



# **BIGOTRY & BRUTALITY IN FOREIGN POLICE TRAINING**

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a comprehensive report on  
the Georgia International  
Law Enforcement Exchange  
(GILEE)

# BACKGROUND

The Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) is a privately controlled and largely privately funded police exchange program. [1] According to the official GILEE website, the program arranges for American law enforcement officials, corporate security executives, and others to engage in training, briefings, and seminars with foreign governments, including the Chinese, Egyptian, Hungarian, Kazakh, Uzbek, and Israeli governments, the last of which is the original and primary focus of the program. [2]

Since GILEE's inception in 1992, at least 1,600 participants have engaged in its training programs, including officers from the Atlanta Police Department. When Georgia-based officials travel to the Middle East for training, they study at least 28 different topics. Although GILEE has long refused to share details about what officials learn through the program, [3] open records requests have forced GILEE to reveal that the

28 topics include border policing, community policing, and urban policing. [4]

In recent years, numerous scholars, activists, civil rights organizations, and human rights groups have called on local law enforcement agencies, including the Atlanta Police Department, to stop participating in foreign training through the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange.

This memorandum details three major objections to the program:

**I. GILEE training perpetuates police militarization and brutality.**

**II. GILEE engages in training with oppressive foreign governments.**

**III. GILEE's history of bigotry, including anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia.**

# I. GILEE TRAINING PERPETUATES POLICE MILITARIZATION & BRUTALITY



Law enforcement action in Israel (left) and in America (right).

When Georgia State University students filed an open records request about GILEE in 2011, then-Attorney General Sam Olens rebuffed those students, saying they might pass the information to “terrorists.” Olens then backed a law that now protects GILEE from detailed open records requests.

Nevertheless, the open records request forced GILEE to reveal its list of 28 training topics. Topics include urban policing, community policing, and border policing. Under the guise of teaching such topics, [5] and 25 other topics, GILEE puts police at risk of learning and legitimizing tactics used by militarized police forces in foreign nations, as well as a focus on Muslims as potential criminal actors.

Between 2017 and 2018, the number of deadly police shootings that occurred in Georgia nearly doubled. [6] Concerned community members have argued that foreign police exchanges with human rights violators make these problems worse. As a result, multiple cities have ended foreign police exchanges, such as the cities of Durham and Northampton. [7][8]

# I. GILEE TRAINING PERPETUATES POLICE MILITARIZATION & BRUTALITY

Among other things, GILEE has taught that officers should inspire fear by “racking” their firearms when they unholster them, which is a common tactic that Israeli officers use against unarmed Palestinian protesters. [9] GILEE also encourages police officials to direct their officers to flash the blue lights on the roof of their vehicles while patrolling certain neighborhoods. [10]



"Racking", pictured above, is a fear tactic taught by GILEE

Georgia State University Police Chief Joseph Spillane, a GILEE participant, testified to a Georgia State Student Senate Committee that he would not feel comfortable adopting those tactics within his police department. [11]

Most recently, GILEE has encouraged law enforcement officials to move beyond targeting criminal behavior, and to start limiting free speech by targeting “incitement.” [12]

**The following are some training topics covered by GILEE programs:**

- Community Policing
- Urban Policing
- Prison Service
- Courts
- Police Training Academy: Structure and Tasks
- Border Policing
- Crime Statistics
- Law Enforcement Leadership Development
- Private-Public Partnerships

## II. GILEE ENGAGES IN TRAINING WITH OPPRESSIVE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

GILEE publicly advertises partnerships with foreign governments which use their law enforcement agencies to restrict civil liberties, commit human rights violations, and/or promote bigotry, including sexism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.



Egyptian riot police attacking protesters, 2011



Kazakhstan riot police attacking peaceful protestors



Aftermath of 2005 police massacre in Uzbekistan.

For example, Egyptian police officers have arrested activists, tortured dissidents, performed "virginity tests" on detained women, [13] conducted rectal "examinations" on men arrested for waving rainbow flags, [14] and crushed protests, including a 2013 assault on a sit-in that killed over 800 Egyptians. [15]

Kazakhstan tortures government critics and limits basic freedoms. [16] So does its neighbor Uzbekistan, where "torture, politically-motivated persecutions, and forced labor in the cotton fields remain common." [17]

Uzbek police have also allegedly arrested Muslim women for wearing hijabs in public, performed "forensic examinations" on men accused of same-sex activity, [18] beaten a transgender detainee who refused to "out" other Uzbeks, [19] and confiscated Bibles from "unregistered" churches. [20]

## II. GILEE ENGAGES IN TRAINING WITH OPPRESSIVE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

Since 2010, the Hungarian government has been led by a far-right political party that promotes anti-Semitism and xenophobia. [21] Officials “are increasingly hostile to journalists and critics, and engage in anti-migrant, anti-Muslim and xenophobic rhetoric including through publicly funded campaigns.” [22]



Hundreds of blindfolded prisoners in Xinjiang, western China.

China runs a massive surveillance state that restricts the civil liberties of its citizens. Protesting is forbidden. So is voting. Activists are subject to arrest. [23] Police have raided “unsanctioned” churches, destroying crosses and burning Bibles. [24] One million Uighur Muslims sit in Chinese concentration camps. [25]



Georgia police officials engaging in training with armed Israeli police.

