

MACLC

Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition

January 28, 2011

VIA COURIER

Honorable Raymond Kelly
New York City Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

MACLC Concern Over NYPD Use of “The Third Jihad” Film

Dear Commissioner Kelly:

We, the members of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC), were shocked and saddened to learn that the NYPD has been using a disturbingly offensive and inaccurate film as part of its cadet training program.

As the Village Voice reported recently, the NYPD has been using *The Third Jihad*, “a spectacularly offensive smear of American Muslims,” produced by the Clarion Fund, as counter-terrorism training material as recently as this month. We are certain that you will agree that this film is inappropriate for officers who are responsible for maintaining the public order and protecting all New Yorkers.

The film is not simply critical of Muslims, but is an outright and irresponsible distortion of our faith. By creating unwarranted suspicion of our community, *The Third Jihad* promotes the profiling of our community, not the protection of it. In addition, it risks demoralizing the many Muslim officers and department employees who dedicate themselves to public service. Finally, it undercuts the efficacy of your own efforts to build strong relations between the NYPD and Muslim communities in New York, ultimately undermining the security of our city and nation.

As community leaders, we are deeply concerned about the increasing levels of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments that have been documented in national polls. We are also concerned about the self-appointed, well-funded experts and bloggers who have been deliberately working to instigate fear and hatred of Muslims. The Clarion Fund is part of this troubling anti-Muslim movement, having distributed its film *Obsession* to millions of swing state voters in 2008. Films like *The Third Jihad* only work to further advance such anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be an isolated incident. Public Eye will soon be releasing a report on the use of biased trainers by law enforcement around the country. It offers alarming news. Excerpts already posted indicate that one association made up of former NYPD officers is promoting an extreme and negative view of our religion and our community. We are sure that you

will agree that the last thing we all need is to have the NYPD associated with a film designed to instigate fear and hatred of Muslims or to be accused of such biases.

We hereby request you to take the following steps to remedy the current situation.

First, we call for a prompt investigation and public disclosure about how this biased and incendiary film came to be used in counterterrorism training classes for NYPD personnel.

Second, to prevent the use of such material in the future, we request you to provide us with detailed information on how the NYPD decides on the content of counter-terrorism training courses and we request copies of any and all material used that relates to Islam and Muslims. We understand that we can request such information under the New York Freedom of Information Law, but would rather work with your office to understand the problem and provide input into its solution rather than engage in litigation.

Third, we request that you institute a formal procedure by which films or other information about Islam and the Muslim community are vetted by an advisory council of New York Muslim leaders appointed by you. We do not ask you to give us veto power over the NYPD's training program, but we request a mechanism to present our reviews for your consideration.

We recognize that during your years as Commissioner, the NYPD has shown an admirable willingness to reach out to the diverse communities of New York City, including the Muslim community. This includes a willingness to listen to the constructive criticism from community members, such as the NYPD's openness to meeting with MACLC regarding the NYPD's 2007 Report *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. While we received only limited feedback on our recommendations following the report, we were still pleased to see that some of our points were recognized in the revised version of the report, which was issued in 2009. We trust that you will treat today's request with even greater seriousness.

We are available to meet with you and those charged with investigating this matter, and we look forward to an early response from you.

Please direct all correspondence to Asim Rehman, Vice President, Muslim Bar Association of New York, via email to asim@muslimbarny.org or mail to MuBANY, P.O. Box 1171, New York, NY, 10013.

Sincerely



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