

TESTIMONY before the

Subcommittee on Oversight, Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts

Of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary

On

“Willful Blindness: Consequences of Agency Efforts To Deemphasize Radical Islam in Combating  
Terrorism.”

By

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## I. Introduction

Thank you Chairman Cruz and members of the Subcommittee on Oversight, Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts of the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary for holding today's hearing on "*Willful Blindness: Consequences of Agency Efforts To Deemphasize Radical Islam in Combating Terrorism.*" I am Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser, President and founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD) based in Phoenix, Arizona. I am here today, taking time away from family and work during this last week of what is our holiest month of Ramadan, a time of fasting and deep atonement, because I could not feel more strongly that our current national and agency direction in combating Islamist inspired terrorism is deeply flawed and profoundly dangerous. As a devout Muslim who loves my faith, and loves my nation, the deemphasis of "radical Islam" is the greatest obstacle to both national harmony and national security.

Wholesale denial of the truth by many in our government and political establishment has actually emboldened extremists on both sides of this debate: both radical Islamists and anti-Muslim fascists.

Neither Islam nor Muslims are not monolithic and should not be treated as such by anyone – much less our government and media. Please understand it is as equally foolhardy in counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization work to refuse to acknowledge the role of political Islam in the threat as it is to villainize the whole of Islam and all Muslims. The majority of Americans are smart enough to understand that to say the House of "Islam has no problems" is just as problematic as declaring that "Islam, and all Muslims, are *the problem*".

I am, however, first and foremost here to tell you that our national security policy of refusing to say that "Islam currently *has* a problem" is dangerous. This surrender, which began just after 9-11, has chartered a course towards failure. It has hamstrung our homeland security heroes from addressing any of the most central Islamist precursors of militant Islamists. If the agency actually emphasized the central role of radical Islam and its attendant ideologies, it would shift the entire axis of our agency apparatus toward once and for all beginning to actually address, expose, and engage the root cause of the theocratic strains of Islam (or Islamism) which would begin to make us safer.

The only way to right this deep misdirection is actually very simple. All we need to do is abandon the mantra of "Countering Violent Extremism" and replace it with "Countering Violent Islamism". I will show you today that change can only happen with an acknowledgement of the central role of "Radical Islam" or "Islamism" the radicalization process and in the root cause of the domestic and global security threat to the United States and the West.

## II. Background on AIFD, The Muslim Reform Movement and Centrality of Important Terminology

Our American Islamic Forum for Democracy (AIFD) was founded in 2003 in the wake of the devastating and horrific attacks of September 11. For us it is a very personal mission, a calling, to leave our American Muslim children a legacy that their faith is based in the unalienable right to liberty and to teach them that the principles that founded America do not contradict their faith but strengthen it. AIFD's founding principle is that we as Muslims are able to best practice our faith in a society like the United States that guarantees the rights of every individual blind to faith with no governmental intermediary stepping

2 Testimony of Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser: U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight, Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts, *Willful Blindness: Consequences of Agency Efforts To Deemphasize Radical Islam in Combating Terrorism*

between the individual and the creator to interpret the will of God. Because of this, our mission is *to advocate for the principles of the Constitution of the United States of America, liberty and freedom through the separation of mosque and state*. We believe that this mission from within the "House of Islam" is the only way to inoculate Muslim youth and young adults against radicalization. The "Liberty narrative" is the only effective counter to the "Islamist narrative"

AIFD is the most prominent American Muslim organization directly confronting the ideologies of political Islam and openly countering the common belief that the Muslim faith is inextricably rooted to the concept of the Islamic state (Islamism). AIFD's mission is derived from a love for America and a love of our faith of Islam. The theocratic "Islamic" regimes of the Middle East and some Muslim majority nations use their interpretations of Islam and 'shar'ia' as a way to control Muslim populations, not to glorify God as they portend. We believe as did the founding fathers that the purest practice of faith is one in which Muslims have complete freedom to accept or reject any of the tenants or laws of the faith no different than we enjoy as Americans in this Constitutional republic. We constantly ask that Americans not just observe what is happening inside the House of Islam but that you take the sides of the reformers, dissidents, and secularists against the theocratic Islamists.

AIFD was founded on the premise that the root cause of Islamist terrorism is the ideology of political Islam and a belief in the preference for and supremacy of an Islamic state. Terrorism is but a means to that end. Most Islamist terror is driven by the desire of Islamists to drive the influence of the west (the ideas of liberty) out of the Muslim consciousness and Muslim majority societies. The underlying theocratic philosophy of Islamism is what western society should fear most. With almost a quarter of the world's population Muslim, American security will never come without an understanding and winning out of the ideas of liberty by Muslims and an understanding of the harm of political Islam by non-Muslims.

We work to engage Muslim youth and empower them with the independence to question the ideas of imams, clerics, and so many "tribal" leaders of Muslim communities unwilling to look toward reform and modernity. We empower Muslim youth to have the confidence to take personal intellectual ownership of their own interpretation of Islam, the Qur'an, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), and shariah (Islamic jurisprudence) and separate mosque and state. We work to advocate for the ideas of gender equality, genuine religious pluralism, and an unwavering preference of the secular state and a secular law over the Islamic state among other central ideas in modernity.

Our mission is on the front lines of what is probably the most essential and yet contentious debate of the 21st century. So it should be easy to understand why many Muslims may agree with our mission to separate mosque and state and marginalize political Islam, but yet want to remain private and out of the public eye as supporters.

AIFD most recently convened and helped launch the Muslim Reform Movement (MRM) in December 2015 in Washington D.C.<sup>1</sup> The Muslim Reform Movement is a coalition of over 15 Western Muslim Leaders (from the U.S., Canada, and Europe) whose goal is to actively fight radical Islam by confronting the idea of Islamism at its roots. The MRM has written a Declaration for Muslim Reform, a living document which was presented to all Islamic organizations, leaders and mosques across the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Press Conference of the Launch of the Muslim Reform Movement, National Press Club, December 4, 2015: : <https://youtu.be/xlAnr8bllr8>

in 2016 (Appendix 1), with hopes of using its principles as a firewall to clearly separate radical Islamists from Muslims who believe in universal human rights.

Not one iota of this work is possible in an environment where government agencies and the American public writ large are unwilling to understand and engage Muslim groups domestically and abroad on their diverse interpretations of core terms, ideas, and movements. The attempts and policies of the Obama administration and its advisors to obstruct the use of terms which are central to the precursor characteristics of radicalized Muslims is willfully blind, negligent, and leaves us bare against the threat of radical Islamism.

