



Muslim Community Network (MCN) statement for House Judiciary Hearing on Discrimination and the Civil Rights of the Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American Communities

February 25, 2022

Dear Members of The House Judiciary Committee,

First, we want to thank you for scheduling this important hearing focused on addressing the civil rights and liberties of Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American Communities. Founded in 2003, the Muslim Community Network ([MCN](#)) is NYC's go-to civil-society Muslim organization engaged in interfaith and civic-education work. MCN's mission, which emerged following the rise in Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims in the United States after September 11, 2001, is to shape the public's understanding of Islam and what it means to be Muslim in the United States through civic education, leadership development, and advocacy. MCN's main policy and advocacy priorities includes: **1) hate crime prevention work to collect data on anti-religious hate crimes against Muslim communities in NYC and inform anti-discrimination laws and policies; 2) diversity education to build bridges between the large Muslim-American population and other faith communities through speaker series and workshops at institutions such as schools, hospitals, government agencies, and private companies; and 3) raising awareness on and advocating for policies and issues impacting the Muslim community on the city, state, and federal level.**

As part of our hate crime prevention work, MCN created a **Hate Crime Prevention Survey** in 2019, that was distributed in schools, Mosques, and other institutions across New York City. The [survey](#) collected data on how Muslims experience hate crimes by asking for age, gender, race, ethnicity of survivors, and the location of the incident. Additionally, the survey asks survivors to indicate the degree or severity of the crime committed by asking survivors to list the types of crime or bias committed, and a narrative of the incident. Lastly, the survey allows survivors to make proposals that will inform advocacy for hate crime prevention. In MCN's survey of 116 Muslims in NYC, the [results](#) showed that:

- **42.24% experienced anti-religious hate crimes in the form of verbal abuse**
- **41.38% were harassed based on their religion and ethnicity**
- **23.28% experienced hate crimes in the form of dangerous threats**
- **20.69% experienced cyberbullying**
- **17.24% were victims of physical assault**
- **7.76% experienced damage to their property**

In addition to this alarming data about the many ways that hate crimes are experienced in our communities, the survey results also revealed that the majority of Muslims who experience hate crimes in NYC are young people from ages 10-18 years old. However, college-aged Muslims are also experiencing hate crimes. For example, on March 17, 2021, 21-year-old Hofstra University student, [Nafiah Ikram](#), spent 15 days in the hospital after the attacker threw acid on her face. Ikram suffered severe burns to her face, eyes, chest and arms, and may be permanently blind due to her contact lenses being burned into her eyes.

And while our work is primarily focused on NYC and the US, there is also a rise in hate crimes against Muslims in other countries as well. For example, just two weeks ago on February 9, 2021, [Hoda Al-Jamaa](#), a 17-year-old student at Otago Girls High in New Zealand, who wears hijab (head scarf) suffered a concussion and ended up in the hospital after she was brutally beaten and had her head scarf ripped off by three non-Muslim students. The attackers spewed racial, ethnic, and religious slurs including, “terrorists” and “Muslim b*tches” at her and her other Muslim friends.

In order to reduce the number of hate crimes experienced by young people, MCN along with a broad coalition of faith leaders, civic institutions, educators, and community activists proposed for the passage of [Resolution 1257](#), which called on the NYC Department of Education to include age-appropriate religious diversity courses in its curriculum and provide professional development training to educators in that area. We strongly urge members of this committee to also introduce and support legislation that condemns discrimination and bullying based on religion. Specifically, we join our colleagues in asking for the passage of the **Safe School Improvement Act** to mandate codes of conduct that prohibit bullying and harassment based on religion and all other protected categories. This will ensure the safety and protection of children of all ethnic backgrounds who practice different religions.

Without a doubt, now more than ever we need strong policy and legislation to immediately curtail any more devastating harm such as the incidents and statistics shared above. We join the numerous organizations, public servants, and elected officials who also strongly support the passage of both the **NO BAN Act** (H.R.1333 S.1891) and the **End Racial and Religious Profiling Act** (ERRPA Act H.R. 1280; S. 597). The **NO BAN Act** will require actual evidence of a threat before there can be any broad bans like the Muslim Ban. The **NO BAN Act** will help to ensure that future US presidents will not be permitted to ban individuals solely based on their religion. As you know, the **ERRPA Act** would prohibit federal, state, and local law enforcement from targeting a person based on actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation without trustworthy information that is relevant to linking a person to a crime.

In addition to implementing the **ERRPA Act** and the **NO BAN Act**, we encourage the federal government to include grassroots Muslim organizations as part of organizations receiving funding to support the arrival of Muslim refugees. On November 9, 2022, MCN hosted a stakeholder meeting with over **30 Muslim Civil Society** organizations and national and international organizations such as the International Rescue Committee and Catholic Charities. The convening allowed for an exchange of cultural competency training on how to provide services to the large number of Afghan Muslim refugees fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan, the CBOs collectively identified how their services and focus intersect with the needs of the Muslim refugees, and thirdly, assisted in sharing resources to create a welcome booklet for Muslim refugees arriving in the United States. The stakeholders provide services such as culturally sensitive shelters for Muslim women and children, covid-19 vaccine education campaigns, job referrals and economic empowerment programs, food drives for hunger relief, assisting with access to medical insurance, providing language access, assisting with humanitarian parole applications, providing

services to IDPs coming from Haiti and so much more. It is crucial that federal funding for refugees does not only go to big national organizations, but also support the work that grassroots civil society organizations are doing.

The last issue we want to raise is regarding the National September 11 Museum. We recently sent a [coalition letter](#) to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands to raise express our concern with the Museum asking for Federal funding, once again, and raise awareness on how it perpetuates hate and demonizes Islam and Muslims in the United States through the language and imagery used in some of the Museum's exhibits. We urge members of this Subcommittee to prevent Federal and taxpayer money from funding institutions that fuel hate and discriminate against minority groups.

We at the Muslim Community Network firmly believe that those of us closest to the problem are indeed closest to the solution, however, we remain furthest from the power and resources necessary for sustainable systemic change. We ask for your support in shifting this narrative. Once again, we thank the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties for holding this important hearing and allowing us to submit a statement on behalf of the Muslim Community. We are looking forward to strengthening this partnership to better serve and advocate for the rights, freedoms, and protection of all communities.

For any questions or inquiries, please feel free to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

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Sources

MCN Survey: [MCN Hate Crime Prevention Survey \(google.com\)](#)

MCN 2019 Survey Report: [MCN HATE CRIME REPORT.pdf](#)

Sources: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/muslim-college-student-badly-burned-acid-attack-new-york-police-n1264950>; https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-ny-welcomes-20k-fbi-reward-for-info-on-acid-attack-targeting-nafiah-ikram-in-nassau-county/

Sources:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/461623/otago-girls-high-school-pupil-attacked-hijab-ripped-off-by-fellow-students>

Coalition Letter on 9/11 Museum Advocacy: [Coalition Letter Regarding 9-11 Museum Advocacy \(1\).pdf](#)