



June 28, 2023

Hon. Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

President Biden:

Thank you for your commitment to combating anti-Jewish hatred in your Administration's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. Though noble in its intentions, the genuine impact it will have appears hindered by the inclusion of a recognized antisemitic organization in its implementation: the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).¹

The Anti-Defamation League maintains that “[a]ntipathy towards Israel has been a CAIR staple since the group was founded in 1994,” but a documented record of antisemitism is not the only reason CAIR's engagement with this initiative is troubling. CAIR has been embroiled in a litany of controversies that call into question the character of its leadership and genuine commitment to ending anti-religious bigotry.

A 2021 report by NPR found chapter leadership at CAIR fostered a toxic workplace in which “sexual harassment and bullying” were part of the organizational culture.² Mr. Awad ignored warnings from victims of sexual harassment in his organization and turned a blind eye for years. Even more concerning: Mr. Awad himself is alleged to have engaged in sexual harassment against a former CAIR staffer.³

Furthermore, in 2018, Latina theologian and interfaith activist Karen Leslie Hernandez was terminated from CAIR chapter leadership under the guise that she was “not Muslim.” In reality, court documents attest that the true reason for her dismissal was because Mr. Awad “was upset that the new Dallas employee spoke openly online about being a survivor of domestic violence. CAIR National's attorney came up with an ‘alternate’ story of the events and told the local chapter to offer the woman a payoff using an NDA in exchange for her silence on the religious and gender discrimination she faced.”⁴

At the very least, an organization engaged to promote anti-religious hate should not have a record of anti-religious discrimination within its own ranks. That cannot be said of CAIR, which has sadly been accused of discrimination against other Muslims. A 2001 complaint letter to Mr. Awad from

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/25/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-releases-first-ever-u-s-national-strategy-to-counter-antisemitism/>

² <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/15/984572867/muslim-civil-rights-leader-accused-of-harassment-misconduct><https://www.npr.org/2021/04/15/984572867/muslim-civil-rights-leader-accused-of-harassment-misconduct>

³ https://cairawad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lori_Complaint_Response.pdf

⁴ https://cairawad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lori_Complaint_Response.pdf

Ms. Tannaz Haddadi stated that “[i]t may appear unusual to claim discrimination while working for a civil-rights organization. It may seem even more unusual that I am a Muslim claiming religious discrimination while working for a Muslim organization,” but that is precisely what happened according to Ms. Haddadi. In her letter she declares she was demoted after CAIR leadership “discovered that my background is Shi’a.” Mr. Awad refused to intervene.⁵

Each of these controversies alone should be cause for concern; together they reveal a pattern of odious actions at CAIR that would appear to make their involvement with the National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism less of a strength and more of a liability.

The New Tolerance Campaign respectfully asks that the White House elucidate the internal process that engaged CAIR in the rollout of the National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism; who was tasked with vetting the organization in advance of the rollout; whether the controversies described herein were considered during such vetting; and, if they were, why they were dismissed.

Sincerest gratitude for your attention to this matter, and for your continued efforts to quash antisemitism in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Angelo', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Gregory T. Angelo
President, New Tolerance Campaign

⁵ <https://cairawad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Tannaz-Haddadi.pdf>