As an American Muslim who loves my faith and my country, I ask that any official and unofficial U.S. government moratorium on the use and understanding of the following terms and ideologies be immediately lifted. Let there at least be an ongoing public debate about these terms. Let our analysts at least have the freedom to dare to understand the role of these theo-political ideas in the conveyor belt of radicalization. The suppression and censorship of these words and concepts by the U.S. Government in the public discourse on Muslim radicalization is simply un-American. It is surrender, and it is in fact dangerous. Our founding fathers were able to navigate a war of ideas against theocracy. I'm sure that we can do it again in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is absurd to assert that since these terms are theo-political they are outside the domain of government all the while a militant domestic and global enemy is spreading forms of these ideas virally. I ask that beginning with my testimony, the following terms and ideas become part of the fair domain of our security agencies. Our agency analysts and government experts are smart enough and fair enough to know that each of these terms carries with it a diverse set of interpretations from within the 'House of Islam' and that suppressing this essential debate hands the debate to our Islamist enemies. I submit the following terms and proposed definitions for the record in hopes that other government agencies follow suit and rather than engaging Islamist apologists who obstruct and deny, that they instead begin engaging honest Muslims who are ready to confront the global radical movements that use them:

- a. **Islam:** the faith tradition, its practice, and scriptures identified by over 1.6 billion Muslims in the world
- b. **Islamism and Islamists:** the theo-political movement (Islamism) or party and its adherents (Islamists) who seek to establish Islamic states governed by shar'ia law in Muslim majority nations and institutions.
- c. **Shar'ia:** Islamic theological jurisprudence as interpreted by Muslim jurists and clerics and practiced by Muslims.
- d. **Jihad:** a holy war or armed struggle against unbelievers or enemies of an Islamic state. It can also mean spiritual struggle within oneself against sin.
- e. **Wahhabism:** a Sunni Islamist movement based in a puritanical literalism and intolerance of any other interpretations or faith. A revivalist movement originated in the Najd of Arabia in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ibn Abdul Wahhab. It is the dominant strain of thought empowered by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Its ideas are central to the Salafi-jihadism of groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

- f. **Salafism:** Sunni Islamic fundamentalism which attempts to return normative Muslim practices to the literal ways of the Prophet Muhammad in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Salaf literally means “companions of the Prophet”. It is often synonymous with Wahhabism but is far more ubiquitous. Salafism, like Wahhabism deplors invention.
- g. **Caliphate and Caliphism:** the theo-political ideology or desire by Islamists to re-establish the caliphate, a globally unified Islamic governance of Islamic states which are led by a single caliph.
- h. **Ummah:** the entire Muslim Faith community, but it can also mean the Islamic state
- i. **Islamic reform, *Ijtihad*:** critical interpretation of scripture (exegesis) and Islamic jurisprudence in the light of modernity.
- j. **Takfir:** the rejection (‘excommunication’) of another Muslim from the faith community. The declaration of another Muslim as an apostate.

To think that these words, these concepts and others are off limits, censored to our agencies is just incredulous considering the growing threat we face today from violent Islamism. Violent manifestations of each of these ideas is a natural byproduct of the intolerant non-violent underbelly of their beliefs. Any security apparatus unable or unwilling to connect the dots between the non-violent and violent manifestations of these ideologies is leaving us bare and will continue to miss the signs of radicalization.

The latest recommendations from the Homeland Security Advisory Council ignorantly state the exact opposite recommending that only ‘plain American English words’ be used and these terms be avoided.<sup>2</sup>

I hope and pray that my testimony today will open your eyes to how central the engagement of honest terminology is in demarcating who are our genuine allies from those who are or are working with our enemies abroad and the insurgents within.

Personally, I will add that we are rendered entirely unarmed in our work at AIFD and in the Muslim Reform Movement in America, Canada, and Europe if we cannot engage our own faith community within the House of Islam on these ideas and if agencies cannot look at precursor ideologies to “violent Islamism”.<sup>3</sup> All of the Muslim leaders in our Muslim Reform Movement would agree that looking just at “violent extremism” is too nebulous, nonspecific and will result over and over in agency blinders to the attacks we have seen including the radical Islamist attacks at Fort Hood, Boston Marathon, Chattanooga, San Bernardino, and now Orlando.

*We cannot hold security agencies accountable to precursor ideologies and warning signs when those precursors are part of a continuum our agencies and media censor from the entire discourse.*

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<sup>2</sup> [Interim Report and Recommendations of the Homeland Security Advisory Council Countering Violent Extremism \(CVE\) Subcommittee of the US Department of Homeland Security](#). June 2016.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.muslimreformmovement.org>

### III. Deemphasizing Radical Islam kept Homeland Security and the American Public from seeing the common precursors to many recent attacks on our Homeland

Just last week, a new report from the Homeland Security Advisory Council urged the rejection of Islamic terms such as “jihad” and “shar'ia” in programs aimed at countering terrorist radicalization among American youth while also calling for an additional \$100 million in funding with private sector cooperation.<sup>4 5</sup> In the section on terminology, the report calls for rejecting use of an “us versus them” mentality by shunning Islamic language in CVE programs. It further recommends that DHS “reject religiously charged terminology and problematic positioning by using plain meaning American English”. Yet without the ability to target any of the precursor Islamist ideologies being identified it will continue to be a grotesquely inefficient whack-a-mole program centered simply on the all too vague symptom of “violent extremism” (CVE) rather than the disease of “violent Islamism” (CVI).

The following attacks have been comprehensively reviewed elsewhere. It is not my goal in this testimony to provide a comprehensive analysis of each; rather, I will highlight an obvious common denominator to illustrate how a shift in our agency and public discourse center of gravity from “countering violent extremism” (CVE) to “countering violent Islamism” (CVI) would go a long ways towards making us safer and giving meaning to “see something, say something”. In every one of these cases, it is abundantly obvious that had security agencies been honed in on the continuum of radical Islam or ‘violent Islamism’, had they as a matter of policy been held accountable for monitoring the non-violent precursor of Islamism (political Islam) which precedes ‘violent Islamism’ then these massacres may have been far more likely prevented.

#### a. Fort Hood Massacre of November 5, 2009<sup>6</sup>:

- i. Nidal Hasan’s case contains within it a microcosm of the entire domestic and global threat we face from jihadism and Islamism. If Americans cannot be kept safe from a Muslim terrorist inside an Army fort in Texas, they cannot be kept safe anywhere. During his time at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, before he was transferred to Ft. Hood, Major Hasan was exceedingly vocal in his opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He openly opposed those wars based on his religious views. But nothing was done. Two years before the Ft. Hood attack, Major Hasan gave a PowerPoint presentation at Walter Reed titled “Why the War on Terror Is a War on Islam.” But nothing was done. Some of his fellow officers complained about him to their superiors. But nothing was done. The PowerPoint contained statements from Hasan such as, “It’s getting harder and harder for Muslims in the service to morally justify being in a military that seems constantly engaged against fellow Muslims.” It contained violent excerpts from the Quran. And Hasan’s PowerPoint concluded with a quote from Osama bin Laden: “We

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<sup>4</sup> Gertz, Bill. DHS [Report Calls for Rejecting Terms ‘Jihad’, ‘Sharia’](#). The Washington Free Beacon. June 17, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Interim Report and Recommendations of the Homeland Security Advisory Council Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Subcommittee of the US Department of Homeland Security. June 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Jasser, M. Zuhdi and Leibsohn, Seth. [The West’s Denial at Fort Hood](#). National Review. August 28, 2013 (Accessed June 26, 2016).

love death more than you love life.” The following year, a group of fellow Army physicians met to ask themselves if they thought Hasan might be “psychotic.” “Everybody felt that if you were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, you would not want Nidal Hasan in your foxhole,” said one. But nothing was done . . . except to transfer Hasan to Ft. Hood.

