

Muslim Advocates Challenge ‘Misleading’ Terror Threat Report

NICHOLAS IOVINO April 10, 2018



SAN FRANCISCO (CN) – The Trump administration is using a misleading report that overstates the threat posed by immigrants to justify a travel ban targeting six Muslim-majority nations, a Muslim advocacy group claims in a new lawsuit.

Muslim Advocates sued the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security on Tuesday, claiming a report issued earlier this year excludes pertinent data to make it look as though Muslim immigrants pose a greater terror threat to the U.S. homeland than they actually do.

“This so-called report is blatantly false, purposefully misleading, and it’s illegal,” said Johnathan Smith, legal director of Muslim Advocates, in a statement. “The government has an obligation to be truthful and transparent, and we plan to hold this administration to that standard.”

The report, issued Jan. 16 this year, found 72 percent of those convicted of international terrorism charges in the U.S. from September 2001 to December 2016 were foreign-born.

But Muslim Advocates claims the report “manipulates information” by ignoring domestic terror incidents.

The Oakland, California-based advocacy group says excluding such information contradicts President Donald Trump’s March 2017 executive order, which directed the attorney general and Homeland Security secretary to “to be more transparent with the American people” by releasing data on the number of foreign nationals who have been radicalized, charged with terrorism or domestic abuse offenses, and “any other information relevant to public safety.”

According to the plaintiff, the report improperly counts individuals who committed acts of terrorism overseas and whose only tie to the U.S. is their extradition for prosecution.

“Although someone who has been extradited to the United States for trial may be charged and convicted while in the United States, the offenses committed by that person overseas do not necessarily reveal the actual terror threat to the United States, nor could they serve to inform the United States’ immigration policy,” the 26-page lawsuit argues.

It goes on to claim that, “The report has been used explicitly to stoke anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment and is likely to continue to be used in this manner.”

The government reportedly refused to retract or correct the report, despite Muslim Advocates’ request that it do so.

According to Muslim Advocates, conclusions in the January report conflict with past studies, including an April 2017 report by the Government Accountability Office. That report found that right-wing extremist groups were responsible for 73 percent of 85 violent extremist incidents that resulted in death since Sept. 12, 2001.

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The complaint also cites a May 2017 report by the Department of Homeland Security and FBI that found white supremacist extremists were responsible for 49 percent of homicides in 26 attacks from 2000 to 2016, “more than any other domestic extremist movement.”

“Despite the prevalence of serious domestic terrorist threats, particularly the threat posed by far-right wing violent extremist groups, the report, which purports to address all terrorism related offenses, only provides data related to international terrorism-related offenses,” the plaintiff claims in its lawsuit.

Muslim Advocates says the refusal to retract or correct the report violates the Information Quality Act and Administrative Procedure Act.

The group seeks a court order to make the government stop disseminating the “misleading” report and to respond to a petition seeking a retraction and correction.

Trump rolled out a third version of his controversial travel ban in September 2017 after appeals courts struck down two of its previous iterations.

The renewed order bars travel to the United States by nationals from Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. It also imposes restrictions on travel from two non-Muslim majority countries: Venezuela and North Korea.

Both Iraq and Sudan have been removed since the initial version.

The Supreme Court agreed to [review](#) the case after the Ninth Circuit struck down the third travel ban in December 2017 but allowed some parts of it to remain in place.

Last month, attorneys general from 16 states [asked](#) the high court to overturn the travel ban, arguing it hurts families and undermines the states’ residents, institutions, businesses and economies.

The Trump Administration justifies the policy by claiming certain countries fail to collect and share the information needed to properly screen foreign nationals seeking entry into the U.S.

Opponents have characterized that claim as a pretext, citing Trump’s comments during the 2016 presidential campaign, in which he repeatedly called for a ban on Muslims entering the U.S., as evidence of his bigotry against Muslims.

Representatives for the U.S. Departments of Justice and Homeland Security declined to comment.

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