



October 20, 2016

VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. Richard Plepler
Chairman and CEO
Home Box Office, Inc. (HBO)
1100 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Re: ADC Demands Cancellation of HBO Show “Mogadishu, Minnesota”

I am writing to you on behalf of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the country’s largest Arab-American civil rights organization. ADC has protected the Arab-American community for thirty-five years against discrimination, racism, and stereotyping. The purpose of this letter is to demand the cancellation of the HBO show, “Mogadishu, Minnesota.”

ADC demands the cancellation of “Mogadishu, Minnesota” and would like to request a meeting with its producers, writers, and stakeholders at HBO. The theme of the show feeds off of stereotyping, stigmatization, and criminalization of Somali -Americans. According to statements made to The Hollywood Reporter, the show "will draw open an iron curtain behind which viewers will see the highly impenetrable world of Jihadi recruitment."¹

Most discussions of “Mogadishu, Minnesota” and its thematic focus in major entertainment outlets and media sources suggest that “jihadi recruitment” is the common thread that weaves the series together, and is not merely a backdrop to a broader story about everyday life of Somali-Minnesotans. The initial name of the show was “The Recruiters,” which minimizes the many contributions that Somali-Americans have made to Minneapolis, Minnesota and the United States. HBO is directly giving a platform to the continued racial and religious profiling of a minority community. Moreover, this “jihadi recruitment” theme plays on the fears of terrorism and groups like ISIS, and thus, will further feed growing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in the country. For Americans who have never interacted with the Somali community, this TV show centered on “jihadi recruitment” will be the depiction of Somali-Americans they may ever see, endorsed by HBO.

¹ Daniel Kreps, *K'naan, Kathryn Bigelow Team for Jihadi Recruitment HBO Series*, The Rolling Stones, Dec. 15, 2015, available at <http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/news/knaan-kathryn-bigelow-team-for-jihadi-recruitment-hbo-series-20151212>.

There is no transparency in its production and portrayal of the Somali-American community in Minnesota. There has been limited to no open communication with the Somali American community in Minnesota on how this show will work to represent them. No clarity exists on the identity of all of the writers and collaborators for the show, as well as donors and stakeholders, making it hard to gauge if those involved understand the richness and intricacies of the Somali American experience. Many Somali residents of Minnesota believe that, the show will only serve to further marginalize Somali youth and depict them as more prone to violence. The show will turn Somali's into a suspect class based solely on their identity. Given the focus of the show and its former title, "The Recruiters," this opposition and skepticism is warranted and understandable.

ADC has serious concerns that the HBO series theme is part of the same narrative of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) policies that have targeted the Somali American youth. CVE is a government led program that is based on the notion that certain groups of people are inherently predisposed to violence. CVE 'at-risk' factors and/or warning signs are generally based on socioeconomic factors that have historically been used to target communities of color. Instead of addressing factors that cause alienation like government discrimination, profiling, police brutality, and institutionalized racism, CVE perpetuates profiling and discrimination.

ADC is deeply concerned with the dangers posed by the show "Mogadishu, Minnesota," and demands cancellation of the HBO series. This HBO series will only continue to divide us by glorifying criminalization of an entire community. ADC supports the momentous public opposition by the Somali American community in Minnesota, and looks forward to meeting with you and series production team to discuss the show.

We look forward to your response. You can reach me directly at the office, 202-244-2990.

Respectfully,



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