- ii. And just as Hasan didn’t keep quiet at Walter Reed, neither did he hold his tongue at Ft. Hood. Hasan’s record at Ft. Hood includes telling his medical supervisor there that “she was an infidel who would be ‘ripped to shreds’ and ‘burn in hell’ because she was not Muslim.” But nothing was done. Nidal Hasan made personal business cards; they mentioned no affiliation with the United States military but underneath his name on the cards, listed his profession as “SOA,” or “Soldier of Allah.” But nothing was done. And, finally, Hasan was in frequent e-mail contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical Muslim cleric who, even then, had been implicated in at least two other terrorist plots in America and had since fled to Yemen. But nothing was done. Indeed, taking all of this into account, it is difficult to imagine just what more Nidal Hasan could have done to broadcast his lethal views and intentions. According to an L.A. Times report, documents indicate that “months before the Ft. Hood shooting . . . [Hasan’s] military supervisors praised his unique interest in Islam’s impact on soldiers . . . repeatedly recommending him for promotion.” But all of this was a prelude to the Ft. Hood attack.
- iii. Since then, insult has been added to injury and lethality. After the slaughter, the chief of staff of the Army was asked about Muslims in the military and said, “Our diversity, not only in our army, but in our country, is a strength. And as horrific as this tragedy was, if our diversity becomes a casualty, I think that’s worse.” The Army’s top officer put “diversity” on a higher moral plane than innocent life. If we needed the faintest clue as to why Hasan kept being promoted and passed along, here it was: The politically correct ethic in the Army was one where any perceived threat against ethnic diversity in our military would be treated as worse than a threat against our troops, even on our homeland. Who would have thought such a postmodern view would take root in our nation’s military? But it has.
- iv. Even the Pentagon’s after-action report gave support to this politically correct, multicultural triumph of ethics. In the 86 pages of the “Lessons from Fort Hood,” not once does the name Nidal Hasan get mentioned.<sup>7</sup> Instead, he is referred to indeterminately, as “a gunman” — just like any other random perpetrator of homicide. But Hasan’s name is not the most glaringly absent name, phrase, or term in the report. The word “Islam” appears once, and its appearance comes only in a buried endnote, in the title of one of many scholarly papers. The word “Muslim” appears nowhere in the report. Nor does the word “jihad.”

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<sup>7</sup> [Protecting the Force: Lessons from Fort Hood](#): Report of the DOD Independent Review. Secretary of Defense Dr. Robert M. Gates et.al. January 2010. (Accessed June 26, 2016)

- v. Most of this has now been forgotten, just as most of Hasan’s trial and the import of it is being ignored. But what happened will happen again and again in America until we get this right. Our military personnel, especially Muslims in uniform, operate at the ground zero of the ideological conflict between allegiance to America and allegiance to the advancement and defense of Islamism worldwide. Along with an understanding of the terror and treason committed by Hasan should come a better understanding of the global conflict between political Islam and modernity playing out not only here at home but on the streets of Egypt and Syria, and across the Arab world.

**b. Chattanooga Recruiting Center Massacre of July 16, 2015:**

- i. Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez killed five marines and injured several others in what was a typical militant Islamist act of war inspired by the separatist ideology of Islamism. According to SITE Intelligence Group, a July 13, 2015 post state that “life is short and bitter” and that Muslims should not let “the opportunity to submit to Allah ...pass you by”. In an entry on “Understanding Islam” he referred to the Prophet Muhammad’s companions nation that *“almost every one of them was a political leader or an army general. Every one of them fought Jihad for the sake of Allah. We ask Allah to make us follow their path. To give us a complete understanding of the message of Islam, and the strength the live by this knowledge, and to know what role we need to play to establish Islam in the world”* These posts were only a few days prior to his attack upon the recruiting center but an agency following “Islamist” separatist movements would have picked up on his “jihad” and “need to establish Islam”.
- ii. His father was on the FBI terrorist watch list for an unspecified period of time on suspicion of donating money to an organization suspected of being a terrorist front.<sup>8</sup> The milieu of ideas and affiliations was clearly very Islamist and would have been on the radar of an agency following “violent Islamism” and its Islamist and jihadist precursors. James Kitfield described “Tennessee as the capital of American Jihad” for Politico noting that the first jihadist attack after 9-11 was committed by Carlos Bledsoe aka Abdulhakim Mujahid Mohammed.<sup>9</sup> On June 1, 2009, Mohammed opened fire on a Little Rock Arkansas military recruiting office killing one service member and wounding another.

**c. Other acts of terror on our Homeland with illustrative Islamist precursors**

- i. **The Boston marathon bombing** Islamist attack of April 13, 2013 committed by the Tsarnaev brothers was also rife with Islamist and jihadist warning signs that were ignored and should have been seen.<sup>10</sup> Attorney General Michael Mukasey

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<sup>8</sup> Arutz Sheva Staff. [Father of Tennessee Shooter was on Terrorist List](#). Israel National News. July 17, 2015

<sup>9</sup> Kitfield, James. [Tennessee is the Capital of American Jihad](#). Politico Magazine. July 23, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> [Boston: FBI admits missed warning signs over Tamerlan](#). The Scotsman. April 23, 2013.



proclaimed “Make no mistake it was Jihad.”<sup>11</sup> Our agencies were hamstrung by no radar for Islamism or jihadism.

