

Trump, ultra-right media target Representative Ilhan Omar

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With a tweet blasted out to 60 million people, linking Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, President Trump has joined a fascistic campaign inciting violence against Omar, one of the first two Muslim-American women to be elected to Congress.

Trump's tweet followed a series of anti-Omar provocations in the ultra-right media, beginning with commentary by several Fox News hosts, then an incendiary cover for Thursday's edition of the *New York Post* pairing Omar with a giant photo of the burning World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Both Fox and the *Post* are owned by billionaire Rupert Murdoch, one of Trump's chief political backers.

The media and twitter attacks on Omar follow the arrest two weeks ago of a right-wing Trump supporter in New York for threatening physical violence against the Minnesota congresswoman. Federal prosecutors announced April 5 that Patrick Carlineo Jr. had been arrested after placing a call to her Capitol Hill office in which he threatened to shoot her. Carlineo gave his name and contact information to an Omar staffer, who turned the details over to the FBI.

The ultra-right furor follows a series of media provocations against Omar based on bogus claims of anti-Semitism because of her criticisms of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians and the subservience of many US politicians to the Israel lobby.

The latest provocation is even more transparently fraudulent than the previous efforts. Representative Omar was speaking March 23 at a dinner sponsored by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) in Los Angeles, one week after a fascist gunman killed 50 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Noting the similarity between the gunman's views and those of anti-Muslim politicians in the United

States like Trump, she cited the rising threats to mosques, schools and individual Muslims.

"I think that many of us knew that this was going to get worse, because we finally have a leader, a world leader, in the White House, who publicly says Islam hates us, who fuels hate against Muslims, who thinks it is OK, it is OK to speak about a faith and a whole community in a way that is dehumanizing," Omar said.

She went on to say, "CAIR was founded after 9/11 because they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties."

The four words "some people did something" were seized on weeks later, entirely out of context, first by a Fox News host, then by Republican Representative Dan Crenshaw of Texas, then by the *New York Post* for its inflammatory cover, and finally by President Trump, whose vicious provocations are rarely original, but simply copy and rebroadcast material packaged for him by the ultra-right and fascist media.

The imagery of the *Post* cover and the Trump tweet is very similar to what appeared earlier this year on a poster displayed by Republican Party operatives inside the West Virginia state capitol in Charleston, which showed a photograph of Omar, in a hijab, above the burning Twin Towers, with language deploring the election of the Muslim-American congresswoman as proof that voters had "forgotten" the 9/11 attacks.

One leading House Democrat, Assistant Speaker Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico, joined in the attack on Omar, telling MSNBC, "Those statements were not only hurtful to me, but extremely hurtful to everyone that was personally impacted by those terrorist attacks." Luján announced last week that he would seek the Democratic nomination to fill the US Senate seat being vacated by Senator Tom Udall, who is retiring.

While most Democratic presidential candidates publicly defended Omar and criticized Trump's tweet as an incitement to violence, the initial response of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was to downplay the immediacy of the threat and rebuke Trump not for his attack on Omar, but for using the image of the burning World Trade Center.

Pelosi actually made no mention of Omar in a statement issued from Stuttgart, Germany, where she was visiting US troops and receiving a briefing on US-NATO military deployments against Russia. "The memory of 9/11 is sacred ground, and any discussion of it must be done with reverence," she said. "The president shouldn't use the painful images of 9/11 for a political attack."

Only after public comments noting that her statement made no mention of any threat to Omar did Pelosi issue a second statement, this time from London. She declared that she had spoken with her office in Washington "to ensure that Capitol Police are conducting a security assessment to safeguard Congresswoman Omar, her family and her staff." Pelosi called on Trump to take down his video linking Omar and 9/11.

Pelosi's trip to Europe followed a two-day conference of the House Democratic Caucus at which she was at pains to maintain that the Democrats must continue to work with the Trump administration. While criticizing Trump for his threat to ship undocumented immigrants to "sanctuary cities" like San Francisco—where Pelosi's congressional district is located—she declared, "I'm not giving up on the president," as a possible partner on immigration policy.

Omar, by contrast, had blasted Trump's top immigration adviser, Stephen Miller, as a "white nationalist." This produced bellows from the White House, reiterating claims that Omar was an anti-Semite, because Miller is Jewish. That background has not stopped Miller from consorting with fascists and neo-Nazis who make up much of the audience of Breitbart News and similar ultra-right media outlets.



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