



American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

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Statement for the record
On behalf of
The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Before
The Homeland Security Committee
United States House of Representatives

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement for the record concerning the March 10, 2011, hearing scheduled by Representative Peter T. King (R-NY), Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. Representative King has titled the hearing: “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response.”

ADC is the largest grassroots American Arab civil rights and civil liberties organizations; it is non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-partisan, with members in every State of the United States. As we represent people of every faith, we are submitting this statement out of deep concern for the harm that the narrowly framed hearing will cause, in large measure due to Representative King’s unfair portrayal and singling out of the American Muslim community.

The hearing as titled suggests that radicalization is exclusively confined within one community – a patently false characterization; such myopic framework of a complex subject stigmatizes an entire community of one particular faith, contrary to American constitutional principles. Both the title of the hearing and the messaging emanating from Chairman King undermine the efforts of years of cooperation and building of trust between the law enforcement community and the American Muslim Community.

For example, Representative King has been quoted as stating that Muslims are “an enemy living amongst us.” Such prejudicial statements undermine any impartiality by him in chairing or conducting such hearings, and indicate a predisposition of bias toward Americans who happen to be of the Muslim faith – notwithstanding his recent remarks that the overwhelming majority of Muslims are outstanding Americans.

It is unfortunate that the Committee is missing an opportunity of not using its jurisdiction to conduct a hearing about the domestic threats that our country is currently facing within all sectors of our society. By selectively targeting the community of the Muslim faith, the Committee will engender continual anti-Muslim bigotry. The Committee could have undertaken steps to recommend the establishment of an impartial commission to study the issue of radicalization in America across our societal makeup, and better define its root causes and how best to prevent them. Instead, Representative King chose a path that inflames passions against a minority faith, with the potential for increase in discrimination and hate crimes against those of that faith.

It has been documented, time and again, and as stated by the highest level of our law enforcement officials, that American Muslims have been extensively engaged in dialogue and cooperating with our country’s law enforcement community. Such facts cannot and should not be conveniently discarded by unsubstantiated, prejudicial allegations. See the report of February 2, 2011, by The Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security (a consortium of Duke University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and RTI International), at http://sanford.duke.edu/centers/tcths/about/news_release20110202.php.



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As the Honorable Eric Holder, the Attorney General of the United States, stated at our National Convention on June 4, 2010, it is time to end the “us versus them.” Such characterization is “inconsistent with what America is all about” and it is intolerable. “In this Nation, our many faiths, origins and appearances must bind us together, not break us apart. In this Nation, the document that sets forth the supreme law of the land – our Constitution – is meant to empower, not exclude. And in this Nation, security and liberty are – at their best – partners, not enemies, in ensuring safety and opportunity for all....Regardless of our faith, regardless of our backgrounds, we are all Americans.”

Accordingly, the overarching tone of the hearing is one of divisiveness and not one of American unity. Time and again, throughout our American history, a particular ethnic or religious group has sadly, and subsequently regrettably, been a scapegoat for societal problems. Such misplaced blame was not right then and it is not right now – it is NOT the American way. American Muslims are part of the beautiful American mosaic; their contributions, dedication and service to our country go back to the birth of our Nation.

March 8, 2011