- ii. **The San Bernardino massacre** was executed by a Jihadi couple Farook and Tafsheen Malik. The axis of “violent extremism” left them off the radar. Asra Nomani, a co-founder of the Muslim Reform Movement, points out that their social media footprint is rife with Salafi-jihadi connections including most notably that Tafsheen had studied under Dr. Farhat of the Al-Huda International Salafi-jihadi (Taliban sympathetic) school based in Islamabad Pakistan. Nomani notes that “In the conveyor belt of radicalization, conservative Salafi doctrine is too often a gateway drug to violence—or what French political scientist Gilles Kepel coined as “Salafi jihadism”.<sup>12</sup> The Quilliam Foundation, a Muslim counter-radicalization think tank in London, UK and co-founders of our Muslim Reform Movement published a report in 2013 titled, “It’s Salafi-Jihadist Insurgency, Stupid!” (Appendix 3)<sup>13</sup>
- iii. And last as we are still putting the pieces of the June 12, 2016 Orlando Pulse Night Club Islamist massacre together which left 49 dead and 53 injured, Omar Mateen’s declaration of allegiance to ISIS and its head, al-Baghdadi during his 9-1-1 call proves its Islamist separatist jihadist nature. He further told the FBI negotiator during calls that he was using the same vest as that used in France and he wanted “to tell America to stop bombing Syria and Iraq and that is why he was ‘out here right now’.”<sup>14</sup> The fact that the Obama administration’s reflex response was to redact the 9-1-1 call of any religious references speaks volumes to the obstacles engrained in the executive branch to confronting the real problem. Later it was revealed that Mateen’s father was sympathetic to the Taliban and had a YouTube channel where he seemed to pretend or believe he was the President of Afghanistan. The fact that a gay night club was attacked is also central to the ideologies of political Islam (Islamism) and its persecution of minorities and dissidents. Violent homophobia is preceded by non-violent homophobia just like violent Islamism is preceded by non-violent Islamism. Again, it is appearing that all of the Islamist precursors within him and around him were ignored prior to Mateen becoming weaponized as a militant jihadist.

#### IV. **Cognitive Dissonance: the need for the truth and honesty from our government and media on Radical Isla**

- a. **Islam has a problem or just a PR problem?** This attempt by the executive branch to “protect the image of Islam” is actually making government agencies appear dishonest and dismissive to reform-minded Muslims who would be otherwise ready to take on the reality of the radical narrative of militant jihadists. Reformists like those of us at the

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<sup>11</sup> Mukasey, Michael B. [Make No Mistake, It was Jihad](#). Wall Street Journal. April 21, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Nomani, Asra. [How the Saudis Churn out ‘Jihad Inc.’](#) The Daily Beast. January 4, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> [It’s Salafi-Jihadist Insurgency, Stupid! A policy briefing](#). Quilliam Foundation. January 28, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> [Publicly released](#) FBI News release from Tamp Field Office of phone call transcripts. June 20, 2016

Muslim Reform Movement see that the Islamist insurgents are at war with us and yet our own government is telling us by denying the role of radical Islam to effectively sit down and be quiet with no need to fight back in this war of ideas within the House of Islam. In fact the avoidance of a discourse on Islam does not leave the government neutral. It effectively hands the argument to the predominant power structure of the domestic and global Muslim faith community—the suffocating influence of ‘petro-Islam, the Wahhabi Islam of Saudi Arabia and the Islamist movement of the Muslim Brotherhood based out of Egypt and Qatar.

- b. **Denial fuels bigotry rather than quelling it:** If the reason for routinely publicly engaging Muslim leaders after acts of Islamist terror against Americans is simply to quell the fear of Americans, I will contend that the denial and obfuscation of the administration and the Muslims they engage does the exact opposite. Enabling the deep denial of the need for American Muslims to address the root causes of Islamist inspired terrorism and its separatism actually fuels a growing fear of Muslims and Islam due to the administration’s choice for avoidance over transparency. Pew polling demonstrates that American feelings about Muslims is “cooler” than any other faith group scoring a 40 out of 100.<sup>15</sup> In fact, there is nothing that would do more to melt away anti-Muslim bigotry to the extent that it exists than for Americans to see Muslims step away from denial and actually engaging and confronting the Jihad with their own jihad for liberty and against theocracy. We should be calling for a jihad against jihad rather than shielding Muslims and Americans from the tough love that they need.
- c. **Bad advice:** The predominant Muslim advisors to the U.S. Government are obviously sympathetic to non-violent Islamism and demand that the U.S. see the problem through the lens of violent extremism only. I will address some case examples below. Conversely it is also a fact that as long as our government and public discourse continues to deemphasize the role of Islam this policy avoidance behavior will be a natural attraction for Islamist sympathizers (radicalizers) and a natural repellent for genuine reformers (counter-radicalizers) who seek to modernize interpretations of Islam against the theocrats.
- d. **Bipartisan blinders and false assumptions:** Both the Bush administration and the Obama administration have thus far erroneously felt that giving the radical Islamists air time for their Islamic theological verbiage will lend them credibility. From the time of Attorney General Gonzales, onward there have been significant attempts by the Department of Justice to control the lexicon used to describe radical Islamists, with repeated recommendations to avoid any religiously charged terminology. The assumption that radical Islamists need our air time in order to brand themselves is false and it is more absurd to assume that their identity and branding can be defeated by ignoring it. In fact it requires the opposite—honest exposure, engagement, and marginalization. In fact the suppression of the truth of their Islamist identity is an obstacle to a whole host of policies and engagements which would be the beginning of their defeat.

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<sup>15</sup> [How Americans Feel About Religious Groups: Jews, Catholics and Evangelicals rated warmly, Atheists and Muslims more Coldly](#). Pew Research Center:Religion and Public Life. July 16, 2014.

- e. **The power of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Lobby:** The OIC is the proverbial elephant in the room. The constant refrain from the Obama administration that the United States should not “declare war against 1.6 billion Muslims and their governments” is related to intimidation by the OIC sadly while ignoring the plight of dissidents in their nations. First, make no mistake. Across the Middle East and Muslim majority world, many leaders, scholars, and pundits call these individuals and their acts exactly what they call themselves- Islamists and jihadists. They know that they cannot publicly disengage the attendant Islamic theocratic platform of the political movements of Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood or the Khomeinists. These political movements and the Islamist identity of states like the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Islamic Republic of Pakistan or the Wahhabism of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the underbelly inspiring the militant movements like ISIS, Hamas, Al Qaeda, and Hizballah. However those Islamist governments exploit the militancy of jihadists in order to dictate the ruling form of Islam. It is imperative that the United States not be beholden to the dangerous narrative of the 56 member nations of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) regarding root cause of the Islamist threat. These countries, and their OIC which is essentially a “neo-caliphate” are cauldrons of the precursor Islamist ideas which fuel these movements and until they experience regime change towards democracy will never acknowledge the role of the ‘shar’ia state” in radicalizing Muslims.