As for the Israeli government, Human Rights Watch reports: “Fifty years after Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it controls these areas through repression, institutionalized discrimination, and systematic abuses of the Palestinian population’s rights.” [26]

## II. GILEE ENGAGES IN TRAINING WITH OPPRESSIVE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

According to an Amnesty International report documenting events from 2017 to 2018: “Israeli forces, including undercover units, used excessive and sometimes lethal force when they used rubber-coated metal bullets and live ammunition against Palestinian protesters in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, killing at least 20, and injuring thousands. Many protesters threw rocks or other projectiles but were posing no threat to the lives of well-protected Israeli soldiers when they were shot.” [27]

By allowing police officials to train with governments that violate human rights, Georgia is running a serious risk that our officers will learn dangerous policing methods, bring those methods back home, and apply them to the residents of Georgia.



Police officials posing in front of military plane at GILEE meeting in Israel, October 2012

### III. GILEE'S HISTORY OF BIGOTRY, INCLUDING ANTI-ARAB RACISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA.

There is no doubt that Islamophobic and anti-Arab sentiments appear in GILEE's training. During a 2007 speech at the ICT, Georgia Bureau of Investigation Director Vernon Keenan said that a GILEE partner nation had taught him that "the primary threat to democratic countries was terrorism by radical Islam." [28]



Dr. Robert Friedmann, founder and director of GILEE

The founder and director of GILEE, Dr. Robert Friedmann, has falsely claimed that Muslim leaders never unequivocally condemned the 9/11 attack, [29] [30] complained that the First Amendment prevents the FBI from targeting mosques, [31] accused Arab-American advocacy groups of supporting terrorism, [32] and denied the very existence of Islamophobia in a GILEE partner nation. [33]

#### GILEE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS ON ARABS & MUSLIMS

- **"To date, there is not a single, unequivocal condemnation of the September 11 attacks [from the Muslim community]."**
- **"The problem is, because of the First Amendment, the FBI won't go into mosques."**
- **"Meanwhile self-styled Arab-American advocacy groups continue to support terror while focusing their efforts on mounting frivolous complaints about violations of their 'rights'."**
- **"There is no Islamophobia. There is knife-o-phobia."**
- **"The 'silent majority' of Muslims and their various advocacy groups have not yet broken their silence about terrorism, jihad and their attitude to the West"**

### III. GILEE'S HISTORY OF BIGOTRY, INCLUDING ANTI-ARAB RACISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA.

In 2017, Dr. Friedmann publicly delivered a GILEE presentation about terrorism that used Arabs and Muslims as the sole examples of such violence in the United States [34], despite the fact that right-wing extremists commit most terrorist attacks in our nation. [35] That 2017 GILEE presentation also featured an image of a faux map titled, “The Map of United States of Islam: The Dream of 20th Century Muslims Will Be Real in 21st Century.” The image, which depicts the world under domination by Muslims, appears on multiple anti-Muslim hate websites. [36]



Faux map entitled "The Map of United States of Islam" used in a GILEE presentation at Kennesaw State University in 2017

The official GILEE website also features an array of politically extreme opinion articles dating back to 2002, all written by Dr. Friedmann. [37] Among other things, the GILEE articles have advocated for the Iraq War [38], denounced the United Nations for opposing the Iraq War, [39] called for the bombing of Iran, [40] accused Muslims at-large of refusing to speak out against terrorism, [41] and harshly attacked leaders such as former President Jimmy Carter: condemning the former Georgia governor as "one of the worst presidents in U.S. history," [42] arguing that he should have never received a Nobel Peace Prize, [43] describing him and other anti-war activists as "appeasers," [44] comparing President Carter to the tyrannical Roman Emperor Nero, [45] and calling for him to be labeled a "supporter of genocide." [46]

### III. GILEE'S HISTORY OF BIGOTRY, INCLUDING ANTI-ARAB RACISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA.

GILEE partners with foreign organizations that promote anti-Muslim bigotry under the guise of countering terrorism. [47] For example, a GILEE partner, the International Counter-Terrorism Academic Community (ICTAC), includes members such as Sebastian Gorka, [48] the anti-Muslim activist, former Breitbart writer, and Fox News contributor who left the Trump Administration months after allegations surfaced that he had supported an anti-Semitic militia and a Nazi-allied group in his native Hungary. [49][50][51] To Gorka, terrorism is rooted in Islam and the "martial parts" of the Quran that he says inspire some Muslims to commit terrorism. [52]



**Sebastian Gorka, former Deputy Assistant to Donald Trump**



**Dr. Boaz Ganor, founder and executive director of the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism**

Moreover, both the ICTAC and the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, another official GILEE partner, are led by Dr. Boaz Ganor, who has argued that “World War III is occurring right now,” and that the conflict is a “religious war...within the religion of Islam.” [53][54]

## CONCLUSION

GILEE's bigoted rhetoric and political extremism have no place in our diverse city. Neither does dangerous training from foreign governments that violate civil and human rights. Unless and until these foreign governments change their repressive policies, no American law enforcement agency should learn from them or give them a symbolic stamp of approval by training with them.

The State of Georgia and the City of Atlanta sit at the intersection of an important national conversation about police tactics, civil rights, and criminal justice reform. Given our strong history of leadership on these issues, we should set the standards for others to follow, and we should start by ensuring that our officials and officers engage in appropriate training with only those governments and organizations which share our values. Therefore, law enforcement agencies should cease participation in the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange, starting with the City of Atlanta Police Department.

## CONTACT US

This report was compiled by the Georgia Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Georgia) in coordination with other civil and human rights organizations. To learn more about GILEE or to join the campaign to end bigotry and brutality in police training, please contact us at [info@ga.cair.com](mailto:info@ga.cair.com), 404-419-6390, or P.O. Box 942134, Atlanta, GA 31141.

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