

September 1, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

RE: Request for DOJ to Investigate “Muslim-Free Zone” Bans by Public Accommodations

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

We the undersigned civil liberties, human rights, immigrant rights, faith, and cultural organizations call on the Department of Justice to investigate whether so-called “Muslim-Free Zones” by places of public accommodation violate federal civil rights laws, particularly Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title II makes clear that it is unlawful for certain establishments to deny any person, “full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, and privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation ... without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin.”

If such an investigation reveals that an entity has engaged in illegal discrimination, we urge the DOJ Civil Rights Division’s Housing and Civil Enforcement Section to bring civil enforcement proceedings against business owners who have violated the law.^[1]

Since 2014, a number of U.S. gun shops and firing ranges have publicly declared themselves “Muslim-Free Zones” in Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, New York, Oklahoma, and New Hampshire. Such declared bans are a clear denial of public accommodation to American Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim, based solely on perception of religious beliefs. Several examples of these bans are included in the attachments below. Title II specifically prohibits discrimination by places of entertainment like, in many instances, firing ranges.

Despite numerous reports of public bans of American Muslims by U.S. businesses, including firing ranges, the DOJ has remained silent in its response to this growing trend of denial of a religious minority’s right of equal access to public accommodations.

American businesses posting “Muslim-Free Zone” declarations are no different than the “Whites Only,” “No Dogs, No Jews,” “No Mexican” and “Irish Need Not Apply” signs that were posted during past shameful periods of our nation’s history that we hoped were over.

We look forward to your prompt action in addressing these highly visible displays of public accommodation denials. We also request a meeting with you to further discuss the civil rights impact of these bans and how we can best engage with the DOJ to address current and future discriminatory exclusions by public accommodations.

Sincerely,

^[1] DOJ Civil Rights Division, “Combatting Religious Discrimination and Protection Religious Freedom - Religious Discrimination in Public Accommodations,” August 6, 2015, Source: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/combating-religious-discrimination-and-protecting-religious-freedom-1>

National Organizations

9to5, National Association of Working Women
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
American Civil Liberties Union
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Center for Community Change
Center for Popular Democracy
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Defending Dissent and Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Fair Immigration Reform Movement, FIRM
Islamic Circle of North America
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Islamic Society of North America
Japanese American Citizens League
League of United Latin American Citizens
Muslim Advocates
Muslim American Society
Muslim Legal Fund of America
Muslim Public Affairs Council
Muslim Ummah of North America
NAACP
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of La Raza, NCLR
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Partnership for New Americans
National People's Action
National Center for Transgender Equality
Northern Borders Coalition
OneAmerica
Rights Working Group
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, SALDEF
Sikh Coalition
South Asian Americans Leading Together
UNITED SIKHS
US Council of Muslim Organizations
Voices For Freedom
YWCA USA

State Organizations

Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Arkansas United Community Coalition
CASA
Causa Oregon
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Commuidades Unidas / Communities United
Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas
El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights
Idaho Community Action Network
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Junta for Progressive Action
Latin American Coalition
Maine People's Alliance
Make the Road NY
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Michigan United
Montana Organizing Project
Nebraska Appleseed
New Hampshire Alliance for Immigrant Rights-MIRA
Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition
Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste
Progressive Leadership Alliance for Nevada
Promise Arizona
Rights for All People
Somos Un Pueblo Unido
Sunflower Community Action
The New York Immigration Coalition
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
Texas Organizing Project
WashingtonCAN!
Workers Defense Project
Voces de la Frontera, VOCES

Attachment One



Example of “Muslim Free” sign posted by the gun store Save Yourself Survival and Tactical Gear in Oktaha, Oklahoma.

Attachment Two



Example of “Muslim Free” sign posted by the gun store Jace Firearms in Whitesburg, KY.

Attachment Three



Facebook post by the hunting and fishing store JJ's Sporting Goods in Saint Johnsville, New York publicly declaring that the shop would no longer sell to Muslims.