*The OIC nations hide behind the façade of “countering violent extremism” all the while their governments fuel “violent Islamism”*

It is heartbreaking as an American Muslim to see my own American democratic government invoke OIC-like blasphemy law behaviors preventing the antiseptic of sunlight upon the Islamist ideas which radicalize our co-religionists. With our founders history in defeating theocracy, Americans are uniquely qualified to understand the battle against theocracy from within a faith. The best summary of the influence of the OIC upon our public discourse regarding Islam is Deborah Weiss’ monograph, “The Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Jihad on Free Speech”<sup>16</sup>

V. **How did we get here? Islamist Sympathizers within the administration:**

- a. DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson says that they use only the term ‘violent extremism’ and have “purged radical Islam from official vocabulary at the request of Muslim leaders.”<sup>17</sup> These unnamed Muslim leaders must be Islamists since not one of our coalition of anti-Islamist Muslim leaders of the Muslim Reform Movement were not included in any of the

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<sup>16</sup> Weiss, Deborah Esq. [The Organization of Islamic Cooperation’s Jihad on Free Speech](#). June 6, 2015

<sup>17</sup> FoxNews.com. [Homeland Secretary Johnson suggests term ‘violent extremism’ used at behest of Muslim leaders](#). February 22, 2015.

conversations that led to this policy and in fact Muslims publicly identified with DHS are known Islamist leaders.<sup>18</sup>

- b. The initial efforts to push the CVE narrative began with the DHS “CVE Working Group” which published its suggestions in Spring 2010.<sup>19</sup> Among some of the members of the working group were Dalia Mogahed, Mohamed Magid, Mohamed Elibiary, and Omar Alomari. A little review of their history will reveal how these Muslims likely influenced the CVE narrative to the benefit of Islamists.
  - i. **Dalia Mogahed** at the time was one of two Muslim members of Obama's faith advisory council. But just a few months prior to participating in the DHS CVE working group, Ms. Mogahed appeared on a British talk show sponsored by the extremist pro-Caliphate Islamist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir, where she explained that sharia law as practiced in the Islamic world are understood by the majority of Muslim women to represent “gender justice with sharia compliance”<sup>20</sup> Mogahed later came out and apologized for appearing on the program, but still doubled-down on her remarks in support of sharia law.<sup>21</sup> Her public positions have routinely denied even the existence of Islamism as an ideology while rejecting the voices and the need for reformers.
  - ii. **Mohamed Magid** at the time served as president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Magid's inclusion in the DHS CVE Working Group is remarkable for the fact that just a few years prior, as Newsweek reported, the Attorney General of the United States was having to cancel outreach meetings solely for the reason of the presence of Magid at the event, due to the fact that Justice Department prosecutors were then arguing in federal court that Magid's organization had been part of a conspiracy to fund the terrorist group, Hamas.<sup>22</sup> Several years prior, Magid was speaking at a forum at Georgetown University where he dismissed the ongoing genocide in Darfur in his native Sudan, saying the multiple reports of genocide were an “exaggeration”.<sup>23</sup> In March 2002, Magid's offices were raided as part of the Operation Greenquest investigation.<sup>24</sup> The reason Majid's offices were part of that raid was he was serving as an advisor to the Sterling Charitable Gift Fund, along with several prominent U.S. Muslim Brotherhood leaders<sup>25</sup> which a U.S. Customs agent testified in an affidavit was

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<sup>18</sup> Hoskinson, Charles. [Obama kept reform Muslims out of summit on extremism](#). Washington Examiner. February 21, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> [Countering Violent Extremism \(CVE\) Working Group](#). Homeland Security Advisory Council. Spring 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Gilligan, Andrew and Spillius Alex. [Barack Obama adviser says Shar'iah law is misunderstood](#). The Telegraph. Oct. 8, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Gilgoff, Dan. [White House Faith Advisor Defends Sharia Remarks](#). USNews.com. October 22, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Isikoff, Michael. [Justice Abruptly cancelled ‘Muslim Outreach Event’](#) Newsweek. August 7, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> IPT News. [The State Department’s Poor Choices of Muslim Outreach Emissaries](#). August 27, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmad, Ayesha. [Muslim community members encourage coalition-building](#). IslamOnline.net. March 26, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> [Program Circular](#) of the Charitable Gift Fund. Charitable Giving the Muslim Way.

being used for money laundering and terrorist financing.<sup>26</sup> One of the first actions of the Obama Justice Department in March 2009 was to shut down the intended prosecutions in that money laundering and tax evasion case. Surprisingly, TIME Magazine hailed Magid as "An American Imam" who helped the FBI fight terrorism by reporting suspected extremists. And yet the very day the TIME Magazine article appeared touting his cooperation with the FBI, Magid sent an open letter to his mosque congregation telling them that he, in fact, did not report any suspected extremists to the FBI as the reporter had claimed (presumably told by Magid himself).<sup>27</sup> Magid is a regular invitee to the annual Obama White House iftar celebrations, which curiously exclude any pro-liberty Muslim leaders, and yet his name has been left off the official published attendees list due to controversies surrounding the imam.<sup>28</sup> He has also been at the forefront of many anti-liberty initiatives, such as calling for using anti-discrimination laws to target critics of Islam and limiting free speech<sup>29</sup> and urging the dubious "purge" of FBI counter-terrorism training materials.<sup>30</sup>

- iii. **Mohamed Elibiary** was another member of the DHS CVE Working group and a former member of the DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council until he was removed for controversial comments such as saying that America was an Islamic country and bragging about the inevitability of a resurrected Islamic caliphate.<sup>31</sup>  
<sup>32</sup> <sup>33</sup> Those comments were cheered by ISIS recruiters on Twitter.<sup>34</sup> But even at the time of his appointment to the DHS Homeland Security Advisory Council his extremist views were already well known, such as his speech at a December 2004 event honoring the rabidly anti-American Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini, an event that the Dallas Morning News editorialized as a "disgrace". Elibiary was also an enthusiastic public supporter of the Holy Land Foundation, which was closed by a presidential executive order in December 2001 as a global terrorist financing organization that raised millions of dollars for Hamas. He admitted that the CEO of the Holy Land Foundation, Shukri Abu Baker, was a close friend and a mentor.<sup>35</sup> Following the convictions of the Holy Land Foundation executives in November

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<sup>26</sup> [Affidavit](#) in support of application for search warrant. US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

<sup>27</sup> [Letter](#) from Mohamed Majid to ADAMS All Dulles Area Muslim Society. Nov. 15, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Munro, Neil. [Obama's Iftar guest list omits controversial attendees](#). Daily Caller. August 11, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Munro, Neil. [Progressives, Islamists huddle at Justice Department](#). The Daily Caller. October 21, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> [ISNA and Nat.Orgs meet with FBI Dir. To Discuss Biased FBI Training Materials](#). ISNA website. March 8, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Kredo, Adam. [Controversial DHS Adviser Let Go amid allegations of Cover Up](#). Elibiary let go after extremist rhetoric, claims he improperly used classified docs. The Washington Free Beacon. September 15, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Kredo, Adam. [DHS adviser tweets: America 'an Islamic country'](#): controversial adviser sympathetic to Muslim Brotherhood. The Washington Free Beacon. November 1, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Kredo, Adam. [Senior DHS adviser: "Inevitable that Caliphate returns"](#) The Washington Free Beacon. June 16, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Kredo, Adam. [DHS Adviser's Anti-America tweets celebrated by ISIS Terrorists](#). Elibiary's controversial tweets coopted by terrorists. The Washington Free Beacon. June 19, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, Charles. [Homeland Security Advisor supports convicted terrorist fundraiser](#). The Daily Caller. October 6, 2013.

2009, Baker received a 65 year federal prison sentence.<sup>36</sup> Despite the convictions, Elibiary continues to attack the prosecution and the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court upholding the statute criminalizing the material support for terrorism.<sup>37</sup> Prior to his appointment by Janet Napolitano to his DHS position he publicly feuded with a Dallas Morning News editor in defense of hardline jihadist ideologue Sayyid Qutb, who the 9/11 Commission found was one of the most important influences in shaping Osama bin Laden's worldview. In Qutb's Islamic supremacist worldview, Elibiary finds "potential for a strong spiritual rebirth".<sup>38</sup> In 2010, Elibiary argued against trying to kill Al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, who has inspired several domestic terror attacks, including the Fort Hood killings, the attempted underwear bombing, and most recently, the Orlando terror attack.<sup>39</sup> After Awlaki was killed in a CIA drone strike in September 2011, Elibiary defended his position in an interview with the New York Times.<sup>40</sup>

- iv. **Omar Alomari:** is the former community engagement officer for the Ohio Department of Public Safety, from which he was fired in July 2010 for failing to disclose damaging information on his initial investigative background, including his prior employment as a high-ranking official in the Jordanian government. During the course of the investigation, Alomari lied to investigators about his past, prompting his termination.<sup>41</sup> In his position, Alomari authored official ODPS publications pushing bizarre conspiracy theories blaming U.S. policy for Islamic terrorism and encouraging engagement with extreme Islamist organizations. He even testified to the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment.<sup>42</sup> <sup>43</sup> When questioned by members of the Committee during the hearing about his conspiracy theories expounded in his ODPS publications, Alomari denied knowledge of them.
- v. **The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)** are two of those Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in America. They have typically generically renounced the use of terror and violence, but they have never taken a public position against the ideology of Political Islam (Islamism) and have as a matter of policy sought to obstruct any emphasis on the role of "radical Islam" and Islamism in radicalization. They both have also been some of the primary antagonists to efforts by law enforcement to understand and

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<sup>36</sup> [DOJ press release](#). Federal Judge hands down sentences In Holy Land Foundation Case. May 27, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Elibiary, Mohamed. [Verdict misinterprets 'material support'](#) Dallas Morning News. June 24, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Dreher, Rod. [Sayyid Qutb's purpose driven life](#). The Dallas Morning news. August 28, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Elibiary, Mohamed. [It's a mistake to assassinate Anwar al-Awlaki](#). FoxNews.com. April 16, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Shane, Scott. [The Lessons of Anwar al-Awlaki](#). New York Times magazine. August 27, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Ludlow, Randy. [Homeland Security Official Fired](#). The Columbus Dispatch. July 2, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> IPT News. [House Hearing on Extremism caters to Islamists](#). March 16, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Working with Communities to disrupt Terror Plots. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information sharing and terrorism risk assessment of the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives. March 17, 2010. [Serial No. 111-58](#).

mitigate the real stages of radicalization of Muslims in America. In 2007, under the umbrella of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC), CAIR-NY and MPAC-NY authored "Counterterrorism policy, MACLC's critique of the NYPD's report on homegrown radicalism."<sup>44</sup> The paper is a response to NYPD's report "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat."<sup>45</sup> In it, the organizations lay out their belief that, "The study of violent extremism, however, should decouple religion from terror to safeguard civil liberties on free speech and equal protection grounds as a matter of strong public policy." These Islamist groups then spearheaded a successful effort to purge the NYPD of their seminal counterterrorism documents endorsed by our American Islamic Leadership Coalition. As part of a settlement agreement the NYPD was forced to remove the publication from its database and got not to rely on it in the future.<sup>46</sup> I have attached the full report of the NYPD Report on "Radicalization in the West: the Homegrown Threat," because of the value it serves (Appendix 4). This effort by American Islamist groups is emblematic of the role they have played inside and outside of government in suppressing American understanding of the radical Islam. CAIR was revealed in the The Holy Land Foundation Trial as part of a network of Islamist organizations in the United States which grew out of American sympathizers with the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. The father of them all is the Muslim Students' Association and from it has sprouted a whole host of Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in America. Steven Merley describes the Muslim Brotherhood network in the United States in his monograph.<sup>47</sup>

- vi. **Salam al-Marayati**, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), is one of the closest Muslim advisers to the White House and is reportedly playing a crucial role in advising the Department of Homeland Security on its 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) policies. Marayati was one of the invited participants in President Obama's February 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.<sup>48</sup> During the event he met with Vice President Biden, even tweeting a picture out from their meeting.<sup>49</sup> <sup>50</sup> Marayati and other MPAC officials are also regular invitees to the Obama administration's White House Ramadan iftars.<sup>51</sup> In

<sup>44</sup> Counterterrorism Policy. [MACLC's Critique of the NYPD's Report on Homegrown Radicalism](#). Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition. CAIR-NY. Fauzia N. Ali, Sarah SAYEED, Aliya Latif. 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Silber, Mitchell D. And Bhatt, Arvin. [Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat](#). NYPD Intelligence Division. Police Department, City of New York. 2007. (Accessed June 26, 2016)

<sup>46</sup> Kredo, Adam. [Court Requires NYPD to Purge Docs on Terrorists Inside U.S.](#), The Washington Free Beacon. January 18, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Merley, Steven. *The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States*. Center on Islam, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World. Hudson Institute. 2009

<sup>48</sup> McCarthy, Andrew. C. [Find the "Countering Violent Extremism Summit" at the Intersection of Islamists and Leftists](#) National Review. February 19, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Kredo, Adam. [Muslim Leader who called Israel a 'suspect' after 9/11 meets with Biden at White House](#) The Washington Free Beacon. February 18, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Twitter. [MPAC February 17, 2015](#)

<sup>51</sup> 2010 White House Iftar. MPAC Website. [August 14, 2010](#). [August 11, 2011](#). [August 16, 2012](#). [June 23, 2015](#)

