

TO: Reporters and Editors
FR: **Neera Tanden**, CEO, Center for American Progress Action Fund
Rabbi David Saperstein, former Ambassador At Large for International Religious Freedom
Henry Fernandez, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress Action Fund
RE: Caravan Coverage is Nothing More Than Political Propaganda
DA: October 29, 2018

President Trump is manufacturing a crisis around the caravan for political gain—to stoke fears and garner votes for the midterms. The fact is, the caravan of asylum seekers from Honduras is hundreds of miles away from the U.S. border. It's no threat to the country, it is shrinking in size, unarmed, and filled mostly with women and children. We have laws in place if the migrants reach the border—including allowing people to apply for asylum and turning them away if their claims are not accepted. No one is for open borders; that is a lie the president simply repeats. This is not a national threat. Several migrant caravans have traveled to the [border in the past](#) with much less coverage. In the past week, the media has covered the caravan over 1,808 times.

We are currently facing real threats—a series of hate crimes and hate-filled violence, happening in the form of a serious [attempted political assassination and media bombing](#) campaign, and religious and [racially motivated](#) shootings—all within a few days. But instead of talking about the real threats and actual murders of innocent Americans, President Trump is doing his best to turn the nation's attention elsewhere for political purposes.

President Trump and his allies on Fox News are consistently lying to position the caravan as a threat and to stoke their base.

- A lie started in the darkest racist and neo-Nazi corners of the internet, with [implicit if not explicit anti-Semitic](#) overtones, that George Soros funded the caravan, has now shown up on [Fox Business News](#).
- They claim there are Middle Eastern people in it, a claim no doubt designed to stoke anti-Muslim bias—when pushed, they can offer [no proof](#). President Trump [acknowledged](#) that there is "no proof of anything, but there could very well could be."
- They claim it is full of criminals—in reality, the Mexican government and the media following the caravan attest that it consists of women, children, and families [seeking asylum](#) to escape violence and persecution.
- They spread [a known](#) anti-immigrant trope by claiming people in the [caravan are diseased](#). Just today, Fox News [ran a segment](#) where the guest said the asylum seekers may have leprosy and are going to "infect our people in the United States."

Coverage of these lies and misinformation on the caravan carry [significant consequences](#). As *The Washington Post* [reported](#), "The Soros-caravan conspiracy theory weaves together anti-Semitism, fear of immigrants and the specter of powerful foreign agents controlling major world events in pursuit of a hidden agenda. And it appears to have had real-world consequences on Saturday for Jews attending services, including a baby-naming ceremony, in their synagogue in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood."

The alleged shooter in Pittsburgh was specifically motivated by the caravan and the lie that it was funded by Mr. Soros. Immediately before the shooting he allegedly posted on Gab, a social media tool used by white supremacists and neo-Nazis, [an anti-Semitic screed](#) attacking a well-respected Jewish refugee and immigrant services organization (*HIAS*). [He wrote](#): “*HIAS* likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.”

Several days after a bomb was delivered to Mr. Soros’s home, President Trump continued to encourage verbal assaults on Soros, [laughing and repeating “Lock him up,”](#) to supporters yelling “Soros” at an event on October 26th.

The definition of propaganda is information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

The White House and its advisors have openly stated they are using [the caravan for political purposes](#). As *The Washington Post* [reported](#), [Trump] tweeted that the caravan was an “assault on our country at our Southern Border.” Then, Thursday night in Montana, he told cheering supporters, “This will be an election of Kavanaugh, the caravan, law and order and common sense. ... Remember it’s gonna be an election of the caravan.”

It is incumbent on all of us to know and call out when our leaders are pushing propaganda for [their own callous, political gain](#). And we rely on—and call on—a free and independent media to not give propaganda a pass. The caravan should no longer be treated as a major news story—as was done last week—and it would only embolden this president’s lies to do so. Any mainstream outlet that covers this caravan devoid of the basic facts that it is nowhere near the border and is mainly comprised of women and children is aiding President Trump’s political agenda and contributing to a climate of xenophobia and intolerance.