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**"The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and the Community's Response"**

Thank you Chairman King, Ranking member Thompson, Distinguished members of the committee, for seeking my testimony on what I feel is the most important threat to American security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Islamist Radicalization.

My name is Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser and I am the president and founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. I sit before you a proud, devout, American Muslim whose country is polarized on its perceptions of Muslims and the radicalization that occurs within our communities... One camp refuses to believe any Muslim could be radicalized living in blind multiculturalism, apologetics, and denial, and the other camp believes all devout Muslims and the faith of Islam are radicalized...

Between these two polarities is a reasoned, pragmatic approach focused on solutions that recognizes the beauty of one of the world's great religions, while also acknowledging the existence within of a dangerous internal theo-political domestic and global ideology that must be confronted - Islamism.

I hope that these hearings are the beginning of a rational national conversation about those solutions.

Our Forum was founded in the wake of the devastating attacks of September 11. For me it is a very personal mission to leave my American Muslim children a legacy that their faith is based in the unalienable right to liberty and to teach them that the principles that founded America do not contradict their faith but strengthen it. Our founding principle is that I as a Muslim am able to best practice my faith in a society like the United States that guarantees the rights of every individual blind to faith with no governmental intermediary stepping between the individual and the creator to interpret the will of God. Because of this, our mission is to advocate for the principles of the Constitution of the United States of America, liberty and freedom and the separation of mosque and state. We believe that this mission from within the "House of Islam" is the only way to inoculate Muslim youth and young adults against radicalization. The "Liberty narrative" is the only effective counter to the "Islamist narrative".

Some have criticized these proceedings saying it is not the government's role to do that. As I sit here in the people's House, I am reminded that we are a government of the people whose entire foundation, our Constitution, our Bill of Rights and especially the Establishment clause, rested on the ability of our citizenry to have open dialogue about any issue affecting our society probably most important of which was religious freedom.

Yet as we have seen with the lead up to these hearings, we are barely able to come together to have an open discussion of the problem. This is not a left versus right issue or a case of infringement on the rights of a minority. This needs to be a serious assessment of the threat posed to our national security. The course of Muslim radicalization in the United States over the past two years makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone to assert with a straight face that in America we Muslims do not have a radicalization problem.

From my perspective in our years of work of reform at the American Islamic Forum for Democracy and a lifetime of dedication to America, my faith, and my family, I see radicalization as my problem and as a Muslim I am not offended if you tell me that. In the end countering radicalization should be the obsession of every Muslim because if we do not what will be our legacy for our children?

So I come to you as a devout Muslim, and to give you a so far little heard viewpoint from that Islamic space, that shows our "diversity". Those that have been struggling to get our leadership in mosques to reform and do the heavy lifting of modernization and enlightenment have been faced with too many obstacles inside and outside the Muslim community.

We need to create a deeply rooted theological identification with this society and especially with the American legal system and the American identity. All of our security hangs in the balance of this reform, this Islamic enlightenment process. Only Muslims can figure out how to get our young adults to identify with secular western society and its ideas. Multiculturalism – political correctness-- has prevented true ideological assimilation through the challenging or confrontation of certain Muslim theo-political ideas that conflict with universal human rights and our democracy.

Prime Minister David Cameron addressed this in a very important speech he gave on February 5, 2011 at the Munich Security Conference that I have attached as Appendix 1.

I am a physician and as one, I know when a patient comes in with many different symptoms, we are trained that they almost always have one unifying diagnosis that causes their illness. The radicalization of our youth is not due to the litany of non-Muslim excuses. This cancer within an otherwise vibrant beautiful faith is at its core an identity problem that can only be resolved with Islamic reform- toward modernity and the separation of mosque and state.

So many of the Muslim groups in the United States that are "leading" our communities allow these groups to define our identity only through religion and not by Americanism. To them faith is not personal it is a political collectivist movement. I learned growing up in Wisconsin that my

family came here more to learn from American values and assimilate those into our consciousness rather than coming here to evangelize any Islamic ideals. My concern is that too many Muslim American groups who dominate the discourse currently have the opposite mindset one of bringing Islam to America. That mindset is not one of humility but rather supremacism and it feeds radicalization.

Every Muslim I know would report a violent act about to happen and try to prevent it from happening. Anti-terror work includes a great number of American Muslim heroes as our Attorneys General and FBI Director have repeatedly stated. *But the issue is not violence or reporting violence when it comes to cooperation.* When we speak about “cooperation of Muslims with law enforcement”, what is more important is the growing culture of driving Muslims away from cooperation, partnership, and identity with our nation and its security forces. Our civil rights should be protected and defended, but the predominant message to our communities should be attachment, defense, and identification with America not alienation and separation.

