

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Statement on the United States National Strategy To Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate

December 12, 2024

This October, we marked the passage of one year since the brutal killing of six-year old Wadee Alfayoumi, an American Muslim boy of Palestinian descent, who was viciously killed in his home in Illinois. The attacker also repeatedly stabbed and gravely wounded his mother, Hanan Shahin. Wadee's parents came to the United States in search of what we all seek: a fair chance at pursuing the American dream. These heinous acts shattered an American family. And they spread a wave of horror and fear across our nation.

Over the last year, we have experienced a sharp increase in discrimination and violence against Muslim, Arab, and Jewish communities in the United States. Across the Biden-Harris Administration, we are working with our partners at all levels to keep all communities safe and hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

Since the first day of my Administration, we have prioritized the need to combat hatred in all of its forms and to protect the religious freedom of all Americans. At our 2022 United We Stand Summit against hate-fueled violence, we established a White House Initiative to Counter Hate-Motivated Violence to address violence and bias against all communities. We then launched a whole-of-government effort to counter Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and related forms of bias and discrimination. Last year, we released the first-ever National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism, and today, we are releasing the first-ever National Strategy to Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate.

The latest rise in Islamophobia and anti-Arab hate follows other similar episodes in our nation's history. On September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda terrorists attacked our homeland, murdering nearly 3,000 Americans and injuring over 6,000 more. Muslim, Arab, and Sikh Americans—who were among those killed—shared in the trauma and grief all Americans experienced. And many of them suffered in other ways too, targeted because of the color of their skin, their religion, or ethnicity. On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American entrepreneur in Mesa, Arizona, was murdered in one of the first post-9/11 hate crimes. In the first six years after 9/11, the Department of Justice investigated more than 800 incidents involving violence, threats, vandalism, and arson against Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians.

For decades, these Americans have frequently faced discrimination, hatred, and violence as a result of baseless stereotypes, fearmongering, and prejudice against each of their communities. In some cases, they have been targeted because they are perceived to be Muslim. But let me be clear: community members, such as Arabs and Sikhs, are also routinely targets of hate, bias, and discrimination simply for being who they are.

Individuals and institutions, including places of worship, have been targeted. College students have been shot or assaulted as they walked down streets. Children have been bullied at school, including by having their religious head coverings ripped off. Workers have been denied jobs or demoted due to their faith. Citizens and nonprofit organizations have had their applications for loans, credit cards, and bank accounts denied and their charitable donations blocked merely because of their names. This is wrong. It is unacceptable. And it must change.

The very idea of America is that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. We must realize the dream upon which this country was founded: that freedom and opportunity are for everyone. Muslims and Arabs deserve to live with dignity and

enjoy every right to the fullest extent along with all of their fellow Americans. Policies that result in discrimination against entire communities are wrong and fail to keep us safe. This is why, on my first day in office, I rescinded the discriminatory travel ban that prevented individuals from Muslim-majority and African countries from entering the United States. That ban was a stain on our national conscience and inconsistent with our long history of welcoming people of all faiths and backgrounds.

This first-ever National Strategy to Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate is a historic step forward to live up to our ideals. It seeks to deepen understanding of these communities and the discrimination and bias they have long faced across a number of sectors. The Strategy also sets forth a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort to combat these forms of discrimination. It includes more than 100 commitments to counter hate, discrimination, and bias against Muslims and Arabs. As with the National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, while we focus on communities who have experienced a sharp rise in hatred, the actions that this Strategy puts forward also seek to protect the freedom and safety of other religious and ethnic communities.

This Strategy creates a path for progress, in partnership with all levels of government, civil society, and the private sector. History has taught us that civil society leaders and state and local governments have critical roles in countering hate. The Strategy focuses on short, medium, and long-term actions that will protect individuals and communities from bias, discrimination, and hatred. We urge our state, local, and international counterparts, as well as civil society, to pursue similar strategies and other initiatives in consultation and partnership with these communities. Over the past year, we have implemented a number of the Strategy's commitments. And although we may not immediately achieve all the change we seek, this Strategy is a critical step in identifying the challenges we face and identifying solutions that civil society and state, local, and national governments can implement over time.

Let us walk forward together, upholding our highest ideals and advancing our collective prosperity. We are the United States of America. There's nothing beyond our capacity if we act together. The power is within each of us to transform the story of our time, to rise together against hate, and to build a nation that treats everyone with dignity and respect. I urge every American to join us in this cause.

JOE BIDEN

NOTE: The statement referred to Joseph Czuba, suspect in the stabbing of Wade Alfayoumi in Plainfield, IL, on October 14, 2023; and Odai Alfayoumi, father of Wade Alfayoumi. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as part of the U.S. National Strategy To Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate.

Categories: Statements by the President : U.S. National Strategy To Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate.

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