



**Council on American-Islamic Relations**

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April 9, 2019

Chairman Jerrold Nadler  
U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Doug Collins  
U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary  
2142 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: CAIR STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD ON THE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY HEARING ON “HATE CRIMES AND THE RISE OF WHITE NATIONALISM”**

Dear Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record for today’s hearing on hate crimes and the rise of white nationalism.

Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives took a major step forward in combating bigotry by adopting a resolution condemning anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Sadly, the terroristic Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shootings that took place just one week later were a terrifying reminder of the consequences of not adequately combatting the growing threat of white nationalism, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant ideologies.

CAIR recognizes that today’s hearing is being held in part as a response to this deadly attack and hopes that this discussion will be the first in a series of congressional hearings to expose the threat of white nationalism and Islamophobic hate and to explore what lawmakers and federal and state agencies can do to stem the rise of this growing menace.

While there are many substantive issues to discuss, we will focus this brief statement on the need for U.S. policymakers to recognize that what took place in Christchurch is not an isolated incident. The United States and Canada are presently in the middle of a series of ongoing terrorist attacks and mass shootings carried out by white supremacists targeting minority religious communities.

Some of these documented white nationalist terrorist attacks include:

- **August 5, 2012:** Oak Creek, Wisconsin mass shooting at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin by white nationalist Wade Michael Page who took the lives of six worshipers and wounded four others.
- **June 17, 2015:** Charleston, South Carolina mass shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church by white supremacist Dylann Roof who took the lives of

nine African American worshippers. CAIR notes that it was the first national organization to label the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church attack a terrorist attack.

- **January 29, 2017:** Quebec City, Quebec, Canada mass shooting at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City by Islamophobe and white nationalist Alexandre Bissonnette who took the lives of six worshippers and injured nineteen others.
- **August 2017:** Bloomington, Minnesota an explosion from a bomb targeting the Dar Al-Farooq Islamic Center damaged the house of Islamic worship. The Islamophobe perpetrators of the attack Michael B. Hari, Michael McWhorter and Joe Morris were arrested in March 2018 by the FBI.
- **October 27, 2018:** Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania mass shooting at the Jewish Tree of Life – Or L'Simcha Congregation by anti-Semite, Islamophobe and white Nationalist Robert Gregory Bowers that took the lives of eleven Jewish American worshippers and injured seven others.

Moreover, CAIR has documented several planned terrorist attacks or threats targeting American Muslim communities and houses of worship that were either reported to, investigated or thwarted by law enforcement. These planned Islamophobic terrorist attacks and threats include:

- **2012-13:** Albany, New York, FBI agents thwarted white nationalists and Islamophobes Glendon Scott Crawford and accomplice Eric Feight who planned to build a weapon of mass destruction that would emit lethal levels of radiation intended to kill Muslims in the state of New York.
- **2015:** Tennessee, FBI agents thwarted Islamophobe Robert Doggart who planned to commit arson and carry out a mass shooting targeting the Muslim community of Islamberg in Hancock, New York.
- **2016:** Garden City, Kansas, FBI agents thwarted white nationalist militiamen and Islamophobes Patrick Stein, Gavin Wright and Curtis Allen who planned to use weapons of mass destruction to massacre Muslim refugees living in an apartment complex.
- **September 2018:** Texas, CAIR called on the FBI to investigate an apparent plot to kill people at an Islamic convention in Houston. The alleged plot was revealed in a leaked “Texas Patriot Network” audio chat by armed members of Islamophobic, white nationalist and racist militias rallying against the Islamic event and coordinating plans to physically attack counter-protesters. One person on the chat told another: "Those mother\*\*\*\*ers are dead meat. . . I got a position on them now." The audio also references a CAIR staffer who approached the armed militia members to take video and photographs. At present, the FBI has not pressed any charges or commented on the matter.
- **January 2019:** Delaware County, New York, local police thwarted Islamophobes Andrew Crysel, Vincent Vetromile and Brian Colaneri for possessing explosive devices and planning to attack the Muslim community of Islamberg in Hancock, New York.
- **March 2019:** The Hilton Woodland Hills hotel, site of the Greater Los Angeles Area office of CAIR (CAIR-LA) banquet held on March 23, received an anonymous phone call from a woman calling from a blocked number threatening to bomb the hotel over allowing CAIR-LA to host Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-MN), one of the first two American Muslim women elected to Congress. The caller left a message saying: “What would you do if I told you your hotel was going to be bombed. That is exactly what’s going to happen if you allow the likes of Ilhan Omar into your hotel. She is a danger to

