

Muslims call for reforms 10 years after Patriot Act

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(RNS) A Muslim civil rights group is accusing the FBI and other federal agencies of “bad policing” and flaunting the Constitution in a 56-page report released to mark the 10th anniversary of the Patriot Act.

The Tuesday (Oct. 25) report by Muslim Advocates, “Losing Liberty: The State of Freedom 10 Years After The Patriot Act” recommends more than 40 legal and policy changes to enforcement of the anti-terrorism law.

“One reason for the anti-Muslim sentiment in America is the government policies that target Muslim communities. The government is basically telling people they should fear their Muslim neighbors,” said Farhana Khera, executive director of San Francisco-based Muslim Advocates.

The report accuses the FBI of religious profiling, using informants to spy on mosques, and asking Muslims prohibited questions about their religious beliefs and practices.

“FBI agents are instructed to view Muslims with suspicion by, for example, looking out for converts to Islam and those who wear `traditional Muslim attire,? attend mosques, and have strong religious beliefs,” the report said.

An FBI spokesman said the agency had not seen the report and could not respond to it specifically. In the past, the agency has denied profiling and defended the use of informants as a legitimate intelligence tool.

The report's policy recommendations include calling on the Department of Homeland Security to prohibit agents from asking questions about a person's religious beliefs and practices; urging Congress to pass the “End Racial Profiling Act”; and seeking greater congressional oversight over how the Patriot Act is used.

The report also urges the FBI to stop using trainers that the group alleges are Islamophobic, and for the Treasury Department and Justice Department to offer safe harbor provisions to protect donors who may unknowingly give money to groups who are front groups for terrorism organizations.