Too many so-called Muslim leadership groups in America, like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) or Muslim Advocates, have specifically told Muslims across the nation, for example, not to speak to the FBI or law enforcement unless they are accompanied by an attorney. Rather than thanking the FBI for ferreting out radicals within our community, they have criticized sting operations as being “entrapment”- a claim that has not stood the test of anti-terrorism court cases since 9-11. Informants end up being showcased as bad apples and subjects of lawsuits rather than patriots. While individual rights must always be protected, operations like the FBI conducted in December 2010 in Portland, OR are common place in other types of cases such as drug enforcement and racketeering cases. So why would they not be acceptable in terror cases?

As another example I have been present at Friday prayers in 2004 at one of the largest mosques in Arizona where a photo distributed nationally by CAIR and later proven to be doctored showed an American soldier standing with two young Iraqi boys holding a sign that says, “he killed my dad and knocked up my sister.” (Appendix 2) As offended as I was as a Navy veteran, the imam and CAIR ended up pathologically alienating the Muslims in that audience from an American heritage.

CAIR and MPAC have typically renounced the use of terror and violence, but they have never taken a position against the ideology of Political Islam. They both have also been the primary antagonists to efforts by law enforcement to understand and mitigate the real stages of radicalization of Muslims in America. In 2007, under the umbrella of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC), CAIR-NY and MPAC –NY authored “Counterterrorism policy, MACLC’s critique of the NYPD’s report on homegrown radicalism.” The paper is a response to NYPD’s report “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat.” In it, the organizations lay out their belief that, “The study of violent extremism, however, should decouple religion from terror to safeguard civil liberties on free speech and equal protection grounds as a matter of strong public policy.” I have attached the full report of the NYPD Report on “Radicalization in

the West: the Homegrown Threat,” because of the value it serves our community in understanding radicalization (Appendix 4). Rather than demonize this great work, these groups should have admitted that it was work Muslims should have been doing.

If the root cause of Muslim radicalization is Islamism (political Islam), what good is any effort at counterterrorism that decouples any suggestion of theology no matter how separatist from terror? How can law enforcement effectively do counter terrorism in our country without recognition that Political Islam and its narrative is the core ideology when, at its extreme, drives the general mindset of the violent extremists carrying out the attacks?

The Investigative Project on Terrorism recently noted that, “Though Muslims represent about 1 percent of the American population, they constitute defendants in 186 of the 228 cases DOJ lists,” (Appendix 5). As a Muslim that loves my faith, I also realize that there is a unifying common ideology, a theo-political separatism that is driving this radicalization.

It is important for us to work from the same definition of radicalization. Appendix 9 provides a visualization created by counterterrorism expert Patrick Poole to understand the complexities of radicalization. It is not just the final threat of violence that defines it. It is a continuum only Muslims can dissect. It is our duty as Muslims and as Americans to unravel it. Violent extremism is only the final step. You do not treat a disease effectively by only focusing on the final step. The pathway they all share is a domestic and world view of political Islam-Islamism. This nation is based on a secular government which protects people in a liberty-centric, and God-centric ethic. Islamism is based in a theocratic system that is Islamo-centric. We cannot counter-radicalize Muslims until we as Muslims shed Islamism.

Sure there are other non-Muslim violent extremist movements. But I, our families, our devout fellow American Muslims can only help you change the trajectory of Muslim radicals that slide down the separatist slippery slope of political Islam. To this point there has been little to no work on that trajectory- only the final step of violence.

Homeland Security, government, media and our general population are only focused on that final step when the jihadists seek violence against our homeland. But we will all be chasing our tails for centuries if that remains your focus. I implore you to walk it back and treat the problem at its root, at its jugular—the supremacism of political Islam. As you utilize our resources to investigate methods of solving this ever-increasing and frightening threat, you will be squandering our nation’s resources if we continue to produce work as misguided as the Pentagon’s after incident report on the Fort Hood Massacre committed by Nidal Hasan.

If you look at Dr. Nidal Hasan’s “resume”, in many ways it’s frighteningly similar to mine-- military physician, trained on scholarship, not ghettoized, deceptively assimilated. But I beseech you to look into why he ‘theo-politically’ turned out the way he did and I turned out the way I

did. He did not go to sleep one night a normal compassionate, patriotic Constitutional American Muslim military psychiatrist and wake up the next day a barbaric radical wanting to viciously murder his fellow soldiers. His slide into radicalism was methodical- it was a process.

We need to recognize the pathway he traveled and begin to inoculate our Muslim youth against any ideas that may pull them toward that pathway. We need programs to look at the common ideological slides of these Muslim extremists and not just play defense but have a forward offensive promotion of the ideas of liberty that will inoculate them against any narrative that drives them to hate our nation, hate our fellow citizens and abort their primary devotion as American soldiers or citizens and rather as Faisal Shahzad proclaimed in a New York federal court that he was a “Muslim soldier” and part of a “jihad”. Only Muslims can do this. But it is a legacy we have to repair as Muslims and you can help us build platforms and stimuli to do so.

