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Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt  
Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
*sent via email*

Dear Madam Ambassador,

We write to request that you and the Administration remove the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) from the new National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. The National Strategy was diminished by the inclusion of CAIR as partner from the outset, and given CAIR's recent use and defense of antisemitic rhetoric, the failure to remove it now would open the door for it and future purportedly-allied groups to utilize participation in the National Strategy to hide their own antisemitism—making matters worse, not better.

In an [interview](#) with the Jerusalem Post on Sunday, when asked about removing CAIR from the National Strategy, you were quoted as responding:

Show me the beef, prove it to me... I'm going to give people a chance to change their past behavior, making it take something seriously that they never took seriously before and we'll see what happens.

You specifically cited the "tradition that believes in forgiveness" from under your "Jewish hat." But a requirement of that Jewish tradition, found in our liturgy on the Day of Atonement, is willing confession of wrongdoing. One cannot simply assume that an organization known for antisemitic bias has now committed to becoming a partner for "cross-community solidarity;" that organization must demonstrate that it recognizes its transgressions. And in this case, CAIR has already shown that, to the contrary, it continues to support antisemitic incitement.

As you already know, this year's City University of New York Law School Commencement ceremony featured a hateful address by Fatima Mohammed. This recent law-school graduate not only declared her

opposition to both law and order, labeling them “a manifestation of white supremacy” and “fascism” (referring to the the NYPD) respectively. She also claimed that Israeli soldiers “carry out that same violence globally,” and likened Zionism to both racism and imperialism. She further said:

Israel continues to indiscriminately rain bullets and bombs on worshippers, murdering the old, the young, attacking even funerals and graveyards, as it encourages lynch mobs to target Palestinian homes and businesses, as it imprisons its children, as it continues its project of settler colonialism, expelling Palestinians from their homes, carrying [out] the ongoing Nakba, that our silence is no longer acceptable.

For the record, the Nexus Document, a statement that whitewashes “political action directed at the State of Israel,” “Opposition to Zionism,” and even “treating Israel differently than other countries,” obfuscates manifestations of antisemitism clearly identified by the IHRA working definition as well as rabbinic literature. We believe that document was unworthy of mention in the National Strategy, and we note with appreciation that the IHRA definition remains the sole resource for “Defining Antisemitism” provided by your office on the state.gov website.

Yet as you pointed out, even that inadequate Nexus Document notes that “indiscriminately blaming suffering and injustices around the world on ... the maligning hand of Israel or Zionism,” such as that found in Mohammed’s speech, is antisemitic. Ditto “to promote myths... about Zionism and/or Israel that derive from... antisemitic accusations and tropes,” as Mohammed so robustly did. So even by a “standard” that pardons many types of antisemitic expression, Mohammed’s speech was indefensible.

The response from public figures was not long in coming. Mayor Eric Adams called the speech “words of negativity and divisiveness,” State Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein labeled it “hate-filled and dangerous,” and City Councilwoman Inna Vernikov said it represented “vile, unabashed hatred for America, Israel, NYPD, & democracy.” U.S. Congressman Ritchie Torres said Mohammed was “crazed by hatred for Israel as a Jewish State.”

On May 30, the Board of Trustees and Chancellor of CUNY belatedly responded as well. They drew a line between free speech and hate speech, and condemned Mohammed’s remarks as “a public expression of hate toward people and communities based on their religion, race or political affiliation.”

Yet even this tardy, somewhat mild repudiation of Mohammed’s antisemitic bigotry was too much for CAIR. A day later, a week prior to your interview with the Jerusalem Post, CAIR’s New

York chapter [publicly declared](#) its support for Mohammed and her antisemitic expression, inverted bigot and hated, and castigated those who spoke out against the hateful address.

