



August 17, 2023

The Honorable Eloise Reyes
1021 O Street, Room 8210
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED – HR 52 – Relative to American Muslim Appreciation and Awareness Month

Dear Assemblymember Eloise Reyes:

We write to you in opposition to House Resolution 52 (HR 52) – related to American Muslim Appreciation and Awareness Month in August 2023.¹ This bill stands to do extensive damage to California’s Muslim and interfaith communities by legitimizing extreme Islamist organizations. Collectively, these groups possess appalling track records of bigotry and anti-Semitism, ties to foreign governments and political movements, and even involvement in terrorism-related prosecutions.

The Middle East Forum (MEF) is a nonprofit dedicated to advancing American interests in the Middle East and protecting those interests in the face of Middle Eastern threats. To this end, MEF often works with moderate and reform Muslim American organizations that seek to raise awareness about Islamist groups that divide the community and promote extremism.

Similar resolutions passed by the California Assembly in previous years have commemorated the achievements of California Muslims in the areas of science, law, entertainment, and sports.² These bills showcased how the Muslim community is an integral part of American society, committed to the same values and principles as their California neighbors, while maintaining their unique cultural traditions.

However, HR 52 departs from previous bills by exclusively celebrating Sunni Islamist organizations. These nonprofits are deeply partisan, radical institutions that fail to represent the Muslim majority.

The 2023 resolution praises the California chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CA) as a “valued partner organization within California.” Yet, in a 2007 terror finance trial, CAIR was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in a plot to fund and support Hamas, a

¹ “House Resolution 52.” 2023. *California Legislative Information*.

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240HR52

² “House Resolution 48.” 2019. *California Legislative Information*.

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200HR48

foreign terrorist organization.³ At least seven CAIR officials have been convicted or deported for serious terrorism-related crimes.⁴ The Anti-Defamation League, a respected Jewish organization that monitors anti-Semitism, has accused CAIR-CA leaders of “traffick[ing] in antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric.”⁵

Next, HR 52 honors the Muslim American Society (MAS), referring to its Public Affairs and Civic Engagement branch as a “community organizing” and “leadership development hub.” In fact, prosecutors have called MAS the “overt arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in America,” which is part of a transnational, pan-Islamic movement known for promoting violence and extremism around the world.⁶ In 2014, both MAS and CAIR were designated as terrorist entities by the United Arab Emirates, a close U.S. ally.⁷

The bill also commends the activities of the Institute of Knowledge (IOK) in Diamond Bar, California, pointing to “its 25th year of empowering Muslim students.” On the contrary, IOK is an Islamic seminary inspired by Salafi and Deobandi teachings, two of the most ideologically extreme sects within Sunni Islam.⁸ At a 2019 conference, IOK’s Dean of Academics justified the practice of slavery under Islamic law, arguing that Islam has “regulated but not banned slavery.”⁹ Another IOK instructor once prayed that Allah would “exterminate” Israeli Jews.¹⁰

Finally, HR 52 honors the charity wing of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), noting that it provides “caring and compassionate service to victims of adversities and survivors of disasters.” The resolution does not explain how ICNA is the widely acknowledged U.S. branch of Jamaat-e-Islami, a violent South Asian Islamist movement responsible for massacring intellectuals in Bangladesh’s 1971 War for Independence.¹¹

In addition to mainstreaming extremist groups, HR 52 fails to acknowledge the achievements of Muslims from minority Islamic sects and reform movements. There is no space to commend Shi’a Muslim or Ahmadiyya communities, many of which settled in California to escape persecution from Islamists, nor does the resolution honor reformers that challenge the political dominance of American Islamist institutions.

Presently, California Assemblymembers have received hundreds of constituent letters and targeted tweets calling on the State Assembly to reject HR 52 in its current form. Please consider these concerns and find

³ USA v. Holy Land Foundation. 2007. “List of Unindicted Co-Conspirators and/or Joint Ventures.” *Investigative Project on Terrorism*. https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/423.pdf

⁴ Daniel Pipes. 2014. “Is CAIR a Terror Group?” *National Review*. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2014/11/cair-terror-group-daniel-pipes/>

⁵ The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). 2023. *Anti-Defamation League*. <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/council-american-islamic-relations-cair>

⁶ USA v. Sabri Benkahla. 2007. “Statement of the Issues.” *Investigative Project on Terrorism*. https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/542.pdf#page=58

⁷ Chiaramonte, Perry. 2014. “US group CAIR named terrorist organization by United Arab Emirates.” *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/us-group-cair-named-terrorist-organization-by-united-arab-emirates.amp>

⁸ Swindle, David. 2020. “Islamic Collectivism.” *Islamist Watch*. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/60742/islamic-collectivism>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Westrop, Sam. 2019. “Prominent California Islamists Praise Imam’s Call to Exterminate Jews.” *Middle East Forum*. <https://www.meforum.org/58906/california-islamists-praise-imams-call-to-exterminate-jews>

¹¹ Westrop, Sam. 2019. “Catalogue of ICNA’s Links to Jamaat-e-Islami.” *Islamist Watch*. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/57929/catalogue-of-icna-links-to-jamaat-e-islami>

a more appropriate and representative way to celebrate American Muslim Appreciation and Awareness Month.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'B. Baird'.

Benjamin Baird
Director of MEF Action
Middle East Forum