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CHR&GJ Welcomes Release of U.S. Strategy on Preventing Violent Extremism

Cites Human Rights Concerns and Inadequate Safeguards

The Global Justice Clinic of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law welcomes the White House's release of its strategy [*Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*](#), but expresses concern about the extent to which it co-opts a wide range of community engagement tools, including social services, to prevent violent extremism and its emphasis on Muslim communities. As demonstrated in the Center's July 2011 163-page report [*A Decade Lost: Locating Gender in U.S. Counter-Terrorism*](#), this approach of defining community integration as counter-terrorism—recently rejected in the United Kingdom after being in place since 2007—further securitizes engagement with Muslim communities and makes women in these communities unsafe. *A Decade Lost* also provides the first in-depth analysis of the U.S. government's use of counter-narratives to combat extremist ideology—another key plank of the White House's new strategy—warning of the human rights impacts (e.g. on freedoms of religion, association, and expression, including of women and sexual minorities) that result without adequate safeguards. Such safeguards are notably absent from the new strategy, which fails to define key terms such as “radicalization” and “violent extremism,” explain the relationship between the two, or identify the basis on which the government will select and vet partners for its counter-narrative and engagement strategies.

According to Jayne Huckerby, CHR&GJ Research Director, “Far from empowering local partners to prevent violent extremism, the new strategy recasts community programs as national security activities and further securitizes the Obama Administration's engagement with Muslim communities. From stigmatizing these communities to discouraging women from accessing community services because of fear of exposing themselves and family members to undue scrutiny, the fallout from this approach is immense.”

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