ADC Statement on Anti-Arab Backlash and Islamophobia

Thursday December 10, 2015

As the country continues to grasp the horrible act of violence which occurred in San Bernardino, it is imperative that the continued xenophobic rhetoric come to an end. While the ADC condemns all forms of violence no matter the perpetrator or the victims, the recent attacks in Paris and San Bernardino have resulted in an increase of anti-Arab backlash and Islamophobia. The rhetoric coming from the far right, including Presidential candidate Donald Trump, has painted Arabs and Muslims with a broad brush. Through the lens of folks like Trump, Arabs and Muslims are all terrorists. Trump has gone so far as to suggest that the U.S. should not allow Muslims into the United States, and has advocated for the forced registration of Muslims. His statements advocate for the mass violation of both constitutional and human rights of Arabs and Muslims, and cannot be tolerated.

Many security experts agree that this rhetoric is playing into the hands of terror groups like ISIL. Closing our doors to refugees and acting with bigotry runs contrary to what the values this nation should stand for, the same values that terror groups work to undermine. Rather than continue with this rhetoric, elected officials need to engage with the Arab and Muslim American community in the pursuit of working together to help protect the national security and interests of the United States. Arab and Muslim Americans are perhaps the greatest allies the government could ask for. By continuing this rhetoric, individuals such as Trump are themselves acting as extremists.

The viewpoints of the vast majority of Arab and Muslim Americans are being ignored by the media, politicians and by every day Americans who have focused their attention on the anti-Arab and Muslim xenophobia that is becoming increasingly mainstreamed. It seems more and more the only voice being heard by the media, and politicians are that of the fanatics, while the voices of reason are drowned out or pushed to the side. ISIL and other groups that preach hatred and fanaticism do not represent Arab or Muslim Americans. The overwhelming majority of Arab and Muslim Americans abhor the politics of terror. Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S. also fear violence from terrorists and are not exempt from terror attacks. In fact, an overwhelming majority of those that have been targeted by ISIL happen to be Arab and Muslim.

While there are fringe and deviant segments of the Arab and Muslim communities who are radicalized, such as in all communities, it is important to understand that the current hate rhetoric, and suggested government policies, do nothing to combat radicalization and extremism. The answer to radicalization and fanaticism is not exclusion, surveillance, and continued profiling. The true antidote is inclusiveness, acceptance, understanding, unity and opportunity for all people. The role of the U.S. government in combating extremism and radicalization is not through continued surveillance programs. Many studies have shown that a lack of opportunity often leads to extremism in all communities. The U.S. government must take action to eliminate poverty, lower the wage gap, enhance public education and provide better opportunities for all Americans.
The American people need to understand that Arabs and Muslims are an integral part of the American fabric. As President Obama stated during his Address to the Nation this past week, “…it is the responsibility of all Americans -- of every faith -- to reject discrimination. It is our responsibility to reject religious tests on who we admit into this country. It’s our responsibility to reject proposals that Muslim Americans should somehow be treated differently. Because when we travel down that road, we lose.”

At the same time, the Arab and Muslim American community members must continue to practice citizenry and engage in both the political and the social realms of our country. The community must not be deterred from the ongoing rhetoric, and must do what it can to combat the hate, and write our own narrative. The community must also take a look inward, and have a conversation amongst ourselves at what we can do to better ourselves during these challenging times.

To this end the ADC would like to make a call for a national dialogue regarding the issues facing our country and the Arab and Muslim American community. We propose a national round table discussion to include political leaders, civil leaders and Arab and Muslim American leaders to discuss the issues facing the country and the community. We need to stand united as one country against the intolerance, bigotry and hate we are seeing in this country.

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