader
- Rev Sean Smith, Senior Pastor, New Horizon Baptist Church
- Rev. John Vaughn, Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Reverend Robert Wright, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

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First Five Freedoms

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*First Five Freedoms is a group of concerned citizens, faith and civic leaders from across the spectrum of political and religious beliefs, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, who regard that noble experiment to be under attack. We seek to create a peaceful Civil Rights–inspired movement to defend our five First Amendment freedoms and condemn extremist rhetoric and political violence.*

*The [Georgia Democracy Resilience Network \(DRN\)](https://georgiadrn.org/) exists to reach across the aisle and to bring network members together to see how we are more alike than different. Support for the norms of our democratic republic is something we all share along with the need to disagree agreeably. Through this collaboration, we encourage peaceful civic discussions across the rich differences in our society today. [Georgia Faith Forward Democracy Network](#) is a part of the [Georgia Democracy Resilience Network](https://georgiadrn.org/), which is supported by [The Carter Center](#). Please contact us via the website or at [drninfo@cartercenter.org](mailto:drninfo@cartercenter.org).*

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