

September 14, 2022

The Honorable Joseph Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

From Charlottesville to Buffalo, we have seen the consistent and visible rise of white supremacist violence. We recognize the urgency of the political moment. We have all grasped for words and solutions as our country reels from the recent manifestation of our country's long history of white supremacist violence. And still, we write to you deeply concerned that the United We Stand summit will continue or expand the harmful counterterrorism framework and initiatives that have furthered white supremacy, particularly the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program now named Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) at the Department of Homeland Security. We oppose this repackaging of a flawed initiative.

Since the Obama-Biden administration launched CVE, Muslim communities and civil rights groups nationally have consistently called for an end to this program. Your [campaign promise](#) to end the program gave us hope, but we have subsequently been deeply disappointed that CVE instead has been renamed and rebranded as a "public health" and "whole of society" approach to preventing violence. Law enforcement funding and shepherding of social services is not a "whole of society" approach, but rather furthers criminalization and chills access to these essential services.

DHS claims that it has dramatically revamped CVE, even recently touting it as part of the [DHS Equity Action Plan](#). While the first years of the CVE program included blatant targeting of Muslims, with behaviors like [wearing the hijab or criticizing foreign policy deemed risks](#), now DHS claims it is ideologically neutral, promoting much broader "indicators" like having psychological issues, sporadic employment, and trouble in relationships.

This shift from pure Islamophobia to supposedly targeting anyone is not helpful when the underlying assumptions are false. [Time](#) and [time again](#), both observers and CVE materials themselves show almost all of these so-called indicators are NOT predictive of violence and exhibiting one or more of them does not mean the person will commit violence. Indeed, many of these indicators are widely demonstrated throughout the United States by people not inclined to engage in any violence. Moreover, reliance on such vague and malleable signs opens the door to bias. Racial and religious minorities who are already viewed with suspicion will bear the brunt of this approach.

There is no evidence that the CVE model reduces violence, but there is global evidence of its negative impacts. DHS and DOJ continue funding numerous CVE programs and grants, even though, [according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights & Counter-Terrorism](#), the field is dominated by junk science, exaggerated claims of effectiveness, and so-called experts chasing disproved ideas. Furthermore, given widespread association of Muslims with terrorism, simply removing examples of Muslims from DHS reports does not eliminate the pre-conceived racism people harbor in their individual biases. Muslims are disproportionately targeted by counterterrorism programs due to unconscious biases, [even in the medical field](#).

The rebranding of this initiative as “public health” is undercut by the involvement of the U.S. Intelligence Community—including the National Counterterrorism Center and the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis—and federal law enforcement agencies. Public health programs are not, and should not be, led or primarily supported by law enforcement agencies. Indeed, inserting law enforcement into public health undermines these services by discouraging people from getting the help they need. Social services should be managed by the agencies best equipped to provide them, not co-opted by police and security agencies like DHS and DOJ.

Equity does not mean applying a debunked and globally criticized model for behavioral policing to all communities; equity means listening to those communities harmed by both these initiatives and white supremacist violence. White supremacist violence should not be shrouded with the vague vocabulary of hatred and extremism. This terminology (e.g. extremist, radicalized, terrorism) has historically justified the policing and surveillance of the communities most impacted by white supremacy. The administration has been lauded for tackling this violence, when in reality all of the proposed initiatives target “domestic violent extremism” - which has been intentionally defined broadly, for example to include both anti- and pro-abortion “extremists.” It is not co-equal with white supremacist violence and is thus open to abuse.

Beyond CVE, there have been numerous initiatives launched to tackle “domestic terrorism” or “domestic violent extremism” including social media monitoring by the [FBI](#), [Federal Protective Service](#), and DHS [Office of Intelligence and Analysis](#). These programs threaten free expression, target critics of government policy, including Black, environmental, and abortion rights activists smeared as “extremists,” and are ineffective. Solutions to address white supremacy must not rely on these broken models that have often been used to perpetuate it. Indeed, CVE programs [explicitly operate](#) on the bizarre and unsupported assumption that diversity is suggestive of a national security threat—and that Muslim, immigrant, Black or LGBTQ Americans must be surveilled to keep America safe. And as [recent analysis](#) has shown, relying on law enforcement to fix our white supremacy problem will fail as many of those agencies have their own problems with racism, white supremacy, and militancy they need to solve first.

We agree that we must come together to address this violence. But the goals of the United We Stand Summit will not be met if your Administration relies on a debunked CVE framework or expanded law enforcement programming to guide the government’s response. We are still demanding an end to the flagship CVE program, DHS’s Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3), and note that both the House and Senate included new reporting

requirements for CP3 in their appropriations reports. Additional reporting on federal agencies' counterterrorism and "domestic terrorism" investigations and prosecutions are welcome, especially given the history of targeting communities of color. There should also be a thorough review of the harm caused by every iteration of this office (from CVE and TVTP to CP3) through public conversations, research, and hearings with impacted communities, which you also promised in [your campaign platform](#), to understand the damage done and guide the reallocation of CP3 funding away from law enforcement.

We invite you to work with us to end these discriminatory programs and redirect this funding towards resources that communities impacted by white supremacist violence need. Please reach out to Fatema Ahmad at fahmad@muslimjusticeleague.org with any questions or to arrange a meeting.

Fatema Ahmad
Executive Director, Muslim Justice League

Action Center on Race & the Economy
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Security, Race and Rights
Chingaree Consulting, LLC
Coalition for Civil Freedoms
Defending Rights and Dissent
Demand Progress Education Fund
For the Binat
Friends of Human Rights
HEART
Islamophobia Studies Center
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Voice for Peace - North Carolina Triangle Chapter
MediaJustice
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
Muslim Counterpublics Lab
Muslim Power Building Project
Muslims for Just Futures

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
Oakland Privacy
Pacific Asian Counseling Services
Palestinian Youth Movement
Poligon Education Fund
Project South
Restore the Fourth
RootsAction
Sakhi for South Asian Women
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Network
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
The Sikh Coalition
The Surveillance, Tech & Immigration Policing Project at the Immigrant Defense Project
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
Vigilant Love
X-Lab

Additional Resources

[CVE 101 - Muslim Justice League](#)

[Community Investment, Not Criminalization](#) - Brennan Center for Justice

[CVE & White Supremacy: The Trap of Equal Opportunity Surveillance - Muslim Justice League](#)

[The Surveillance State Can't Solve White Supremacy - Progressive.org](#)

[Civil Libertarian Opposition To New Domestic-Terrorism Bill Weakens \(substack.com\)](#)

[Biden Is Expanding Trump's War on "Domestic Violent Extremism" — and It's Sweeping Up Black People \(theintercept.com\)](#)

[The Leadership Conference - National Strategy - The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights \(civilrights.org\)](#)