



September 16, 2024

Statement for the Record
Muslim Public Affairs Council
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary
A Threat to Justice Everywhere: Stemming the Tide of Hate Crimes in America

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Graham, and distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this Statement for the Record on behalf of Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC).

Since 1988, MPAC has advocated for policies to advance American Muslims' civil liberties, defend freedom of speech and religion, and ensure the equitable application of our nation's greatest ideals of justice for all. In light of ongoing challenges faced by the American Muslim community, particularly concerning hate crimes and discrimination, we thank the Chairman for calling this hearing.

In recent years, there has been an increase in hate crimes targeting American Muslims, and it has increased significantly since October 7, 2023. These crimes range from verbal harassment and vandalism of mosques to violent assaults and, in some tragic cases, murder.

On October 14, just one week after October 7, 6-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume was killed after being stabbed 26 times at home in Plainfield Township, IL. His mother was strangled and repeatedly stabbed but survived the attack.

A month later, in November 2023, three Palestinian college students were shot in Burlington, Vermont, in what is being investigated as a potential hate crime. In April of this year, the Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers University was broken into and vandalized as the students prepared to celebrate the end of Ramadan.

In fact, from October 7, 2023, to November 4, 2023, CAIR's national headquarters and chapters received a staggering 1,283 requests for assistance and reports of bias, marking a 216 percent increase from the previous year. A recent Pew Research survey found that 70 percent of American Muslims expressed that they faced increased discrimination since October 7th.

These statistics likely underrepresent the true extent of the problem, given significant gaps in the reporting of hate crimes.



The impact on American Muslims is profound. Many families live with the fear of being targeted, whether at their local mosque or simply going about their daily lives. Children face bullying at school, while adults experience discrimination in the workplace and public spaces. These experiences not only harm individuals but also tear at the social fabric that binds us as a nation.

At this moment, we must ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be. Will we allow fear and intolerance to shape our society, or will we reaffirm our commitment to equality, justice, and mutual respect? The rise in hate crimes against American Muslims is not just an issue for one community—it is a challenge for all of us. By standing together and upholding the ideals of inclusion and respect, we can ensure that the United States returns to a place where everyone, regardless of their religious background, can feel safe and valued.

As United States Senators and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, you are uniquely positioned to create meaningful change. Given that, we at the Muslim Public Affairs Council strongly believe the following policy changes counter the rise in hate crimes against not just American Muslims but all communities who have borne the brunt of this evil.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Mandate Reporting of Hate Crimes:

- a. Attempts to improve hate crime reporting belie the underlying issue; reporting is not mandatory. Without a statutory requirement, that problem will persist.
 - i. Hate Crime tracking began with the 1990 Hate Crime Statistics Act, which was approved by unanimous consent by the Senate Judiciary Committee, and required the Attorney General to collect hate crimes data but did not require law enforcement to report it.
 - ii. We urge members of this Committee to introduce legislation that would make reporting a requirement and work to ensure it is signed into law this Congress.

Change the Way State and Local Enforcement are Incentivized to Report:

- b. Instead of providing additional resources for meeting metrics related to reporting, baseline funding must be contingent on reporting. The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must make funding contingent on reporting metrics and criteria.



2. Expanding Community Outreach

- a. Local law enforcement must create stronger programs to foster meaningful relationships between houses of worship to ensure best practices are shared. Congress must earmark funding for local Law Enforcement agencies through the Department of Justice (DOJ) to focus on community outreach and engagement to better create awareness around hate crimes reporting.

3. Training Law Enforcement on Bias-Motivated Crimes:

- a. Law enforcement officers often lack the training to properly identify and report hate crimes, which can result in incidents being misclassified as simple assaults or other crimes. Congress must provide funding to develop comprehensive training programs on how to identify, investigate, and report hate crimes to be administered to state, local, and federal law enforcement. This training should include culturally competent practices that respect the dignity of diverse communities and encourage victims to come forward.

4. Creating a Federal Hate Crime:

- a. A centralized federal hate crime data dashboard must be developed and made accessible to the public. This tool would allow for real-time tracking of hate crimes by location, type of offense, and target community, providing transparency and enabling both the public and policymakers to assess the scope of the problem. It could also facilitate data sharing between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

5. Holding Social Media Companies Accountable/Addressing Domestic Terrorism Online:

- a. There must be mechanisms put in place to hold social media platforms accountable for failing to prevent the spread of hate speech that incites real-world violence. A legal framework must be created to ensure that platforms that knowingly allow the spread of domestic terrorism content. The rise in hate crimes is closely linked to the spread of domestic terrorist ideologies particularly online, often facilitated through private chat rooms and encrypted messaging platforms. Congress must support initiatives that engage social media through public awareness campaigns. These efforts should involve collaboration with civil society organizations, including American Muslim groups.