April 24, 2014, the White House and MPAC co-hosted a forum on American Muslim women.<sup>52</sup> MPAC is also identified by the FBI as one of its official "outreach" partners.<sup>53</sup> This has carried over into the Clinton campaign. On March 2016, Marayati participated in a roundtable event with Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton<sup>54</sup> Marayati's close association with the Hillary Clinton campaign is noteworthy in that during her husband's administration, Marayati had his nomination to a U.S. government terrorism commission withdrawn by House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt after criticism from former FBI Counterterrorism Section Chief Steven Pomerantz and Jewish groups who noted his open support for Hamas and Hezbollah<sup>55</sup> In a press release by the Journal for Counterterrorism and Security International documented MPAC and Marayati's longtime support for terrorism and public defense of terrorism suspects.<sup>56</sup> That support for extremism continues up until today. In 2010, former federal prosecutor Andrew McCarthy documented Marayati and MPAC's long history of extremism.<sup>57</sup> That same year, the Anti-Defamation League criticized MPAC for promoting antisemitic blood libels.<sup>58</sup> Particularly, a now-deleted post on the MPAC website claiming (falsely) that Israel harvested the organs of Palestinian prisoners.<sup>59</sup> In October 2012, the State Department has also selected Marayati to represent the United States as part of the official delegation to a 10-day OSCE human rights conference.<sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup> After protests by Jewish groups about his appointment to the delegation, a State Department spokesman defended Marayati, calling him "valued and highly credible".<sup>62</sup> Marayati was recently in the news noting his advisory role with the Obama administration in light of his comments on a Los Angeles radio station on the day of the 9/11 attacks blaming Israel.<sup>63</sup> An LA Times article published just a few weeks after the attacks reported on Marayati's comments, noting that Jewish groups were no longer considering him an outreach partner.

Perhaps most perplexing in light of his previous removal from the Clinton administration terrorism commission is the role that MPAC has played in directing the Obama administration to purge counter-terrorism training and trainers who

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<sup>52</sup> MPAC Website. [MPAC Partners with the White House Hosting Groundbreaking Women's Forum](#). April 17, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> FBI [Community Outreach Partners](#). (Accessed June 27, 2016)

<sup>54</sup> MPAC Website. [MPAC President Speaks at Roundtable with Hillary Clinton](#). March 25, 2016. [Video](#)

<sup>55</sup> Goodstein, Laurie. [Gephardt Bows to Jews' Ange over a Nominee](#). New York Times. July 9, 1999. Also see [CNN](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Does Salam al-Marayati Support Terrorism? You make the call](#). The Journal of Counter-terrorism and Security International. July 9, 1999

<sup>57</sup> McCarthy, Andrew. [MPAC History](#). National Review. August 7, 2012

<sup>58</sup> ADL New Blood Libel: Jews Accused of Harvesting Organs. [MPAC](#)

<sup>59</sup> MPAC Website. [Israel Admits Harvesting Palestinian organs](#). December 21, 2009

<sup>60</sup> Kredo, Adam. [Anti-Israel Advocate reps U.S. At Rights Conference.MPAC represents](#). The Washington Free Beacon. October 3, 2012

<sup>61</sup> MPAC Website. [MPAC represents US Government at human rights conference](#).

<sup>62</sup> Kredo, Adam. [State Department stands by their man](#). The Washington Free Beacon. October 4, 2012

<sup>63</sup> Hasson, Peter. [Muslim DHS Adviser Called Israel a 'Suspect' in 9-11](#). The Daily Caller. June 16, 2016.



discuss the role of radical Islam. To that end, Marayati penned an oped in the LA Times threatening that non-compliance by national security and law enforcement agencies to conduct such a "purge" endangered their relationship with the administration.<sup>64</sup> Marayati's organization signed their name to a letter to then-White House Counterterrorism czar John Brennan demanding such a purge.<sup>65</sup> One of the most telling events was the two-day DHS Muslim engagement meeting held in late January 2010 marking the escalation of engagement with U.S. Islamist groups.<sup>66</sup> The discussion between DHS officials on who to invite uncovered by a Judicial Watch FOIA request on the meeting shows that many of the attendees came from Muslim Brotherhood-aligned organizations.<sup>67</sup> The results of this meeting established the Obama administration's policy of embracing Islamist groups in favor of more reform-minded Islamic organizations. This policy was officially established in 2011 when DHS civil Rights and Civil Liberties circulated a memorandum, "Countering Violent Extremism Dos and Don'ts," that expressly warns local and national law enforcement agencies against using moderate Muslim "trainers who are self-professed 'Muslim reformers'" because they "may further an interest group agenda instead of delivering generally accepted, unbiased information."<sup>68</sup>

- vii. **CAIR** has been one of the most obvious beneficiaries of this embrace of Islamist groups has been the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). During the 2007-2008 Holy Land Foundation terrorism financing trial, CAIR was directly implicated by federal prosecutors in the Muslim Brotherhood's U.S. Palestine Committee conspiracy to provide "media, money and men" to Hamas.<sup>69</sup> During the course of the trial it was reported that CAIR, among other U.S. Islamic groups including ISNA, had been named unindicted co-conspirator in the case.<sup>70</sup> During the trial itself, FBI Special Agent Lara Burns testified under oath that CAIR was a front group for Hamas.<sup>71</sup> Just weeks after the jury in the Holy Land Foundation case found the defendants guilty on all counts, the FBI quietly announced a policy to not have any official contact with CAIR.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, CAIR challenged their unindicted co-conspirator status in the case, and when the judge's order on the matter was unsealed in 2010 it was revealed the judge in the case had determined

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<sup>64</sup> Marayati, Salam. [The Wrong Way to Fight Terrorism](#). LA Times. Octobers 19, 2011

<sup>65</sup> Muslim Advocates website. [Letter to DHS John Brennan on FBI use of biased experts and training materials](#)

<sup>66</sup> DHS Readout. [Readout of Secretary Napolitano's Meeting with Faith-Based and Community Leaders](#). January 28, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Judicial Watch Investigative Bulletin [DHS Secretary Napolitano and Controversial Islamic Community Leaders' Meeting Documents](#). December 9, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, Charles. [Homeland Security guidelines advise deference to pro-Shar'iah Muslim Supremacists](#). The Daily Caller. May 17, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> ACLU Files [USA V Holy Land Foundation CR No. 3:04-CR-240-P](#)

<sup>70</sup> Gerstein, Josh. [Islamic Groups named in Hamas Funding Case](#). NY Sun. June 4, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> [Crime Blog](#). FBI: CAIR is a front group, and Holy Land Foundation tapped Hamas clerics for fundraisers. Dallas Morning News. Oct. 7, 2008

<sup>72</sup> Abrams, Joseph. [FBI Cuts ties to CAIR following terror financing trial](#). FoxNews.com. January 30, 2009.

that there was "ample evidence" presented by federal prosecutors in the case tying CAIR and other Islamic groups to Hamas, but that the unindicted co-conspirator list should not have been made public. The federal appeals court declined to overrule the trial court judge's finding regarding CAIR, but ruled his order on the matter should be unsealed<sup>73</sup> The Obama administration, however, made efforts to repair the damage done to CAIR by the evidence in the Holy Land Foundation case. It was revealed several years later that one of the first acts of the Obama Justice Department to scuttle the planned second round of Holy Land Foundation prosecutions, which would have indicted several CAIR leaders, prompting congressional leaders to ask questions why the prosecutions had been stopped by DOJ political appointees.<sup>74</sup>

