



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

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### Rising Risk of Confrontation Around the Abortion Debate

*The debate over abortion rights will likely become more heated, and potentially more confrontational, as anti-abortion adherents challenge abortion service providers locally and nationally.* Anti-abortion activists may be emboldened by new restrictive abortion legislation enacted in multiple states and a more conservative Supreme Court. While activists have conducted peaceful protests in recent years, abortion providers report an uptick in intimidation and threatening behavior nationwide and in the District.

- Since 2016, abortion providers have reported an increase in incidents of vandalism, trespassing, hate mail/harassing phone calls, Internet harassment, and picketing, according to the National Abortion Federation. In recent years, some abortion opponents also have published online the personal identifiable information of doctors who provide abortion services, an intimidation tactic known as “doxing.”
- According to the 2018 National Clinic Violence Survey, anti-abortion violence and the threat of violence against family planning and abortion clinics remains “dangerously high.” Eighty-eight percent of clinics that participated in the survey stated they experienced some form of anti-abortion activity, some as frequent as once-a-week
- Abortion opponents have led “Red Rose Rescues” at abortion clinics nationwide and in the District. Activists enter the facilities, provide red roses to patients, try to dissuade them from receiving abortion services—activists then refuse to leave the premises. In the District, federal judges have dismissed or dropped trespassing charges for “Red Rose Rescues” four times. In September, a group will go on trial for using this tactic in March at a clinic in Northwest DC.

#### Anti-Abortion Violence

Three arrests in August raise concerns that abortion providers could be the targets of a new wave of violence. On August 21, a 20-year-old man in Tennessee was arrested for posting threats online to “shoot up” a Planned Parenthood facility in DC. On August 16, a 19-year-old Chicago resident was charged with threatening online to “slaughter or murder any doctor, visitor, or patient” at an abortion clinic. On August 7, Justin Olsen, an 18-year-old in Ohio, was arrested for threatening to assault a federal law enforcement officer; investigators found online references threatening a Planned Parenthood facility.



Justin Olsen (Source: New York Times)

Historically, 1977-1988 was the high point of violence against family planning and abortion clinics when extremists nationwide assassinated doctors and bombed clinics and other facilities.

For immediate threats or emergencies call 911. Report suspicious activity to the [iWatchDC](#) platform.