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Muslim Council adopts points on countering violent extremism

(WASHINGTON, D.C., 2/17/2015) -- The US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), a coalition of several leading national and local Muslim organizations, gathered around fifty U.S. Muslim leaders at a full-day forum on countering violent extremism (CVE) in Washington, D.C. on February 10, 2015.

At the Council's invitation, a speaker from the Department of Homeland Security and speakers from the ACLU, Amnesty International and the Brennan Center for Justice addressed government and civil liberties perspectives on CVE.

Following the presentations, summit participants deliberated the issue. Following this shura (consultation) process, the USCMO adopted the following points on CVE:

- In December 2014, The USCMO endorsed an ACLU-led letter addressing the current countering violent extremism initiative that was sent to the Obama administration. We are disappointed that the administration has not responded to the fair concerns raised in the letter.

See Federal Support for Countering Violent Extremism Programs letter

here:https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/141218_cve_coalition_letter_2.pdf

- Based on the shared experience of summit attendees and recent media revelations, the USCMO is very concerned that law enforcement outreach and CVE programs may be accompanied by intelligence gathering activities or other abusive law enforcement practices. The concern is particularly acute in relation to the FBI.
- A violent extremist problem exists in some Muslim communities. It is minute, but one case is too many. The Islamic faith and this council reject violent extremism.
- The USCMO is concerned that the Muslim community has been singled out by the administration for CVE. This singling out is Constitutionally-questionable and morally problematic.
- The USCMO believes that free speech is vital. Many local community leaders have shut down political discussions in their institutions due to fear of law enforcement informants or other overzealous law enforcement misinterpreting their words and intentions. Religious leaders should feel safe to provide guidance on topic from Islamic sources, to help construct a positive understanding of Islam in at-risk persons. This includes the need to discuss domestic abuse of civil liberties and foreign policy issues.
- Council members noted a lack of specific information on the Obama administration's current CVE initiative.
- The Council agreed that African American Muslims have far more experience with these types of U.S. government programs than other segments of the American Muslim community. The council agreed that more shura from African Americans is vital to developing a comprehensive understanding of the issue.
- The USCMO notes that government statements on the CVE issue since September have not acknowledged the significant contributions of American Muslims to protecting our nation.
- Given the low-level of confidence in government-led CVE, the USCMO believes it is best to identify and support community-driven best practices.