As Prime Minister Cameron of the UK stated that Muslim violent extremists are all swimming in the same pool of ideologies and the only way to defeat them is an offensive strategy to drain their pool of the water and energy that feeds them- treat their common condition. And it is not violence. These are the details many Muslim groups that supposedly “represent American Muslims” do not want to address and will do anything legally possible to avoid ever discussing.

As we address specific ideological drivers toward radicalization we must note that many but not all of the current predominant Muslim groups in Washington and their alphabet soup like CAIR, the Muslim American Society (MAS), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Circle of North America, Muslim Students’ Association, and Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) to name a few have been in existence for some time. They may disagree on a great deal but they share the distinction of remaining silent about the threat of the ideology of political Islam (Islamism) and in fact many of the ideas they employ utilize Islamist methods of engagement of Muslims and non-Muslims. To many of them diversity is ‘ethnic diversity’ or religious ‘sectarian diversity’ rather than religious ideological diversity.

I am here to tell you that we are a very diverse community. There is not one Islam. With almost a quarter of the world’s population practicing the faith that would be impossible. We are a diverse community. Many if not a majority of Muslims choose not to even frequent mosques and do not accept representation of their “Muslim identity” to the mosque or to any Muslim organizations because they are personal pietistic Muslims who choose political activism through traditional American political infrastructure rather than arms of political Islam and its ideologies with which they disagree. We cannot forget this when supposedly engaging the “Muslim community”. By engaging Muslim groups as “representatives of predominant Muslim thought” we dismiss the majority of American Muslims who do not collectivize our community.

I implore you to avoid taking that lowest hanging fruit as being representative of American Muslims or in any way allowing yourselves to think that “American Muslims” think homogenously on anything.

With that caveat, many mosques do teach an Islam that is spiritual patriotic and not in conflict with America. But there are also many that are transmitting ideas that are Islamist and push Muslims down that pathway toward intoxication and possible violent radicalization. Let’s be frank. The example I gave earlier is not a unique one. Imam Anwar Awlaki did not become a rabid jihadist overnight and we forget that for years he had been preaching in mosques from Denver, to San Diego to Northern Virginia. We should be looking at how to counter his words and actions back then not just now. His own process of radicalization did not occur in a vacuum. He may now be a radicalizer but before he became that he must have been radicalized by a continuum of an ideology.

So rather than foster a climate of transparency that Islam is an open welcome religion whose prayer halls are open to everyone, our sermons should all be published publicly in the spirit of transparency, reform and modernization instead these groups sue you, sue the government, sue airlines, and even try to sue passengers who simply see something or say something. One of the Phoenix imams suing US Airways said to CAIR in a taped audio conversation after they were removed from an airline, “terrorism is not our problem, it’s their problem.” He was the head of the National Imams Federation.

Yes, they are all against violence, or as you politically correctly call it violent extremism, but this insidious separatism of political Islam drives separatism and ultimately early radicalization.

Openly Islamist parties in Egypt like the Muslim Brotherhood may utilize democracy as an engine of advancement but in the end their entire lens for governance is based upon “Islamization” and slow advancement of Islamic legalisms and evangelism rather than reform or learning from American foundational ideals and our Establishment Clause. Again this is all the same diagnosis. So when you look at some of the “Islamic” institutions, understanding their original foundational inspiration for Muslim evangelism and its funding is essential.

Their funding matters- because it usually comes with ideological strings. Even if they no longer take foreign funding, after planting the tree it still produces toxic fruit. According to former CIA director R. James Woolsey, the Saudis have spent nearly \$90 billion spreading their ideology around the globe since the 1970s. According to scholars such as Gilles Kepel, Wahhabism, the fundamentalist militant Saudi Islamist ideology, gained considerable influence among Muslims following the dramatic increase of the price of oil in the 1970s. The Saudi government began to spend tens of billions of dollars throughout the Islamic world to promote Wahhabism, often referred to as “petro-Islam”. The Saudis themselves have acknowledged donations too many

mosques in the United States. There have documented donations to major mosques in Boston, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Denver Washington, DC, Northern Virginia, San Diego and New York City to name a few. The North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) is a non-profit 501-(C)3 organization that from its own documents admits to holding the deed to over 300 properties for mosques and Islamic schools. While it claims to not administer these institutions, it admits to support and advise them regarding their operation in conformity with the Shari'ah (Appendix 10). NAIT's initial funding was provided by significant donations from petro dollars.