When the Obama administration began deleting the term "Islamist" from usage in defense and national security policy documents in favor of "violent extremists," CAIR publicly cheered the change.<sup>75</sup> <sup>76</sup> More recently it has tried to eliminate the use of "Islamist" in public discourse, particularly the media, which ends up conflating the hardcore political Islam ideology embraced by CAIR, ISNA and other more extreme Islamic groups from more mainstream interpretations.<sup>77</sup> CAIR took a lead in publicly attacking U.S. government counter-terrorism training, signing onto the October 2011 demand letter sent to the White House by 57 Islamic groups demanding a training "purge." During the investigation into the dozens of young Somali men who had left the Minneapolis area to travel to Somalia to fight with the Al-Shabaab terror group, friends and relatives of the missing men publicly accused CAIR of interfering in the investigation and protested CAIR's attempts to silence family members from asking questions about how their loved ones had been recruited.<sup>78</sup>

Both CAIR and MPAC attacked me and other Muslim reformers including Asra Nomani and Qanta Ahmed in the prelude leading up to our testimony on Muslim Radicalization to the Homeland Security Committee of the House in March 2011. In a form of subtle takfirism, never dealing with the substance of our testimony, they cast the hearings which included only Muslim witnesses in the first panel for the Republicans as "Rep. Peter King's Anti-Muslim Congressional Hearings."<sup>79</sup>

The group also came under fire in January 2011 when one of its local affiliates circulated a poster ominously warning the Muslim community, "Don't talk to the

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<sup>73</sup> [Judge's ruling on Islamic Group made public](#) . Politico.com

<sup>74</sup> [Peter King questions decision not to prosecute CAIR](#). Politico

<sup>75</sup> [Terror Reviews avoid word "Islamist"](#). Washington Times. February 12, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> [End to Loaded Islamic terms welcomed](#).

<sup>77</sup> Hanchett, Ian. CAIR Comm Director: [Term "Islamists" used as pejorative](#). Breitbart.com Jan 19, 2015.

<sup>78</sup> [Somalis take to the street to protest group's actions](#). Star Tribune.com June 12, 2009

<sup>79</sup> [Rep. Peter King's Anti-Muslim Congressional Hearings](#). CAIR.com June 2012.

FBI." They predictably claimed that the poster had been "taken out of context."<sup>80</sup> Despite the open hostility from CAIR and in violation of stated FBI policy, several FBI field offices flagrantly violated the ban on official contact with CAIR a Justice Department Inspector General investigation found.<sup>81</sup> Members of Congress called for punishment for FBI officials who defied the CAIR official contact ban, which never came.<sup>82</sup> The Obama administration and top Democratic Party leaders also failed to follow the direction of the FBI to stay away from CAIR, with top CAIR officials directly implicated in the Holy Land Foundation case showing up at party fundraisers.<sup>83</sup> A senior White House official admitted that the administration had "hundreds" of meetings with CAIR despite the FBI official contact policy ban.<sup>84</sup> In November 2014, the United Arab Emirates named CAIR and another U.S. Islamic group, the Muslim American Society, as terrorist organizations as part of their ban on international Muslim Brotherhood groups.<sup>85</sup> The Obama administration immediately stepped up to say that they would work with the UAE to try to get both organizations de-listed.<sup>86</sup> The unashamed empowerment, embrace and rehabilitation of CAIR by the Obama administration in the face of their direct complicity in supporting terrorism as successfully argued by federal prosecutors in federal court has come at the expense of the influence of more mainstream Islamic organizations in shaping U.S. government counter-terrorism policies and community engagement.

## **VI. CONCLUSION: The way forward- shift the center of gravity domestically and globally from Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to Countering Violent Islamism (CVI)**

The importance of identifying the theo-political precursors of militant Islamists could not be more clear to our security and or domestic and global counter-terrorism strategy. Any attempt to purge the discourse of an understanding of the Islamist precursors is dishonest, empowers the Islamist movements domestically and marginalizes our greatest allies- reform minded anti-Islamist Muslims.

De-emphasizing radical Islam keeps our security agencies in the dark while Islamist precursor ideologies and warnings are ignored in the public. The deemphasis makes us far more vulnerable than we should be and it also is a primary obstacle to enabling the very reforms and reformers that would otherwise bring forth the end of radical Islamism. Every massacre from Fort Hood to Boston to Chattanooga to San Bernardino and now Orlando is fraught with lessons we ignore. We must end the cognitive dissonance

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<sup>80</sup> [Starnes, Todd. CAIR Says Poster Warning against helping FBI is Misinterpreted.](#) Foxnews.com. Jan. 13, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> [Review of FBI interactions with CAIR.](#) US Department of Justice. September 2013.

<sup>82</sup> [IPT News. Wolf Demands FBI Punish Agents for CAIR Contact.](#) Investigative Project on Terrorism. September 19, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> Munro, Neil. [Pelosi holds secret fundraiser with Islamists, Hamas-linked groups.](#) The Daily Caller. Nov. 2, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Munro, Neil. [Administration admits to 'hundreds' of meetings with jihad-linked group.](#) The Daily Caller. June 8, 2012.

<sup>85</sup> [UAE publishes list of terrorist organizations.](#) Gulf News. November 15, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> [US Govt pledges to work with CAIR, MAS on UAE Designation.](#) CAIR.com Dec. 22, 2014.

and be honest with Americans and treat our Muslim communities with a tough love. I give the following recommendations:

1. Transition immediately from a center of gravity on “Countering Violent Islamism” (CVE) to one centered on “Countering Violent Islamism” (CVI).
2. The US government and public discourse (academia, NGO’s, and media) must include a broad spectrum of ideologically diverse voices in the Muslim community. It is time to end the un-democratic ban on any theological terms and with that also end the marginalization of reform minded Muslims most notably the Muslim leaders of the Muslim Reform Movement.
3. It is time to stop engaging Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in government and media and recognize their misogynist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and anti-American problematic underpinnings. We must at least recognize that they are not the only voice for American Muslims. We must make women’s issue and freedom of freedom of conscience a litmus test. These groups, when pressed, will fail.
4. It is time to stop giving credence to the concerns of OIC dictatorships over their opinions about our word choices and counter-radicalization strategies. Our real allies abroad are the free thinkers in their prisons not in their palaces.
5. As uncomfortable as it may be to speak the language of the enemy, they do call themselves Islamists and effectively separate themselves from Muslims like me. We must identify them as Islamists and draw a clear line.
6. I ask that you re-open the investigation into CAIRs radical ties, and into their extensive network of foundations and poorly hidden branches.
7. I ask that you no longer fear offending by using these terms. Those oppressed by Islamism - including many Muslims - depend on your honesty. Homeland security depends upon your honesty in order for the American people to hold them accountable to the natural precursors of violent Islamism

Respectfully submitted,

M. Zuhdi Jasser, MD  
President, American Islamic Forum for Democracy  
June 26, 2016