

September 29, 2016

Ms. Vanita Gupta
Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
(via email)

Re: Request for Additional Measures to Deter Violence and Discrimination Directed against Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian Communities

Dear Ms. Gupta:

The undersigned groups are deeply grateful to the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division (Division) for your robust enforcement of civil rights laws to protect communities that have faced violence and discrimination since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. We write now to request that the Division amplify its ongoing efforts. In recent months, organizations that work closely with Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian communities have observed a marked increase in violence and discrimination. We anticipate that this disturbing trend will only accelerate in light of the recent horrific attacks in Minneapolis, Seaside Park, New Jersey and New York City.

As you know, our communities continually face hatred, violence, and discrimination in every facet of life. Whether we are in houses of worship or our own homes, pre-schools or colleges, in the subway or on an airplane, in the workplace or at a place of public accommodation, we face discriminatory treatment on the basis of our actual or perceived national origin, race, and religion. As the recent California State University, San Bernardino's Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism documented, we are in the midst of a surge in anti-Muslim hate crimes, which surpasses any increase in the fifteen years since the 9/11 attacks.¹ In fact, in just August and September, we learned of the murders of a Bangladeshi imam and his assistant in Queens; the fatal stabbing of a 60-year-old Muslim woman; the murder of an Arab Christian; and arson of the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce, Florida. This week, in the aftermath of the Minneapolis mall attack, an area restaurant displayed the sign, "Muslims Get Out."

Given the current climate, we believe that the Division's efforts can make a meaningful difference in stemming this tide of discrimination and violence against our communities. We write with the following suggestions for the Division to consider:

1. We request that the Division publicly acknowledge open investigations related to violence or discrimination against the Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian communities, and provide status updates. These messages can deter future

¹ Joe Nelson, *Cal State San Bernardino study shows hate crimes against American Muslims up 78%*, SAN BERNARDINO SUN, Sep. 19, 2016, goo.gl/xiOCKw.

violence and discrimination, as well as provide community members with the confidence to report future incidents to the relevant authorities.

2. We request that the Division work with its civil rights counterparts in other federal agencies to inform local officials, including police departments, mayors, major public-sector employers, and school superintendents about federal civil rights laws. These advisories would provide information about anti-discrimination laws and regulations related to Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian communities in particular, as well as identify best practices for how bias incidents should be addressed and prevented.
3. We request that U.S. Attorney's offices ensure that federal and local law enforcement agencies receive the resources and trainings necessary to accurately report and track hate incidents.
4. We request that the Division boost its outreach efforts to Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian organizations through your existing infrastructures that were created to address post 9/11 backlash² (coordinated by the Division) and hate violence³ (coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council), as well as through the efforts of the Community Relations Service, for the sole purposes of providing information about the scope of relevant federal antidiscrimination laws and to better understand the types of bias, harassment, and violence that communities face on a daily basis. We request that the Division ensure that these efforts are limited exclusively to civil rights outreach and enforcement, and not surveillance, investigation or prosecution of communities at any level or in any manner.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

² See <https://www.justice.gov/crt/combating-post-911-discriminatory-backlash-0> (last accessed on September 27, 2016)

³ See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/11/06/commemorating-fifth-anniversary-shepard-byrd-hate-crimes-act> (last accessed on September 27, 2016)

Muslim, Arab, South Asian and Sikh Community Organizations

American Center for Outreach
American Muslim Advisory Council (AMAC)
Arab American Association of New York (AAANY)
Arab Muslim American Federation (AMAF)
Chhaya CDC
Council of Peoples Organization, Inc
Council on Arab-Islamic Relations-Arizona
Council on Arab-Islamic Relations-New York
Council on Arab-Islamic Relations-New Jersey
Hillside Islamic Center
ILM Foundation
Islamic Center at New York University
Islamic Civic Association (iCivica)
KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers For Human Rights
Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA)
Muslim Bar Association of New York (MUBANY)
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Justice League
Muslims For Liberty
Muslim Political Club
Muslim Students Association National
MPower Change
National Network for Arab American Communities
Nueces Mosque
Texas Muslim Women's Foundation
Raksha, Inc
Satrang
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI)
South Asian Network
The Sikh Coalition

Ally Organizations

18MillionRising
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
African Services Committee
APIAVote Michigan
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Auburn Seminary
Causa Oregon
Cabrin Immigrant Services of NYC
Center for Community Change
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for New Community
Center for Popular Democracy
CLEAR (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility), CUNY School of Law
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Communities for Just Schools Fund
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Japanese American Citizens League
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Judson Memorial Church
Long Island Wins
Maine People's Alliance
Make the Road New York
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Mijente
Million Hoodies United
Mizna
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Partnership for New Americans
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
New York Immigration Coalition
OneAmerica
Peace Action of Staten Island
People's Action
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition

Presente.org
Promise Arizona
Reform Immigration For America (RIFA)
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Shoulder to Shoulder
Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice
The Revolutionary Love Project, University of Southern California ORL
United We Dream
United Voices for America
University United Methodist Church
Voces de la Frontera

cc: Megan H. Mack, Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Department of
Homeland Security
Paul Monteiro, U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service
Cecilia Munoz, Director, Domestic Policy Council, and Manar Waheed, Domestic
Policy Council
Doua Thor, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans and
Pacific Islanders