

June 15, 2011

The Honorable Peter King  
U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security  
339 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman King:

The undersigned groups write to express our serious concern regarding the Committee on Homeland Security's upcoming hearing entitled, "The Threat of Muslim-American Radicalization in U.S. Prisons." We are concerned that this inquiry will foster continuing misimpressions about and hate and prejudice toward the American Muslim community. We note that there is no credible evidence or expert research that Muslim prisoners pose a unique or particular threat.

According to the witness list, there will be no officials called from the Federal Bureau of Prisons ("BOP") or the U.S. Department of Justice for this hearing. We strongly urge you to reconsider this omission. A representative from the Department or the BOP would be in the best position to testify about current conditions and potential threats in the prison system from a system-wide perspective. There are also academic and other experts who have conducted system-wide studies. We are concerned that instead the invited witnesses will focus on isolated instances of violent extremism by former or current inmates who are Muslim, without the proper context of the threat of recidivism and violent extremism by all former or current inmates, regardless of faith background.

Indeed, there are a number of problems in the U.S. prison system that are legitimate subjects of congressional inquiry, such as disparities in sentences for people of color, overcrowding and dangerous conditions of confinement, and the lack of sufficient rehabilitation and reentry programs to reduce prisoner recidivism. Instead of focusing on these issues, solutions to which will only strengthen our criminal justice system and ensure public safety, the upcoming hearing is divisive and distracts from both our country's national security concerns and challenges faced by our prison systems.

We urge the committee to rethink its decision to hold another hearing singling out a group of Americans based on their religious faith, and instead focus on serious examinations of the real threats to our national security.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Justice  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
American Muslim Voice Foundation  
Arab American Association of New York  
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)  
Arab Muslim American Federation  
Asian American Justice Center, a member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice  
Asian Law Alliance  
Association of Muslim American Lawyers

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Bay Area Association of Muslim Lawyers (BAAML)  
Center for Media and Democracy  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)  
Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC)  
Council of Islamic Organizations of Michigan (CIOM)  
Council on American Islamic Relations - New York (CAIR-NY)  
Counselors Helping (South) Asians, Inc. (CHAI)  
Defending Dissent Foundation  
Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM)  
EMERGE-USA  
Georgia Association of Muslim Lawyers  
Interfaith Alliance  
Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)  
Islamic Society of Greater Houston, Inc.  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Michigan Muslim Bar Association  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Bar Association of Chicago  
Muslim Bar Association of New York  
Muslim Bar Association of Southern California  
Muslim Consultative Network  
Muslim Lawyers Association of Houston, Inc.  
Muslim Legal Fund of America  
Muslim Peace Coalition USA  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)  
New England Muslim Bar Association  
New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association  
Northern California Islamic Council  
Ohio Muslim Bar Association  
People For the American Way  
Rights Working Group  
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
South Asian Network (SAN)  
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition  
The National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild  
The Sentencing Project  
The Sikh Coalition  
TrikoneNorthwest  
UNITED SIKHS  
Women In Islam, Inc.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson