

*In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful
All praise belongs to God, the Lord of the Worlds
May peace be upon Prophet Muhammad and his family*



Council on American-Islamic Relations
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April 8, 2022

Todd Combs
Chief Executive Officer
GEICO
5260 Western Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

RE: GEICO's Public Attack on Linda Sarsour and Cancellation of Arab-American Heritage Month Event

Dear Mr. Combs:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, our nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, I write to express deep concern with GEICO's decision to cancel a planned event celebrating Arab-American Heritage Month and launch a defamatory public attack on one of our nation's most prominent Muslim and Arab-American community activists.

Last month, GEICO contracted with Linda Sarsour to speak at an event celebrating Arab-American Heritage Month. After GEICO announced this event, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian voices, including a former Trump Administration official, began publicly attacking both Ms. Sarsour and GEICO. One notoriously anti-Palestinian group called on its followers to inundate your company with critical messages and social media posts.

In response to these attacks, GEICO suddenly announced the cancellation of the Arab-American Heritage Month event. What's even worse: in your statement announcing the cancellation, GEICO launched a public attack on Ms. Sarsour, implicitly accusing her of "hate."

This is unacceptable. Linda Sarsour is a widely known and widely respected human rights activist. She has vocally advocated for justice for all people and she repeatedly fought against Islamophobia, antisemitism, xenophobia, and other forms of hatred. She has appeared on various major media outlets, from CNN to MSNBC, and received an award from the White House during the Obama Administration. She also co-organized the first annual Women's March in Washington, DC, the largest single-day protest in American history.

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Because of her human rights activism, Ms. Sarsour has been repeatedly attacked and smeared by far-right voices, particularly anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian organizations, who frequently tell blatant lies about her past statements in order to attack her. She regularly receives hateful messages and death threats as a result of these dishonest attacks.

Although experiencing such abusive behavior is common for human rights activists, especially Muslim activists, what's not common is being publicly attacked by a prominent corporation like GEICO. Your attack on Ms. Sarsour has validated dishonest Islamophobic smears, harmed her reputation and increased the danger she faces.

In addition, your decision to cancel GEICO's Arab-American Heritage Month event altogether has insulted our nation's Arab-American and Muslim communities. Celebrating Middle Eastern and North African contributions to our nation was a laudable decision. Backtracking in response to racist, Islamophobic and anti-Arab voices was the wrong decision.

People across the country expect better from GEICO, a corporation that has spoken up about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion. In this correspondence, we are including a statement signed by dozens of civil rights and human rights groups, including Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Arab-American organizations.

To address widespread concerns about GEICO's conduct, we ask that your corporation immediately delete the statement it published attacking Ms. Sarsour, apologize to the Arab-American community for cancelling your planned heritage month event, and meet with us and other community leaders to plot a positive way forward.

Thank you for your swift attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nihad Awad".

Nihad Awad

National Executive Director

Council on American-Islamic Relations