

An Open Call For Unity Following Paris Tragedy:

We, the undersigned civil rights advocates and faith leaders, write to express deep concern about recent rhetoric that exploits the tragic attacks in Paris to misrepresent Islam, call for more profiling of Muslims, and demonize Muslim refugees. Dividing Americans at a time when we need to be united not only hurts our democracy -- it hurts our standing in the world.

The bigotry and hate we've witnessed in the last few days [has sadly been reminiscent of the response to January's terrorist attacks at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris](#). Media figures and public officials have taken to social media and the airwaves to claim Islam is inherently violent and conflate all of Islam with ISIS, disregarding hundreds of millions of Muslims who fight for the cause of freedom and democracy every day. U.S. Senator Marco Rubio compared [Muslims to Nazis](#) during an interview with George Stephanopoulos on ABC's *This Week*. Hosts on CNN International [berated the spokesperson of a French Muslim outreach group](#) because he would not agree that all Muslims share "responsibility" for the attacks.

It is extremely concerning that countless leaders and media personalities have also used the tragedy to call for more discriminatory profiling of American Muslims, including [Donald Trump](#) who told MSNBC "you're going to have to watch and study the mosques," and [Rep. Peter King](#) who said that increased surveillance of Muslim communities is warranted because "that's where the threat is coming from."

Investigation after investigation has proven that blanket surveillance based on ethnicity, race or religion is ineffective, diverts resources and erodes trust in law enforcement that the public should have. The practices of data gathering and mapping of Muslim communities are contrary to our nation's promise of equal protection and equal treatment under the law.

Others have cloaked their bigotry in their opposition to welcoming refugee families fleeing from violence abroad. [Fox contributors](#) and too many others have endorsed closing US borders to Muslim refugees -- even going so far as to claim, "there are real refugees among the people fleeing Syria and they're Christians." News Corp. and 21st Century Fox executive co-chairman Rupert Murdoch echoed this endorsement, [suggesting that](#) President Barack Obama "make [a] special exception for proven Christians" when considering refugees in the wake of recent attacks in Paris. In recent days, more than half of governors have said they won't accept Syrian refugees even though none of them have the power to turn them away from a safe place to call home.

Not only does this type of rhetoric reinforce false representations of communities around the world, but it also creates an environment in which hostility towards Muslims is justified. After the attacks in Paris earlier this year, *The Independent* [reported](#) that “twenty-six mosques around France have been subject to attack by firebombs, gunfire, pig heads, and grenades as Muslims are targeted with violence.” In Florida over the weekend, two mosques received phone threats that warned of militia coming to fire bomb the mosque and shoot worshippers -- local and federal law enforcement are still investigating the threat. And in Texas, vandals tore apart and dumped feces on pages from the Quran outside of a mosque.

The American people depend on all leaders and media for an open and disciplined debate about acts of terror and ways to respond relying on historical context and multiple perspectives, including those from Muslim, Sikh, Arab, South Asian and other communities here in the U.S. and abroad. To those leaders and media figures who have responsibly relied on multiple and diverse perspectives and the facts, we thank you and ask that you continue doing so.

To those who are responsible for the divisive rhetoric, we call on you to refrain from religious bigotry and focus instead on unity in the aftermath of this tragedy. There are real consequences, as described above, to creating an anti-Muslim climate.

Now is a moment for all communities to come together in the spirit of our American ideals of freedom and justice, and not allow the Paris tragedy to divide us along faith lines.

Very respectfully,

Advancement Project
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles
American Civil Liberties Union
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Center for New Community
ColorOfChange
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Islamic Networks Group (ING)
Million Hoodies for Justice
Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Public Affairs Council

NAACP

National Disability Rights Network

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Race Forward

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

The Interfaith Center of New York

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

The Sikh Coalition

UNITED SIKHS

United We Dream

Unitarian Universalist Association

9to5, National Association of Working Women