American society and your hotel. You are not to allow her foot into there if you value your own safety. Do not allow her in there. Cancel the event.”

- **April 2019:** New York, FBI agents thwarted white nationalists and Islamophobes Thomas Alonzo Bolin and Austin Witkowski for planning over Facebook to carry out a Christchurch, New Zealand inspired attack against Muslims in Baltimore.
- **April 2019:** FBI working with Capitol Police thwarted Islamophobe Patrick Carlineo for threatening to assault and kill Representative Omar. Carlineo called Rep. Omar’s Washington, D.C. office and told a staff member: “Do you work for the Muslim Brotherhood? Why are your working for her, she’s a (expletive) terrorist. I’ll put a bullet in her (expletive) skull.” Carlineo informed FBI agents that he is a “patriot,” that he loves President Trump and hates radical Muslims in government, according to the criminal complaint.

In December 2015, CAIR’s national office, headquartered two blocks from Congress, was forced to evacuate after receiving a letter containing white powder and a note that read in part “Die a painful death, Muslims.” Authorities testing the substance later found it to be harmless.

In 2017, CAIR documented 144 anti-mosque incidents, including harassment, intimidation, and hate crimes. CAIR is still in the process of documenting all anti-mosque incidents for 2018. CAIR recognizes that law enforcement in recent years have thwarted several similar planned attacks targeting Jewish and African American communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

CAIR urges the House Judiciary Committee and all the U.S. government to confront and admit the reality that we as a nation are in the middle of an epidemic of white nationalist and Islamophobic attacks targeting minority religious communities. Congress and the U.S. government must address this wave of violence with the full force of its Constitutional powers in consultation with impacted communities.

CAIR calls out those in Congress and in the U.S. government who would deny that an epidemic of white nationalist and Islamophobic violence exists or is at least a growing threat. President Trump’s recent denial that white nationalism is not a rising threat following the Christchurch shooting is not just shameful, it endangers the safety of all Americans.

CAIR appreciates that some in the Trump Administration disagree with the president on this issue, like FBI Director Christopher Wray, who last week before the House Appropriations Committee testified that white nationalist violent extremism poses a “significant” and “pervasive” threat to the country.

Likewise, CAIR calls out those politicians who spread hateful ideologies by propagating bigoted and anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy objectives. President Donald Trump’s own Islamophobic statements as a presidential candidate and then as president have legitimized and mainstreamed anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States and abroad. Words matter.

When Trump makes statements like "I think Islam hates us" and calls for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," he inspires others to hate. The Christchurch shooter's manifesto praises President Trump as a symbol of "white identity and common purpose." CAIR believes that there is a connection between Trump's anti-Muslim statements and the Christchurch shooter finding inspiration in Trump's rhetoric.

Similarly, for the past several years CAIR has documented a wave of "TRUMP" and "MAGA" related vandalism on Muslim houses of worship.

CAIR trusts that today's hearing is a good first step to confronting hate crimes and the continued rise of white nationalism and Islamophobia. We urge all congressional committees of relevant jurisdiction to continue exploring the issue of increasing hatred in the U.S. We also ask that the House Judiciary Committee hold a follow-up hearing that includes panelists from federal law enforcement agencies.

Finally, we hope that this hearing will yield valuable lessons to prevent future hate crimes and strategies to discourage the spread of hate in the U.S.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nihad Awad", is written in a cursive style.

Nihad Awad  
CAIR National Executive Director