



**MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL  
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

**Hearing on Hate Crimes and the Threat of Domestic Extremism**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS and HUMAN RIGHTS**

UNITED STATES SENATE  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2012

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Graham and members of the Subcommittee: We are honored to submit this statement for the record on behalf of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) regarding today's hearing on hate crimes and extremism. We commend the members of the Committee for holding today's hearing, "Hate Crimes and the Threat of Domestic Extremism."

MPAC is a faith based American institution working for the integration of Muslims into American pluralism. To that end, we actively strive to affect policy reforms that uphold core American values and preserve Constitutionally protected freedoms of all Americans. We have done extensive work on highlighting the rise of hate crimes and domestic extremism in America. Our position has always been and will continue to be that we are against any and all forms of division. The United States is built on inclusion, plurality and diversity; hate crimes and the actions of hate groups who seek to divide our nation affect all Americans. We urge Congress to follow your leadership and take increased measures to prevent, address and combat hate crimes domestic extremism in the U.S.

We thank you for holding this critical and timely hearing on hate crimes and domestic extremism. While it has been nearly three years since the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was signed in 2009, strengthening existing legal protections, hate crimes and hate groups continue to be a serious threat facing this country. Oak Creek, Aurora, and other recent incidents have brought attention to this serious issue. However, it is important to remember that these are not isolated incidents. In the past several weeks alone, numerous Islamic institutions, mosques and

community centers have been vandalized, shot at with paintball and high velocity rifles, attacked with an acid bomb and suspiciously burned down.

Hate crimes are a daily threat to society as a whole. Law enforcement officers and government institutions are in the direct line of fire when hate groups attack or sometimes specifically target institutions. MPAC is particularly concerned about many statistics recorded in the 2010 FBI Hate Crimes report which states that hate crimes against American Muslims have increased by 50% since 2009. Hate crimes are often underreported and the Bureau of Justice statistics has suggested that the number of actual hate crimes may be up to 15 times higher than what is reported.

Statistics and cases regarding hate groups and domestic violent extremism show that according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the number of hate groups in our nation has grown by over 60% since 2000. A broad range of communities are targeted by hate crimes: In 2010, according to the FBI, 47% of hate crimes were racially motivated, 20% were motivated by the victim's religion, 19% were based on sexual orientation and 13% were based on ethnicity or national origin. Hate crimes, hate groups and violent domestic extremism affect not only individuals but targeted communities as well. Targeting individuals and communities by hate groups sends the message that they do not belong in this country. Hate groups and violent domestic extremists threaten the safety of all Americans because of the violence of that is perpetrated and often occurs in the public sphere.

### **Impact of Government Actions**

Government actions and political discourse shape the public's perception of minority communities. These actions can ultimately fuel violence motivated by hate and can prevent government from pursuing actual threats posed by hate groups and domestic extremists.

Racial and religious profiling can be perpetuated by biased law enforcement actions based on perceptions of community members through discriminatory policing. When biased policing occurs, resources are diverted from investigating and policing actual threats, including hate and domestic extremist groups. Biased policing leads to diminishing trust of law enforcement work especially during times when assistance is needed when communities are faced with hate crimes.

More recently, bigoted rhetoric in the political discourse have come from statements made by elected officials premised on race/hatred toward certain religions and xenophobia. Elected and public officials have a responsibility to refrain from making such statements because of the visible positions that they hold and broad range of audiences that they reach.

## **Conclusion**

History has shown us the past efforts led by the highest levels of government have been pivotal setting a framework to combat hate crimes and domestic extremism. We are at a moment in history when the grave threat currently posed by hate groups to minority communities and all Americans, is imperative that policymakers take strong measures to prevent, document, investigate and combat hate crimes. Specifically, existing hate crimes legislation must be rigorously enforced. Hate crime data collection and reporting must be improved. We need to ensure robust and comprehensive implementation of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Further, Congress must allocate and prioritize federal funding for initiatives that prevent, investigate and combat hate crimes, hate groups and domestic extremism.

MPAC is heartened by the Subcommittee's leadership in holding this hearing and we are grateful for the opportunity to present our position on combatting hate crimes and domestic violent extremism.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express the views of the Muslim Public Affairs Council. We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue and discussion about these important issues.