"CAIR-NY strongly condemns the City University of New York (CUNY) for joining dishonest, cowardly, and dangerous attacks on their own student leader," said Executive Director Afaf Nasher. "We urge CUNY to live by its stated values and stop cowering to anti-Palestinian pressure." Ignoring the "pervasively hostile environment for Jewish students" at CUNY [identified](#) in a complaint to the US Department of Education less than a year ago, Nasher claimed that the real threats are "anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-immigrant" and said that Mohammed was targeted "for daring to support justice for all."

CAIR inverting hatred, calling institutions and officials "anti-Muslim" and "anti-Palestinian" for condemning antisemitism, is hardly new. But the timing is important, given that CAIR was just highlighted as an ally in the new National Strategy. It was supposed to have abandoned its past bad behavior.

That record is clear. CAIR was [founded](#) by leaders of the Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP)—IAP's own founder is now a senior officer of the Hamas terror organization in the Gaza Strip. IAP was [described](#) by a past FBI counterterrorism chief as "a front organization for Hamas that engages in propaganda for Islamic militants," and IAP's Public Relations Director, Nihad Awad, became and remains CAIR's Executive Director.

Essentially, CAIR was created as an improved propaganda vehicle for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. This is why Awad misrepresents Hamas as "defending itself" and refuses to condemn it. CAIR is itself identified as a terrorist organization by the United Arab Emirates.

In 2019, CAIR published a report, "[Hijacked by Hate](#)," accusing the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, and the Arie and Ida Crown Memorial Foundation, among many others, of being "Fundamentals of Anti-Muslim Bigotry." In November of 2021, the executive director of CAIR's San Francisco office, Zahra Billoo, [identified](#) "Zionist synagogues" and all "polite Zionists"—essentially all Jews—as "enemies," both Islamophobic and opposed to "human rights." And CAIR's 2022 report, "[Islamophobia in the Mainstream](#)," slandered the American Center for Law and Justice, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis, the Middle East Media Research Institute, and the Gatestone Institute as part of an "Islamophobia Network." All of the targeted individuals and organizations oppose antisemitism and terrorism, not Islam.

CAIR has long [advocated](#) for Aafia Siddiqui, a terrorist now serving a long sentence for attempting to murder U.S. personnel in Afghanistan. She was [arrested](#) with notes on how to best carry out “a ‘mass casualty attack’ [on] NY City monuments” and “shower a city w deadly [radioactive] fallout.” Yet the director of CAIR’s Dallas chapter, Faizan Syed, called her arrest “one of the greatest cases of injustice in U.S. history” just days *after* Malik Faisal Akram charged into Congregation Beth Israel of Colleyville, Texas with a pistol, taking its rabbi and three congregants hostage in order to join CAIR’s demand for Siddiqui’s release.

So the repugnant tactics used by CAIR-NY in support of Mohammed’s hateful address are those it has employed throughout its history. It was a serious error to name CAIR as a provider of “cross-community support” in the National Strategy without a public statement of regret and commitment to change.

The Administration should rightly have insisted that CAIR publicly repudiate its ties to, and previous defenses of, a terrorist organization advocating for completion of Hitler’s final solution. It should have demanded CAIR rescind its reports targeting Jewish and other charities. And it should have required that CAIR permanently cease labeling those who support Israel and oppose terrorism “anti-Muslim.”

While we can debate the past, we should agree that the Administration must now take action. The proof you requested, that CAIR is still true to its malign history of antisemitic, pro-terror propaganda tactics, arrived a week before you asked for it in your interview. By the time you demanded “the beef,” top sirloin, filet mignon, and entire sides of ribs were already stacked on the table. And needless to say, not a morsel of it is kosher.

CAIR must be repudiated as the antisemitic PR front for terrorism and hate that it was created to be and unquestionably remains. Including it as a “cross-community” partner was mistaken from the outset, and now threatens the integrity of the National Strategy. No organization should be able to use national recognition for fighting antisemitism as a facade behind which to hide its incitement of hatred against Jews.

We look forward to your immediate response.

Yours sincerely,



Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld  
President