



DEFENDING DISSENT

foundation

8630 Fenton Street • Suite 524 • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 • 202-529-4225
info@defendingdissent.org • www.defendingdissent.org

**Founded in 1960
as the
National Committee
to Abolish HUAC**

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Statement of Sue Udry, Executive Director
For Immediate Release

The Defending Dissent Foundation is a 51 year-old civil liberties organization, working to protect and promote the right to dissent in the United States.

We are angry, but not surprised at the latest revelation of biased, ignorant training that relies on prejudice, stereotype and absolutely unfounded assertions about American Muslims and Islam. In spite of repeated calls by advocacy groups concerned about the trainings, our nation's domestic security agencies continue to rely on a private industry that peddles misleading, inflammatory and dangerous information about the nature of the terror threat. Although the FBI quickly issued disclaimers about the specific training session exposed by Wired.com, given the FBI's and the Department of Homeland Security's record, we are not satisfied. Not only must the FBI immediately review its counterterrorism training curriculum to ensure that all materials and trainers accurately identify terrorist threats rather than relying on inaccurate, biased and counter-productive materials that vilify Islam and Muslim-Americans, but Congress must step in and fully investigate existing programs to ensure that counterterrorism trainings are based on proven indicators of criminal activity rather than religion or ideology.

Trainings such as these undercut the efforts of local law enforcement to establish credible community policing programs that the Obama Administration claimed were at the center of his domestic counter-terrorism effort. They also give support to those in our public sphere who seek to demonize Islam. These advocates of repression have made headway in Congress, even adding language to the Intelligence Authorization bill to form a commission designed to push our intelligence agencies to focus on radical ideology rather than criminal activity.

Congress must also take a look at investigative practices in the field that have been influenced by hate-filled trainings. Are local, state and national police engaging in unconstitutional profiling and/or religious, ethnic and racial discrimination? Are police relying on religious practice and speech as a proxy for evidence of criminal intent? An Associated Press report on the NYPD's secret Intelligence Division that specifically targeted Muslims and Arabs indicates that the answer to those questions is a resounding 'yes'.

One has to wonder why, 10 years after the 9/11 attacks, the FBI and DHS continue to rely on political and religious ideology, rather than criminal activity as an indicator of a terrorist threat.

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Sue Udry
Executive Director

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Assistant to the Director

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*In Memory of
Frank Wilkinson,
Director Emeritus &
Chauncey Alexander,
President Emeritus,
and all who went before.*