

## Statement of 81 Civil, Human Rights, and Faith Based Groups

### Serious Concerns Regarding Harm to American Muslim Civil Society from Terrorism Designation

Media reports suggest that the Trump administration is considering designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. The undersigned coalition of organizations is deeply concerned that such a designation could lead to the stigmatization and targeting of American Muslim civil society, including non-profits, charities, religious organizations, and activists.

For several years, fringe anti-Muslim voices have called for the designation of the Brotherhood as a terrorist group, and framed American Muslim civil society and leaders as suspect or criminal through guilt by spurious association. We note that numerous scholars and national security and foreign policy experts from across the political spectrum have voiced concern regarding the validity of such a designation. We are particularly concerned about the effects of such a designation on American Muslim civil society, including non-citizens, refugees, and asylum seekers. Even without a formal designation, some have used false “six degrees of separation” accusations about the Muslim Brotherhood as a way to smear prominent Muslims, American Muslim civic and religious institutions, as well as a range of other people. Accusations from government officials can have the power to destroy reputations and chill lawful activity, including freedom of worship, association, expression, and charitable giving.

A designation would intensify this smear tactic. Indeed, many baseless accusations have already come from White House officials, as well as members of Congress. For example, Steve Bannon, the President’s Chief Strategist, has stated that his former news organization, Breitbart, has linked Tim Kaine, the 2016 Democratic nominee for vice president, to the Muslim Brotherhood. Witnesses called before Congress have, without evidence, claimed that the two American Muslim members of the House of Representatives, Keith Ellison and Andre Carson, supported terrorism because they attended Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) events.

Designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization could lead to a witch-hunt against Muslim civil society in the U.S. It could also open the door to the threat of legal action by the government against Muslims and civil society organizations by invoking overbroad and unfair laws and executive orders regarding designated entities. For example, individuals could be criminally prosecuted for providing support, services, resources, expert advice or assistance to the Muslim Brotherhood without any intent to support terrorist activity. A designation could also result in unconstitutional asset seizures and effective shut-downs of civil society and rights groups. Despite court rulings requiring probable cause and due process when the Treasury Department seizes Americans’ assets, the Department has not changed its internal regulations. The Department takes the view that it can block or freeze the assets of any individual or organization that is providing ‘financial, material, or technological support for, or financial services to,’ or is broadly ‘otherwise associated’ with a designated terrorist organization. There is no requirement of actual intent or knowledge of wrongdoing. The Treasury Department’s decision can rely on classified information the targeted person or organization cannot see or meaningfully refute, and a blocking order can be issued pending investigation into whether the target is somehow associated with a designated group.

As a result, the potential negative impact on American Muslim civil society of false and unjust smears and investigation resulting from a terrorism designation of the Muslim Brotherhood is high. It runs the serious risk of stifling religious and political freedom and the ability to assist and represent Muslim communities without fear of retaliation.

American Muslim organizations are part of the rich fabric of our democracy. They provide social services to their own communities and work with other faith-based organizations to provide support to others, such as those affected by natural disasters and mass shootings. They run mosques that give Muslims space to exercise their faith and promote inter-faith understanding and dialogue. Muslim civil rights groups work to protect communities against discriminatory laws and policies, a role that is critical at a time when the threat of anti-Muslim measures is extraordinarily high and hate crimes against those perceived as Muslim have soared.

We stand in support of American Muslims and more recent Muslim immigrants in all their rich diversity and against the discrimination, fear, and stigma that we are deeply concerned a terrorism designation is likely to increase.

### Signatories

Act Now Worcester  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Friends Service Committee  
Amnesty International USA  
Arlington Street Church - Social Action Committee (Boston)  
Asian American Psychological Association  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Asian Law Caucus  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Los Angeles  
Beloved Community Interfaith Network  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation  
Brennan Center for Justice  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for New Community  
Charity & Security Network  
Coalition to Preserve Human Dignity  
CODEPINK for Peace  
Codepink Women for Peace, Golden Gate Chapter  
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
Council on American-Islamic Relations - Arizona  
Emerge USA  
Every Voice  
First Church Cambridge Mission and Social Justice Committee  
First Church Unitarian, Littleton, MA  
Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network  
Harvard Islamic Society  
Human Rights Watch  
Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center  
Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness/Advocacy Network  
Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center  
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)  
Jewish Voice for Peace  
Maryland United for Peace and Justice  
Media Alliance

Montgomery County (MD) Civil Rights Coalition  
Montgomery County Muslims  
MoveOn.org  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)  
Muslim Justice League  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Lawyers Guild - Massachusetts Chapter  
National Network for Arab American Communities  
National Religious Campaign Against Torture  
New England Translators Association  
New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good  
Nicaragua Center for Community Action  
Old Cambridge Baptist Church  
People For the American Way  
Prince George's County Peace and Justice Coalition  
Project SALAM (Support And Legal Advocacy for Muslims)  
RootsAction.org  
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
St. Francis of Assisi Pax Christi  
St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Columbia, MD  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry  
The Aafia Foundation  
The Constitution Project  
Therapists for Peace & Justice  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Unitarian Universalist Mass Action Network  
Unitarian Universalist of York  
Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network (UUPLAN)  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
United For Peace and Justice  
United Voices for America  
Veterans for Peace  
Women's International League for Peace & Freedom  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Houston  
Women's Voices Women Vote Action Fund  
Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, Southern Methodist University  
Yemen Peace Project