In addition to some mosques, the ideological infrastructure of some American imams in positions of significant leadership most likely contributes to early radicalization. In the United States for example, a major if not the major arm of "legal Islam" is led by the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America. I've attached their lists of members and experts who make up their network. While they have slowly massaged their ideas as some of us have exposed them, their fatwas (religious legal opinions) speak for themselves. I have attached a few of the thousands of rulings at their website which they place for young American Muslims to read. Some endorse harsh penalties for apostasy, confusing negativity towards citizenship, and other malignant interpretations of Islamic law incompatible with this nation.

I am very confident that radicals like Nidal Hasan were influenced in their path toward radicalization by some of these separatist Muslim beliefs being propagandized on websites and in some mosques. This will not be repaired by simply well intended outreach of law enforcement. There needs to be a campaign toward a Muslim led reorientation about what core ideas America stands for and an ideological abandonment of the collectivization of Muslims as a political "ummah" (nation state or legal unit). The current majority of Muslim organizations have yet to declare such a campaign. And in fact as the FBI documented in their letter to CAIR April 28, 2009 where they state in light of evidence from the Holy Land Foundation terror financing trial, "The FBI suspended all formal contacts between CAIR and the FBI." (Appendix 7)

We need a solutions oriented paradigm in this nation to address the radicalization problem. That paradigm needs to be Muslim led which will melt away inappropriate fear of Muslims. It needs, as Prime Minister Cameron stated a forward, "muscular liberalism" Our Muslim Liberty Project I believe is just one of those foundational solutions that can inoculate youth for a lifetime against such radicalization. It teaches them that the greatness of America is at its core a protection of every individual blind to faith, race, ethnic origin under God with unalienable rights. This is not under any singular faith but under God. This is very different from the Islamist mantra of an Islamo-centric government, constitution, and society.

Once Muslim youth can dismiss or reject the Islamic state and identify at their depths of their soul with the American legal system that will be the only inoculation against radicalization. Until all of you, and all of us as Muslim families understand that ideology, we will never make

headway against radicalization and any headway we make against the symptom of violent acts or cells will be illusory. This society and its ideological foundations need to be ours at our core as Muslims. That needs Islamic reform against Islamism (political Islam). We need Muslims writing texts about the Establishment Clause, anti-Wahhabi, anti-salafi, and for a pious Islam that separates mosque and state.

I actually do not want you, our government solving this for us. I want us, Muslims to solve this but there has been no drive, no resources, no political will to do so. You shouldn't do it, but you can drive it and give us a long overdue platform. Without that reform there will always be an antagonism for the identity of Muslims between political Islam and our secular constitutional republic based in liberalism. Our Muslim Liberty Project instills in young Muslims these values of liberalism, self-critique, and empowerment to challenge imams and clerics who tell them liberalism is not Islam. It teaches them to internalize the ideas of the Enlightenment without losing their personal Islamic relationship with God, their devotionism, and spirituality.

This is not about Muslim civil rights. We must protect Muslims like all faiths. Are we that dysfunctional as a nation that we cannot have healthy discussions about a religion and pathways within it toward radicalization versus pathways toward modernity and America?

We have got to be functional enough as a nation to be able walk back Muslim radicalization without labeling all Muslims and fostering a climate that increases fear of Muslims. Our founding fathers had healthy critical debates about religious diversity within Christianity and it built this great nation. We should be able to do the same. And as for Muslims that repel this honest debate because they fear stigmatization, they have little faith in our national maturity to deal with political Islam while empowering reformist Muslims or they live in a culture of denial like the end-stage alcoholics and their enablers.

Defining the Muslim identity as an Islamist, a salafist, a jihadist or a wahhabist can no longer be acceptable to a moderate Muslim at home with American liberty. We Muslims must step away from history and redefine the moderate Muslim to our youth as someone who embraces Islam and liberty. The future of American Security depends upon Muslims mustering the courage to dissect the Islamic ideas that fuel volatile separatism from a modern Islam that we want to leave our children.

Our nation's attempts at counter-radicalization have proven so far ineffective because it has lacked a strategy and a forward ideology into Muslim communities. We have been so fixated on preventing the next attack that we have neglected to develop the tools necessary to defeat the ideology that drives the attack. It is malpractice for us to believe that by eschewing violence we solve the problem. As we have watched the long overdue changes in the Middle East, at long last the threat that the Muslim Brotherhood poses to security around the world has been brought to the forefront. The Brotherhood is the leading Islamist organization in the world. It

has also over the past century hatched many of the most violent Islamist organizations in the world. We have not transitioned this newly understood concern to the operations of the Brotherhood and like-minded organizations and leaders within the United States. Our domestic and foreign policy should be the same on this issue.

Muslims are long overdue for an ideological counter-jihad. Please help me wake up our communities to that American and Muslim responsibility we have.

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Support materials can be found at:

[http://www.aifdemocracy.org/library/Jasser\\_Testimony\\_Appendices.pdf](http://www.aifdemocracy.org/library/Jasser_Testimony_Appendices.pdf)