

August 14, 2014

Lisa O. Monaco
Assistant to the President for Homeland Security
and Counterterrorism
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ms. Monaco:

The undersigned organizations urge you to take immediate action to end the use of anti-Muslim training materials and address anti-Muslim conduct exhibited by agencies throughout the federal government. This problem has persisted for many years, and recent revelations in a July 9, 2014 article in *The Intercept* underscore the urgent need to take concrete action to eliminate bias from our nation's law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Those revelations include a template memorandum reportedly used to justify intelligence surveillance that has a reference to "Mohammed Raghead" as the placeholder target. They also include an FBI official's admission that he specifically sought surveillance on American Muslim targets.

We appreciate that the White House has recently decried "the use of racial or ethnic stereotypes, slurs, or other similar language by employees" as "both unacceptable and inconsistent with the country's core values." The White House directed the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to undertake an assessment of Intelligence Community policies, training standards or directives that promote diversity and tolerance, and, as necessary, make any recommendations, changes, or additional reforms. We are dismayed, however, that after an initial review the DNI has instead chosen only to expand multicultural and diversity sensitivity training and re-establish an external advisory board on diversity and inclusion. These measures may be necessary, but they do not directly address the persistent problem of law enforcement and intelligence agencies using anti-Muslim training materials and engaging in discriminatory law enforcement.

The Intercept article highlights the latest, troubling example of virulently anti-Muslim trainings and discriminatory conduct by government officials. For example, John Guandolo, a former FBI counterterrorism official who believes CIA Director John Brennan is a "closet Muslim" and the FBI has been taken over by the Muslim Brotherhood, has trained agents that "mainstream" Muslims should be treated as supporters of terrorism. Guandolo's definition of activities that merit surveillance encompasses so many basic practices of Islam that it would include virtually every Muslim in the United States and activities protected by the First Amendment. Similarly, FBI analyst William Gawthrop has instructed law enforcement officials that Islam is a "Death Star" that must be destroyed.

In addition, the disturbing template memo referenced in *The Intercept* article that uses a religious slur as the placeholder for the name of surveillance targets was used by an untold number of law enforcement and/or intelligence agents and officials, sending the

message that targeting a community based on racial, ethnic and religious stereotypes is appropriate. Furthermore, the “raghead” slur encompasses people of other faiths who are also impacted by bigoted trainings and practices.

As you know, the problems with biased conduct and training materials extend far beyond those referenced in *The Intercept* article. The breadth of the problem and its prevalence across government agencies was explained in a letter addressed to your predecessor, Counterterrorism Advisor John Brennan, and signed by more than 100 organizations (see attachment “A”). Mr. Brennan responded by affirming that biased training “runs completely counter to our values” and “our commitment to strong partnerships with communities across the country.”

As far back as November 2011, Mr. Brennan agreed the White House would create an interagency task force to create review processes and build rigorous standards to ensure training material is not biased.¹ However, there has been no accounting to the public about any task force or assessment of the pervasiveness of these biased training materials and whether the agents and officials involved were subject to any disciplinary action. Moreover, although there was reportedly a review and purge of a limited portion of training materials by the FBI, no commitment has been made to review intelligence products that mirror these biased training materials. We also have received no assurance that law enforcement and other government employees who participated in these trainings have been retrained. We are concerned that these biased trainings and intelligence products continue to drive racial and religious profiling at every stage of the intelligence-gathering process.

Without executive branch actions, including those we recommend below, trainings that perpetuate gross stereotypes and false information about Islam and Muslims will continue to proliferate at the state and local level. For example, John Guandolo, the same former federal official who was responsible for such training materials at the FBI, has conducted trainings at county sheriffs’ offices, including Culpeper County, Virginia, Rutherford County, Tennessee, and Franklin County, Ohio. It is our understanding that those trainings are open to federal law enforcement officers.

The use of anti-Muslim trainers and materials is not only highly offensive, disparaging the faith of millions of Americans, but leads to biased policing that targets individuals and communities based on religion, not evidence of wrongdoing. Government training materials that include religious epithets also foster fear and suspicion of American Muslims among law enforcement and the general public, increasing discrimination, bullying, harassment, and anti-Muslim violence.

The Obama administration made a commitment almost three years ago to address

¹ Nov. 3, 2011 Letter from John O. Brennan to Farhana Khera (see attachment “B”).

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this issue that Mr. Brennan described as “critical to ensuring the security of the United States,”² yet we have seen no significant change. The time is now for the administration to go beyond mere assurances of reform and take concrete, corrective action to make these trainings and materials consistent with our American values and protect Americans from real threats. We urge you to promptly undertake the following steps:

- (1) Audit all federal law enforcement and intelligence gathering training and educational materials to identify and remove information that is factually incorrect or exhibits bias against any race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin;
- (2) Implement a mandatory retraining program for all federal, state and local law enforcement officials who have been subjected to biased and discriminatory trainings provided by the federal government or with federal funds;
- (3) Pursue disciplinary action against those agents and officials engaging in discriminatory conduct and responsible for these training materials;
- (4) Require federal agencies that provide law enforcement and homeland security funding to state and local governments to condition such funding on carrying out training or otherwise using federal funds in a manner that upholds our nation’s commitment to equal treatment and equal justice under the law and barring the use of trainers or materials that exhibit bias against any race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent and profoundly important problem.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American Center for Outreach
American Civil Liberties Union
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Arab American Action Network (AAAN)
Arab American Association of New York
Arab American Institute
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

² *Id.*

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Auburn Seminary
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for National Security Studies
Center for New Community
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago
Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR)
Defending Dissent Foundation
DRUM - South Asian Organizing Center
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Emerge USA
Franciscan Action Network
Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Georgia Association of Muslim Lawyers (GAML)
Human Rights Campaign
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
Imam Hussain Islamic Center
Interfaith Alliance
Islamic Information Center of America
Islamic Networks Group (ING)
Jews Against Islamophobia
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
Lambda Legal
Majlis Ash-Shura (Islamic Leadership Council) of Metropolitan NY
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Michigan Muslim Bar Association (MMBA)
Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC)
Military Religious Freedom Foundation
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA)
Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC)
Muslim American Community Association
Muslim Bar Association of New York
Muslim Bar Association of Southern California
Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)
Muslim Peace Coalition USA
Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
NAACP New York State Conference
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

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National Lawyers Guild

National Muslim Law Students Association

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association (NJMLA)

OneAmerica

Progressive Congress

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

The Hindu Temple Society of North America

The Interfaith Center of New York

The International Institute of Tolerance

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

The National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

The Queens Federation of Churches

The Sikh Coalition

Transgender Law Center

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

UMMA Community Clinic

United Sikhs

Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA)

Women in Islam Inc.