

MACLC Media Contacts: Asim Rehman, asim@muslimbarny.org
Faiza Patel Brennan Center for Justice; faiza.patel@nyu.edu (646) 292 8325

“Spectacularly Offensive”— Muslim New Yorkers Express Concern Over NYPD Use of “The Third Jihad” Film

As the Village Voice reported recently (January 19, 2011), the New York Police Department has been using The Third Jihad, “a spectacularly offensive smear of American Muslims,” as counter-terrorism training material as recently as this past month.

On January 28, 2011 the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC) sent a letter of concern to Raymond Kelly, Commissioner of the New York City Police Department. The Coalition expressed its conviction that this biased film is inappropriate for officers who are responsible for maintaining the public order and protecting all New Yorkers. As of today however, the group has not received a clear response from NYPD regarding its concerns.

MACLC members signing the letter represented Women In Islam, Inc; the Muslim Bar Association of New York; Muslim American Society of New York; Association of Muslim American Lawyers; Arab American Association of New York; Council on American Islamic Relations – New York; Muslim Public Affairs Council – New York, Muslim Consultative Network; Table32; DRUM - Desis Rising Up and Moving and CLEAR - Creating Law Enforcement Accountability in addition to Mr. Omar Mohammedi, who also serves as a New York City Human Rights Commissioner.

In the letter, the coalition stated, “The film is not simply critical of Muslims, but is an outright and irresponsible distortion of our faith community. Its ugly and explicit imagery seeks to depict the religion as a threat to women and families. As faith community leaders of New York, we are deeply concerned about the increasing levels of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments caused by such smear campaigns and documented in national polls.”

On behalf of the coalition New York attorney Asim Rehman clarified its concerns that; “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 efforts to build strong relations between the NYPD and Muslim communities in New York, ultimately undermining the security of our city and nation.”

In the letter to Commissioner Kelly, MACLC noted that the Clarion Fund, as producers of the Third Jihad, was already infamous as producers of the Islamophobic “Obsession” DVD that was distributed throughout the nation just before the 2008 elections.

To respond to this serious situation, the coalition called for a prompt investigation and public disclosure about how a biased and incendiary film came to be used in counterterrorism training classes; and for a plan to work more closely with Muslim community advisors in selecting such materials in future. The coalition also requested a meeting with Commissioner Kelly regarding these requests. A copy of the letter is attached to this press release.

Representing a range of Muslim organizations in New York City, MACLC has worked to foster dialogue with NYPD around issues of concern. MACLC has written several reports regarding the NYPD’s 2007 Report Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat and were able to obtain some revisions. For more information please see: www.maccl1.wordpress.com