



August 28, 2015

Open Letter to the Honorable Scott K. Walker, Governor of the State of Wisconsin, 115 East Capitol, Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

I am the President of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, the largest Islamic organization in Wisconsin that operates three mosques serving the greater Milwaukee area's estimated 15,000 Muslims. This letter is being written to express our concerns relative to your statement last Friday at a campaign stop at a VFW Post in Derry, New Hampshire that there are only a "handful of reasonable, moderate followers of Islam who don't share the radical beliefs that these radical Islamic terrorists have." Despite multiple requests from the media and others that you personally clarify whether you simply misspoke, you have remained personally silent. We believe that allowing your statement to stand "on the record" without a personal and direct correction by you poses a safety risk to the lives and property of American Muslims, including residents of the State of Wisconsin and their places of worship.

As you know, there is an "Islamophobia industry" in this country that seeks to vilify all Muslims and their faith, Islam. The result of these efforts has been to fuel feelings of hatred toward Muslims living in this country, leading to incidents of murder, assault or vandalism of property. Last week on August 18, 2015 – just three days before you made your remark in Derry - the FBI released the following statement to the general public, which it previously had sent to law enforcement across the country in May 2015:

Militia extremists are expanding their target sets to include Muslims and Islamic religious institutions in the United States. This has resulted in increased violent rhetoric and plotting and has the potential to lead, over the long term, to additional harassment of or violence against Muslims by domestic extremists. The FBI makes these assessments with high confidence on the basis of a large body of source reporting generated mainly since 2013. This information augments prior FBI analysis that established militia extremists target government personnel and law enforcement officers, perceived threats from abroad, and individuals or institutions that seek to constrain Second Amendment rights.

See: <https://publicintelligence.net/fbi-militias-targeting-muslims/>

In its report, the FBI also concludes in part that "militia extremist interest in Islam as a target is a product of ideology that views Muslims collectively with suspicion" and that "militia extremists, increasingly over the past two years, have conducted surveillance, plotted and advocated violence against mosques and Islamic centers across the United States and specific Muslim communities."

Thus, allowing your remark that there is only a "handful of reasonable, moderate followers of Islam who don't share the radical beliefs that these radical Islamic terrorists have" to stand without your personal explicit

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correction could reasonably be viewed by these militia extremists and others of their ilk as further support for their collective suspicion of and acts of hatred and violence against American Muslims.

Nor was your campaign spokeswoman AshLee Strong's comment the next day that, "The Governor knows that the majority of ISIS's victims are Muslims. Muslims who want to live in peace – the majority of Muslims – are the first target of radical Islamic terrorists," sufficient. First, it was not your personal clarification that you misspoke. Second, the comment by Strong that "the majority of Muslims" want to live in peace ("majority" being an undefined remark that might only constitute 51%) does not adequately state the truth of the situation and still invites the collective suspicion of Muslims that fuels militia extremists against American Muslims by implying that possibly up to almost one in two Muslims supports terrorism. You, even inadvertently, should not feed a new kind of McCarthyism, either in this State or in our country or in the world, by maintaining your personal silence.

In the past, while campaigning for Milwaukee County Executive or while holding that office, you personally visited our Islamic Center in Milwaukee and have met with the leadership and members of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee and toured its school. Moreover, you should know that the Islamic Society of Milwaukee has and does condemn terrorism, whether by a state, a quasi-state or an individual. For example, the Islamic Society of Milwaukee has stated its complete support for the religious ruling against terrorism and religious extremism issued by the Fiqh Council of North America (the highest Islamic Sunni juridical body in North America), which reaffirmed Islam's absolute condemnation of terrorism and religious extremism:

Islam strictly condemns religious extremism and the use of violence against innocent lives. There is no justification in Islam for extremism or terrorism. Targeting civilians' life and property through suicide bombings or any other method of attack is haram – or forbidden - and those who commit these barbaric acts are criminals, not "martyrs."

See: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4775588>

More recently, the Islamic Society of Milwaukee's Religious Director (as Secretary General of the Fiqh Council of North America) and I signed an internationally published letter condemning ISIS and refuting its un-Islamic ideology. See: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/religion/local-muslim-leaders-join-denunciation-of-islamic-state-b99359212z1-277146101.html>

We understand that you are in the midst of a heated campaign and every day brings its new challenges and there is a desire to keep moving ahead. However, we believe that it is in the best interests of all concerned, including for the safety of American Muslims, that you take the time to personally clarify this issue: it is only a *relative* handful of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims who support terrorism; the *vast* majority of Muslims are reasonable, moderate and peaceful. We urge you to join us in reaffirming this fact by your personally stating this fact and that you misspoke in your statement last Friday.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Ahmed J. Quereshi

President, Islamic Society of Milwaukee