

Civil rights groups to feds: Purge anti-Muslim training materials

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(RNS) Civil rights and religious groups say efforts to rid federal agencies of anti-Muslim bias have faltered and prejudice against Muslims persists, particularly in the training of anti-terrorism officers.

On Thursday (August 14), 75 groups—including the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Auburn Seminary, and the NAACP—sent a letter to the White House urging an audit of federal law enforcement training material.

“The use of anti-Muslim trainers and materials is not only highly offensive, disparaging the faith of millions of Americans, but leads to biased policing that targets individuals and communities based on religion, not evidence of wrongdoing,” the letter reads.

A National Security Council representative said the letter will be reviewed and a response issued.

“As we said when these news reports first came to light, the use of racial or ethnic stereotypes, slurs, or other similar language by employees is both unacceptable and inconsistent with the country’s core values,” said Caitlin Hayden, National Security Council spokeswoman.

The groups point to a reference to “Mohammed Raghead” in a memo and the claim by a former FBI official that the CIA’s director is a “closet Muslim.”

Anti-Muslim sentiment, flagged several years ago, prompted the White House to order an assessment of the intelligence community’s training materials and policies—but that never happened, the letter charges. Instead, the groups wrote, administration officials settled on expanded sensitivity training and other measures that don’t directly address the continued use of anti-Muslim materials.

The letter states that its allegations are based in part on a July 9 article in The Intercept, an online publication created by journalist Glenn Greenwald. According to its website, its immediate goal is “to provide a platform to report on the documents previously provided by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden,” the former National Security Agency systems analyst now a fugitive living in Russia.