



Department of Justice

United States Attorney William C. Killian
Eastern District of Tennessee

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(865) 545-4167
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**REMARKS BY U.S. ATTORNEY WILLIAM C. KILLIAN AT
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY EVENT
HELD IN MANCHESTER, TENNESSEE, JUNE 4, 2013**

Good evening. It's an honor for me to be here today to speak to you -- members of my American family -- and to reflect on our current struggle for civil rights in the Post 9-11 era. Thank you for your invitation to speak. The American Muslim Council continues to be a partner with us on addressing the challenges we all face in keeping our country safe, and in protecting our civil rights and civil liberties.

My office, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Tennessee, is known largely for its work on criminal prosecutions. But the truth is that by the time we are prosecuting someone, it is usually too late. The individual being prosecuted has already broken the law. The victim has already suffered the consequences.

Sadly, this is the reality of our hate crimes work. Almost 10 years after 9/11. More than 50 federal prosecutions later and lots of long prison sentences . . . and far too many people are still repeating the same vicious acts of hate against members of the Arab/Muslim/Sikh and South Asian Communities.

But truly, what would cause a man to attempt to burn a place of worship?

I think that it is instructive that we remember what the 1st Amendment says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Let me be clear, in this country hateful speech is allowed, it is protected by the freedom of speech part of the First amendment. But if someone makes threats of violence, that is not protected speech, and they will be prosecuted. Likewise, if someone commits acts of violence, under the guise of religion or other speech, they will be prosecuted for their violent acts.

We are fully committed to prosecuting federal hate crimes -- threats and acts of violence -- committed against Arabs, Muslims, Sikhs and South Asians and all who face the horror of hate violence. But these prosecutions are not enough; these prosecutions are not changing hearts and minds. Already in fiscal year 2012, we in the Justice Department convicted more defendants on federal hate crimes charges than we did in 2011; and in 2011, we convicted more defendants on these charges than in 2010.

You need not like the color of a person's skin, practice their religion, agree with their sexual orientation, enjoy their various cultural traits or appreciate their living with a disability. However, under the law, we must respect their civil rights. Under the law, people may not be threatened or subjected to violence because of these traits. And we will continue to work night and day to keep our communities safe – safe from terrorists, and safe from those who commit hate crimes.

In the Justice Department, we sadly see acts of hate and discrimination against the Arab and Muslim communities in all parts of our work, and we use all of the laws Congress has given us to right those wrongs, civil as well as criminal.

We are also seeing the harm that bigotry causes young people in schools from bullying and harassment. We know that many Arab and Muslim children face unacceptable taunting, bullying and even violence because of who they are, what they look like, where their parents came from, or the way they worship God. We are bringing civil cases across this country to make sure that all children can attend safe schools, and to identify bullies and try to correct their misbehavior. As Tom Perez, the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, has warned, without ensuring safe schools, "Today's bullies are tomorrow's civil rights defendants."

Don't forget the language of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

It is going to require more work in all of our areas to get us closer to eliminating discrimination against Arabs in our country—to truly change hearts and minds. We have to fight discrimination in our schools, in our workplaces and in our communities. And we (and this we includes you) must fight discrimination not just against Arabs and Muslims and Sikhs but also with respect to all races, all religions, all national origins, all ethnicities, and stand with all of our brothers and sisters with disabilities and regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Not only are we all God's people. But we are all America's people. There is no form of hate that should be acceptable in this great country."

When it comes keeping this country safe, some continue to falsely believe that we can lump entire groups of people together based solely on their race or color or religion. Not only is this thinking wrong, but it is dangerous.

As the Attorney General said, "Our focus must be on individuals as opposed to communities. We need to be focused on what drives individuals to do certain things? We don't want to stigmatize. We don't want to alienate entire communities. We need to focus on individuals and groups of individuals who might band together who would try to harm American interests or American citizens that is what this Justice Department is doing."

Upholding our core constitutional values is indeed necessary to protect us as a nation. Let's keep working toward this goal and as the Attorney General said: "This work begins by meeting fear with reason; by meeting ignorance with information; and by meeting suspicious gazes with an outstretched hand."

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