

July 26, 2006

VIA FACSIMILE

The Honorable Robert S. Mueller III  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
J. Edgar Hoover Building  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Director Mueller:

According to recent news reports, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), while acknowledging there is no specific or credible intelligence indicating an imminent attack on U.S. soil by Hezbollah, has nevertheless launched an investigation into the potential presence of Hezbollah members in the U.S. and their activities. This announcement has caused alarm that the FBI could again be singling out members of the Arab, Muslim, Iranian, and South Asian American communities for voluntary interviews.

We, the undersigned Arab, Muslim, Iranian and South Asian American organizations, therefore urge you to issue guidance to FBI field offices and agents instructing them that:

- 1) racial, ethnic and religious profiling is unacceptable: investigatory activities should focus on credible evidence of suspicious or criminal behavior and not target individuals or institutions based on racial, ethnic or religious background;
- 2) individuals subject to voluntary interviews should not be coerced;
- 3) constitutional protections allowing an attorney to be present and against self-incrimination should be respected;
- 4) information concerning First Amendment protected activities should not be sought; and
- 5) public statements by the FBI and its agents should emphasize that it is wrong to suspect communities of terrorist ties on the basis of religion, national origin or ethnicity.

Since September 11, 2001, the FBI has launched a number of voluntary interview programs. First, there was a program targeting adult male nationals of Arab or Muslim countries holding student, business or visitor visas. Interview initiatives later expanded to include US citizens, those of Iraqi background, and more recently, people of Syrian or Iranian background. In 2004, the FBI, working with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), also launched the "October plan," which in part included a plan to target Arab and Muslims for interviews and federal law enforcement scrutiny, just before the fall elections.

During these interview efforts, it quickly became apparent that FBI agents were frequently engaging in harassing, unduly burdensome and improper questioning. They were often not guided by evidence of wrongdoing in selecting individuals to interview

but instead asked open-ended questions that resulted in intimidation of community members and a chilling effect on constitutionally protected political and religious expression and activities. For example, numerous individuals across the country reported being asked their views of the Iraq war or President Bush, or whether they are practicing Muslims or attend a mosque and, if so, how frequently. According to a former high-level FBI official, the FBI completed roughly 500,000 such interviews, and yet not one of those interviews yielded information that would have prevented the September 11th attacks.

Americans of Arab, Muslim, Iranian and South Asian backgrounds stand with their fellow Americans against those who would do our nation harm. Interview initiatives and other investigatory activities and inquiries that single out people simply because they are Arab, Muslim, Sunni, Shia, or Iranian, however, are ineffective as a law enforcement tool and serve to breed mistrust between law enforcement and our communities. Specific guidance from you that FBI investigatory activities must be carried out in accordance with our nation's laws and constitutional rights and protections would go a long way to stem further erosion of this trust.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully submitted,

American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
Arab American Institute  
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)  
Association of Muslim American Lawyers  
Bay Area Association of Muslim Lawyers  
Capital Area Muslim Bar Association  
Council of Peoples Organization  
Council on American Islamic Relations  
Islamic Center of Hawthorne  
Islamic Center of Southern California  
Islamic Information Center  
Islamic Institute of Orange County  
Islamic Shura Council of Southern California  
Islamic Society of North America  
Islamicity.org  
KinderUSA  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Bar Association of Chicago  
Muslim Bar Association of New York  
Muslim Consultative Network  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Iranian American Council  
The Qunoot Foundation  
South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT)  
Yemeni American Association