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NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Attorney Wendy J. Olson Issues Statement on Building Resilient Communities

U.S. Attorney Wendy J. Olson today announced the beginning steps of a grass roots effort to form a community and law enforcement coalition to build stronger, safer communities.

“Strong communities are safe communities,” said Olson. “We need to make our community resilient against threats posed by violent crime, violent extremism and on-line predators. When law enforcement, community groups, faith community leaders, business leaders and government officials work together, we more effectively prevent and reduce crime and make Idaho a better place to live.”

Olson said that on July 8, representatives from the refugee community, refugee support agencies, Muslim community, Boise Police Department, FBI, Intermountain Fair Housing Council, ACLU, and Stand Up America met with representatives from her office and discussed community responses to recent incidents in Idaho and across the country. “We are at a critical

time in our nation and in our own community – from the shooting at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, to anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiments expressed by groups and individuals in Idaho, to defiance in parts of some states to the Supreme Court’s decision to legalize same sex marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*,” said Olson. “There are many currents that seek to divide communities. Instead, we have to come together. We need to stand up and form strategies against those who espouse extremist ideologies and recruit others to engage in violent acts in our communities on their behalf. We want to mentor our young people, educate parents, identify solutions, and form closer relationships between refugees and Idahoans who have been here for generations.”

Olson said that an immediate objective of the July 8 meeting was to reassure members of the refugee community and Muslim community that with the federal terrorism trial in *United States v. Kurbanov* scheduled to begin July 13, law enforcement officers will be vigilant to protecting them against bias crimes.

“To be certain, international terrorism and the conduct of those who are inspired by international terrorist groups to engage in violent conduct pose a serious threat to every community in this nation,” said Olson. “Law enforcement agencies and my office will be deliberate and thorough in pursuing such criminal cases. But we also take great care to ensure that individuals are investigated and prosecuted based on specific illegal acts, not based on how they appear, or how they worship or where they are from. Nor should investigation and prosecution of one person provide inspiration for others to act out against refugees or Muslims or to act out in support of extremism inspired by Al Qaeda or ISIL or other terrorist groups.”

Olson said that attendees at the July 8 meeting supported efforts for further outreach and education to build a resilient community. “There is clear support that a broader coalition would

provide safer communities in two ways. First, it would provide tools for early awareness of a person being radicalized to commit a violent act, regardless of the ideology promoting the violence. Second, it would empower community members and allow us to stand together as a community in support of those who are targeted as victims, just as the white community in Charleston stood with the Emanuel AME congregation.”

Olson said that plans are being made for future building resilient communities sessions and invited interested participants to contact her office.