



## News Release

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### **Report shows record number of Muslim-American terrorism cases in 2015**

*Violent extremism dropped off sharply in the second half of the year*

Chapel Hill, N.C. – Feb. 1, 2016 – A new report by Charles Kurzman, a professor at UNC-Chapel Hill, documents an unprecedented number of Muslim-Americans associated with violent extremism in 2015, with most of the cases involving travel or attempted travel to join militants in Syria. The number of cases dropped off sharply in the second half of the year. As in recent years, violent extremism involving Muslim-Americans accounted for only a small fraction of the threats to public safety in the United States in 2015.

The report, published annually since 2010 by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, offers systematic evidence on the pressing issue of terrorism. Data from past reports has been cited in Congressional testimony, White House policy documents, national and international media, and scholarly work on the subject.

The 2015 report identifies 81 Muslim-Americans associated with violent extremism, the highest annual total to date. Three quarters of these plots occurred in the first half of 2015, and only one quarter in the second half of the year, although this drop-off was overshadowed by the shootings in San Bernardino, California, in December, which caused 14 fatalities.

The report also identifies 41 Muslim-Americans who have traveled since 2012 to join militants in Syria. The pace of travel peaked in 2014 and declined in 2015.

“The period of accelerating radicalization appears to have passed,” said Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology in UNC-Chapel Hill’s College of Arts and Sciences and author of the report. Kurzman noted that militants in Syria have recruited dozens of Americans to their cause, including some who were inspired by the self-proclaimed “Islamic State” to engage in violence in the United States.

David Schanzer, director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security and Associate Professor of Public Policy at Duke University, noted the disparity between

actual cases and estimates of American with connections to ISIS/ISIL. “We have seen government estimates that 250 Americans have traveled to fight in Syria, but the report documents only 41 known cases, with 5 returned foreign fighters (all of whom were arrested). This is a threat to keep our eyes on – but it is not an overwhelming one.”

“Fortunately, the appeal of revolutionary violence remains very limited among Muslim-Americans,” Kurzman said. “Muslim-American extremists have caused 69 deaths over 14 years, while 134 people were killed in mass shootings in the United States in 2015 alone.” This figure does not include the victims of Muslim-American extremists.

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