



September 15, 2011

Cynthia A. Schnedar
Acting Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Room 4706
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Acting Inspector General Schnedar,

We are writing to request that you launch an immediate investigation into the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) use of grossly inaccurate, inflammatory, and highly offensive counterterrorism training materials about Muslims and Islam used to train its agents and other law enforcement. These materials malign and disparage an entire faith community and their religious practice, in flagrant violation of the Department of Justice’s (“DOJ”) mandate to “ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans” and our country’s fundamental values of religious freedom and pluralism.

As reported yesterday in *Wired* magazine,¹ the FBI is conducting counterterrorism training using materials that include woefully misinformed statements about Islam and bigoted stereotypes about Muslims. The training materials were developed by an analyst employed by the FBI and presumably reviewed and vetted by the FBI. The presentation included statements, such as:

- “Accommodation and compromise between [Islam and the West] are impermissible and fighting [for Muslims] is obligatory.”
- “There may not be a ‘radical’ threat as much as it is simply a normal assertion of the orthodox ideology . . . [t]he strategic themes animating these Islamic values are not fringe; they are main stream.”
- The Islamic practice of *zakat*, alms-giving, is characterized as a “funding mechanism for combat.”
- In a comparative line graph titled “Militancy Considerations,” the Torah, Bible, and Quran are charted on an axis showing a trajectory of the sacred texts from “violent” to “non-violent.” The Torah and Bible are graphed until 2010, reaching the zenith of “non-violent,” while the line for the Quran stops at 622 AD with a parenthetical that “this moderating process has not happened.”

¹ Spencer Ackerman, *FBI Teaches Agents: ‘Mainstream’ Muslims Are ‘Violent, Radical’*, *Wired*, September 15, 2011, available at <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/09/fbi-muslims-radical/>.

News of the FBI's biased training materials were first reported by *Wired* magazine in July 2011, when documents were disclosed in response to a FOIA request by civil rights organizations.² The materials, which were dated January 2009, referred to Islam as a religion that "transforms [a] country's culture into 7th-century Arabian ways." When FBI officials were asked about the materials, they stated that "[t]he presentation in question was a rudimentary version used for a limited time that has since been replaced." Administration officials questioned by Muslim Advocates about the materials in August of 2011 also stated that the materials were no longer in use. However, the latest documents released show that these briefings, including a presentation where the Prophet Muhammad was referred to as a "cult leader," took place as recently as March 21, 2011. Furthermore, Muslim community members recently participated in a meeting with FBI officials in Seattle in which inaccurate and offensive references to a Shia leader were made.³

In 2010, Muslim Advocates joined a coalition of concerned civic and civil rights organizations in a direct appeal to FBI Director Robert Mueller, raising concerns about biased trainings by the FBI, including employing trainers who are known for promulgating anti-Muslim rhetoric, and received no response.⁴ Similar efforts by members of Congress to investigate biased training and to stop the use of anti-Muslim trainers in government briefings have been unavailing. In a letter to the administration earlier this week, Senators Lieberman and Collins reiterated their call for the administration to stop the funding of anti-Muslim trainers who "spew[] inaccurate or even bigoted information to state and local law enforcement personnel, stigmatizing Muslim-Americans generally, and in effect, lending support to the false narrative that we are 'at war' with Islam."⁵ As one former FBI agent said, "biased police training can only result in biased policing."⁶

The gravity of this issue and the need for an investigation into the FBI's training of its agents and other law enforcement is long overdue. We respectfully request that your office undertakes an immediate investigation. We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Farhana Y. Khera
President & Executive Director
Muslim Advocates

² Spencer Ackerman, *FBI 'Islam 101' Guide Depicted Muslims as 7th-Century Simpletons*, *Wired*, July 27, 2011, available at <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/07/fbi-islam-101-guide/>.

³ Emily Heffter, *FBI Ends Up Offending Muslims at Outreach Workshop*, *Seattle Times*, September 10, 2011, available at http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2016171004_copworkshop11m.html.

⁴ Coalition letter to FBI Director Robert Mueller, August 2, 2010, available at www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/coalition_letter_to_FBI.pdf.

⁵ Ryan J. Reilly, *Lieberman, Collins: If Obama Won't Do Something About Anti-Muslim Counterterrorism Training, We Will*, September 12, 2011, available at http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/09/lieberman_collins_to_obama_if_you_dont_do_something_about_anti-muslim_counterterrorism_training_we_will.php?ref=fpc.

⁶ Ackerman, *supra* note 1.