

February 13, 2015

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder,

The undersigned civil rights, faith, community and advocacy groups are deeply saddened by the tragic killing of three vibrant young, Arab-American Muslims in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, earlier this week. We write to urge you to open a full and rigorous federal hate crime investigation and to publicly condemn this heinous attack.

Deah Shaddy Barakat (23 years old), his wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha (21 years old), and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha (19 years old), were brutally murdered in their home in Chapel Hill on the evening of Tuesday, February 10. Chapel Hill police have arrested Craig Stephen Hicks, a neighbor of the young students, and charged him with three counts of first-degree murder. Though details about this incident continue to unfold, many accounts suggest that these attacks were motivated by hate. Some have suggested that this incident was the culmination of an ongoing parking dispute between the neighbors. The family of the victims, however, has strongly refuted that a parking dispute was the motive for the crime. The father of the Abu-Salha sisters said that Mr. Hicks “picked on my daughter and her husband a couple of times before, and he talked with them with his gun in his belt. And they were uncomfortable with him, but they did not know he would go this far.” The circumstances surrounding this incident—previous threats by Mr. Hicks, combined with the sentiment expressed in Mr. Hicks’ social media posts—warrant a federal hate crime investigation.

These killings come in the wake of a disturbing rise in especially threatening and vitriolic anti-Muslim rhetoric and activities. In recent weeks, after the release of the movie *American Sniper*, many tweeted hateful and deplorable messages demeaning to Muslims and Arabs. For example, one user tweeted that the film “makes me wanna go shoot some f**kin Arabs,” while another stated that “American sniper made me appreciate soldiers 100x more and hate Muslims 1000000x more.” On Saturday, January 17, 2015, outside a Muslim community event in Garland, Texas, hundreds of protesters shouted hateful messages and comments at attendees. Some of the protesters brandished guns, creating a threatening and hostile environment for families attending the event. Also, last month, a podcast host based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, suggested over Twitter that his readers look up a list of mosques and Islamic schools in the United States (he provided them a link to a community website that compiles the names and locations of these institutions) and then attack them with guns and other heavy ammunition pictured in his tweet.

With hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim alarmingly on the rise in recent years, your leadership is crucial to help stem the tide of hate. We urge

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you to open a full and rigorous federal hate crime investigation into the killing of the three Muslim students. We further urge you to hold a press conference announcing the investigation and/or an indictment relating to this vicious attack. Federal leadership is necessary in this case in order to send the strongest message to the public that acts of violence like these have no place in a civil society and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. This would be the first time, to our knowledge, that a U.S. Attorney General has held a press conference to announce a federal investigation or indictment of a potential hate crime against members of the American Muslim, Arab, Sikh or South Asian communities.

The heinous attack in Chapel Hill is being deeply felt throughout the American Muslim community. As American Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim now, more than ever, fear for their safety, the American people need to hear a strong message from our nation's chief law enforcement officer.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

9to5

Academi Watch

ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services)

Advancing Justice | AAJC

Afghan Student Association

African American Islamic Institute (AAIL)

AKNY - Greece Solidarity Movement

Al-Awda Cleveland

American Arab Forum

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Center for Outreach

American Muslim Advisory Council (AMAC)

American Syrian Arab Cultural Association

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

AMP

Apna Ghar, Inc. (Our Home)

Arab American Action Network

Arab American Association of New York

Arab American Institute

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

Association of Muslim American Lawyers

Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Blacks in Law Enforcement of America

Campaign for Peace and Democracy

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Casa Latina

Center for Constitutional Rights

Center for New Community

ColorOfChange.org

Contra Costa Interfaith Council

COSMOS

Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC)

Council of Peoples Organization

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Darul Islah

DRUM - South Asian Organizing Center

Duke Islamic Studies Center

East Bay Immigrant Youth Coalition

Emerge USA

Freemuslim Association Inc.

Georgia Association of Muslim Lawyers

Georgia Tech Muslim Students Association

Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network

Hikmah Institute

Hillel of Cal Poly Pomona

Human Rights Campaign

Islamic Society of Greater Houston

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Imam Ali Foundation

Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaeya, (I.M.A.M.)

Imam Shirazi Foundation

Imamia Medics International

Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights

Interfaith Center of New York

International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD)

Islamic Center of Long Island

Islamic Center of Naperville

Islamic Center of South Jersey

Islamic Masumeen Center

Islamic Shura Council of Southern California

Islamic Society of Central Jersey

Islamic Society of Milwaukee

Islamic Society of North America

Jafaria Islamic Society

KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

MAS Youth

Masjid Al-Farooq

Masjid Annur Islamic Center

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Masjid Waarith ud Deen

MECCA

Michigan Muslim Community Council

Midwest Islamic Center

Mohsena Memorial Foundation Inc.

Mosque Foundation

MSA West

Muharram In Manhattan

Muslim Advocates

Muslim American Society

Muslim American Society of Brooklyn and Staten Island

Muslim American Society, Greater Los Angeles Chapter

Muslim Bar Association of Chicago

Muslim Bar Association of New York

Muslim Bar Association of Southern California

Muslim Communities Association of South Florida

Muslim Community Network

Muslim Law Students Association of Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law

Muslim Legal Fund of America

Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance

Muslim Public Affairs Council

Muslim Student Association at UC Davis

Muslim Student Association Cal Poly SLO

Muslim Wellness Foundation

Muslims for Peace

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund

National Center for Jewish Healing

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Council of Jewish Women

National Disability Rights Network

National Lawyers Guild

National LGBTQ Task Force

National Network for Arab American Communities

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

National Urban League

NC Peace Action

Network Against Islamophobia, A Project of Jewish Voice for Peace

Network of Arab-American Professionals (NAAP)

New Brunswick Islamic Center (NBIC)

New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association

New Vision Partners

North Carolina Stop Torture Now

OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates

Parliament of the World's Religions

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Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
San Jose State University Muslim Student Association
SHARE Kentucky
Shia Ithna'Asheri Jamaat of New York (SIJNY)
Shia Rights Watch
Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, Executive Committee
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom – National
Souls March Coordinating Committee
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association of North America
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
Students for International Peace and Justice
Students for Justice in Palestine at UC Davis
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Arab American Family Support Center
The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group
The Majlis Ash-Shura (Islamic Leadership Council) of Metropolitan New York
The Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood
The Muslim Alliance in North America
The Muslim Students Association of US and Canada (MSA National)
The Northern California Islamic Council
The Organization of North American Shia Ithnasheri Muslim Communities (NASIMCO)
The Sikh Coalition
UAW 2865
UC Berkeley Muslim Student Association
UNITED SIKHS
United Voices for America
Universal Knowledge Institute
Universal Muslim Association of America
US Human Rights Network
Voices For Freedom
Wellspring Endowment
Women In Islam, Inc.
Young Muslims
YWCA USA