



March 21, 2017

The Honorable Trent Franks
2435 Rayburn House Office Building
Independence and S. Capitol St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver, II
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Independence and S. Capitol St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
241 Cannon House Office Building
1st and Independence Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
1514 Longworth House Office Building
Independence and New Jersey Avenues, S.E.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Franks, Cleaver, Eshoo, and Fortenberry:

We write to express deep concern over the Caucus on International Religious Freedom and the Caucus on Religious Minorities in the Middle East's screening of the Clarion Project's "Faithkeepers" on Capitol Hill on March 22nd, 2017. The Clarion Project, which is also co-hosting the event, is known for spreading misinformation and hate.

There is no doubt religious minorities in the Middle East – especially Christians – are being persecuted. We are committed to protecting vulnerable minorities but we take exception to the effort being promoted by the Clarion Project since they are about spreading fear, not affording anyone protection. Their work promotes an anti-Muslim agenda. Creating hatred or fear of Islam is not the way to protect other faith communities.

This is not surprising since they received millions of dollars from the Donors Capital Fund, a known funding source behind "anti-Muslim fear mongers¹." The Clarion Project has been described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an "anti-Muslim" group, known for making and distributing anti-Muslim films that compare Islam to Nazism.² These include "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West" which was distributed to millions of households in swing states during the 2008 presidential election.

¹ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2011/08/26/new-report-details-funding-sources-behind-anti-muslim-fearmongers>

² <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/10/20/anti-muslim-national-security-expert-ryan-mauro-address-homeland-security-professionals>

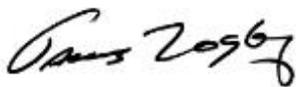
Advisory board members include several notorious “misinformation experts” including Frank Gaffney and Daniel Pipes.³

Our country is currently experiencing an increase in hate crimes. The most recent reports from the Federal Bureau of Investigation show an alarming 67% increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes from 2014 to 2015, leading to a 6% increase in hate crimes across the board.⁴ We believe the increase in hate crimes targeting minority communities can be tied to the influx in inflammatory rhetoric in public discourse. At a time when our country is experiencing this striking increase in hate, we expect our elected officials to take strong stands against bigotry and uphold civil discourse, not align themselves with it.

The screening of a film by the noted-hate group Clarion Project on Capitol Hill risks validating bigotry, misinformation, and hate, and puts communities at risk. This does a disservice to your constituents of all backgrounds. We respectfully ask that you take a strong stance against bigotry of all forms and work to uphold American ideals that are threatened by groups like the Clarion Project.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you in your capacity as co-chairs to host an event that features organizations that support religious plurality and the protection of religious minority communities – whether they be Christian, Yazidi, Sunni, Shia or others.

Sincerely,



James Zogby
President



Maya Berry
Executive Director

³ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/reports/2011/08/26/10165/fear-inc/>

⁴ https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/topic-pages/incidentsandoffenses_final.pdf