

Muslims name 37 groups that fuel Islamophobia

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Groups with a mission to spread prejudice and hatred against Muslims are coordinated and well financed, according to a report released by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Washington-based civil rights group.

The report, titled "Legislating Fear: Islamophobia and its Impact in the United States," was released Thursday (Sept. 19), and it names 37 individuals and institutions that "were at the center of promoting Islamophobia in America" during 2011-2012.

The report, which found that incidents of hatred against Muslims had decreased slightly, includes a list of 32 other groups that promote Islamophobic themes as well as a "best list" of organizations that have sought to combat Islamophobia.

"American Muslims face discrimination every day," said Nihad Awad, national executive director of CAIR. "Islamophobia is a threat to the safety of American Muslims."

In 2012, CAIR rated Islamophobia as a 5.9 on a scale of one to 10, with one representing an America free of Islamophobia and 10 being the worst possible situation for Muslims. In 2010, CAIR rated the state of Islamophobia in America as a 6.4.

The nonprofit organizations whose purpose was to besmirch Islam made more than \$119 million in revenue during 2011-2012, the report states.

Awad said these organizations have made "a lucrative profession out of targeting a religious community." Many of the institutions share founders and funding.

During the report's two-year period, 78 bills "designed to vilify Islamic religious practices" were introduced in 29 states and Congress. Of these bills, 62 contained language from legislation created by David Yerushalmi of the American Freedom Law Center, one of the institutions listed as part of the "inner core."

Awad said the 37 organizations have had a "devastating effect" on how Muslims are viewed in the United States, resulting in the increase of Islamophobic rhetoric and behavior.

"We will continue to be attacked by these individuals and institutions," Awad said. "Our purpose in publishing this information is to empower the people who are concerned about Islamophobia."

According to a 2011 study by the Public Religion Research Institute, 30 percent of the American public believe American Muslims want to establish Shariah law in the United States.

Robert Muike, co-founder and senior counsel at the American Freedom Law Center, called CAIR's objectives in releasing the report "nefarious," saying the civil rights organization is a "Muslim Brotherhood front group."

"CAIR wants to silence speech that sheds light on its illicit objectives by trying to marginalize that speech," said Muike. "By being named in the report, it is evident that the American Freedom Law Center is having an impact on CAIR's operations, which is good for America and all freedom-loving Americans."

Nonie Darwish, founder of Former Muslims United, another group named to the list, said she took issue with the wording of the report.

"The word 'phobia' refers to people who are afraid without reason," Darwish said. "I would be crazy if I were not afraid of Islam. I have lots of fear of Islam, and rightfully so. Islam is brutal. Islamic law is brutal."

Ten of the groups from the "Islamophobia Network's inner core" are:

- * ACT! for America
- * American Freedom Defense Initiative
- * American Freedom Law Center
- * Atlas Shrugs
- * Center for Security Policy

- * David Horowitz Freedom Center
- * Investigative Project on Terrorism
- * Jihad Watch
- * Middle East Forum
- * The Clarion Fund (now called The Clarion Project)