

President Obama Praises Muslims During Mosque Visit

In his first visit to a mosque, which he said was precipitated by concerns over Republican “rhetoric” about Muslims, President Obama Wednesday praised American Muslims and offered them a blanket pledge:

“I want you to know that from the president to the FBI director to everybody in law enforcement, my directive, and their understanding, is that this is something we have to do together,” he said. “Engagement with Muslim American communities must never be a cover for surveillance. We can’t give in to profiling entire groups of people. There’s no one single profile of terrorists.”

The president said Islam is not to blame for terrorism, and thanked American Muslims for their contributions to the nation during his visit to the Islamic Center of Baltimore. He then attacked Republican presidential candidates, and critics of his national security policy, without naming names.

“We’ve heard inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim Americans that has no place in our country. We have to reject a politics that seeks to manipulate prejudice or bias and targets people because of religion,” he said. “I often hear it said that we need more clarity in this [terrorism] fight, and the suggestion is somehow that if I would simply say these are all Islamic terrorists, then we would actually have solved the problem by now, apparently. I agree we actually do need moral clarity. Groups like [the Islamic State] are desperate for legitimacy. I refuse to give them legitimacy. They’re not defending Islam. And we can’t suggest that Islam itself is at the root of the problem. That betrays our values.”