

FBI 'Anti-Extremism' Program Discriminates Against Muslims



Washington, November 4 (RHC)-- The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has designed an interactive program for schools to prevent students from being attracted to violent extremism and radicalization but the program is feared to foment discrimination against Muslims.

The game-like program, called “Don’t Be a Puppet,” developed by the FBI, is meant to teach users how to identify someone who may be on the path to becoming a radical extremist. The program was scheduled to be launched on Monday but was temporarily put on hold and is likely to proceed despite concerns that the program will lead to further bullying of Arab and Muslim students.

“The FBI is developing a website designed to provide awareness about the dangers of violent extremist predators on the Internet with input from students, educators and community leaders,” an FBI spokeswoman told The New York Times. The FBI has not confirmed details of the program or why it was put on hold and when it will be launched.

Some Muslim leaders are skeptical of efforts they see as disproportionately focused on Muslims and wrongly leaning on them to connect law enforcement to people who may simply be criticizing US foreign policy.

“Teachers in classrooms should not become an extension of law enforcement,” said Arjun S. Sethi, an adjunct professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center who specializes in counter-terrorism and law enforcement.

Seamus Hughes, the deputy director of George Washington University’s program on extremism, said: “Unfortunately, the age of violent extremists is trending younger and younger. Therefore, schools can be an important space in spotting and combating radicalization, as teachers are often best positioned to see concerning signs. Of course this needs to be done right, with proper training, respect of civil liberties and without stigmatizing,” Hughes said. “Doing otherwise would make the effort counterproductive. There are finite resources for countering violent extremism programming. It may be best to focus efforts elsewhere.”

Many civil rights and religious leaders have referred to a Muslim student in Texas who was apprehended after bringing a clock he had built to school as evidence that teachers do not have the proper training or judgment to identify potential extremists.

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