

**Briefing Before the Minnesota Advisory Committee to
The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

**Civil Rights Issues Facing Muslims and Arab Americans
In Minnesota Post-September 11**

**Executive Summary and Transcript of Briefing
Held in Minneapolis, February 12, 2002**

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**Civil Rights Issues Facing Muslims and Arab Americans
In Minnesota Post-September 11**

Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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Executive Summary

On February 12, 2002, the Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a briefing to examine the civil rights implications of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on Muslims and Arab Americans in the state and to supplement the Commission's national review. Two representatives from the Minnesota chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) spoke at the briefing: Sorya Amra, the chapter's president, and Fouzi Slisli, its media director. They provided a snapshot of issues facing Muslims and Arab Americans, and those perceived to be, in Minnesota in the months after the attacks. Topics discussed included hate crimes and discrimination stemming from September 11, civil liberties concerns over the government's antiterrorism measures, the media's coverage of the treatment of Muslims and Arab Americans, and the ADC's response to these issues. The full transcript of the briefing follows this summary.

For Muslims and Arab Americans, shock and grief after September 11 were mixed with fear of reprisal. "Our community has not, in a sense, been allowed to grieve like the rest of Americans since, from the word go, they have had to watch out," Fouzi Slisli said. Hate crime statistics gathered in the weeks after the attacks showed that concern was warranted. The ADC reported a surge in hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims and Arab Americans in the aftermath of September 11. People became targets simply for sharing a similar appearance or cultural or religious background of the terrorists. Although many high-profile retaliatory acts occurred elsewhere, in Minnesota there were reports of vandalism, verbal harassment, death threats, and physical assaults. "Our community has suffered a great backlash throughout the United States and also specifically here in Minnesota," Sorya Amra said.

The September 11 backlash has taken many forms and been directed at men and women, Muslims and sometimes non-Muslims. Women who wear hijabs, or headscarves, that make them easily identifiable as Muslims are particularly susceptible to being harassed. In addition to facing hostile comments, some women have had their hijabs pulled off by passersby, Ms. Amra said. Arab-owned businesses received threatening and harassing telephone calls and a rock was thrown through one storefront window. At the University of Minnesota, the president of the Arab Student Association received a death threat, as did a professor at nearby Augsburg College. Arab American and Indian students have reported verbal harassment on their campuses, with one Iranian woman saying she was called a "terrorist" in class. The most violent attacks the panelists described were against a Muslim woman who was nearly run down in a parking lot by an apparently vengeful driver and another who was punched in the stomach outside a Minneapolis area grocery store. Many backlash victims have been from Minnesota's Somali community, one of the largest in the nation. Sikhs have also been targeted, presumably because some people hold the false assumption that men wearing turbans are Arab or Muslim.

Complaints of discrimination in workplaces, schools, and airports also soared after September 11. Ms. Amra said "numerous" employment discrimination issues have arisen and related the case of a truck driver who was fired after the attacks because of "security" concerns. The ADC, she said, was working with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to resolve the case. At the Minneapo-

lis airport, three Iraqi men were forced to disembark from an airplane and reconnect with another airline because the pilot was “uncomfortable” having them as passengers. Incidents such as these fueled already heightened fear and suspicion of the Muslim community.

About two months after September 11, hate crime and discrimination complaints started to taper off, but for many Muslims and Arab Americans fear only escalated that the government was compromising their civil liberties with its antiterrorism measures. As one component of its war on terrorism, the government began interviewing men of Middle Eastern background in the United States on visas in hopes of developing leads and gathering information to prevent future attacks. The Minnesota Arab community, Sorya Amra said, was generally “very accepting of the FBI voluntary interviews.” The interviews did, however, trigger complaints, according to Fouzi Slisli. First, some alleged they were not informed that answering questions was voluntary. For many recent immigrants, civil liberties is an unfamiliar concept and authorities are always to be obeyed. “Nobody paid attention to our cultural sensitivities,” Mr. Slisli said. Others complained that law enforcement agents showed up at their doors unannounced instead of sending letters requesting an interview. In a few cases, when the Arab family was not at home, the officers interviewed their neighbors, again raising suspicion of people who were not considered suspects in the attacks.

The media have often failed to capture the real issues surrounding the civil liberties debate, said Fouzi Slisli. Reporters, for example, have talked broadly about everyone relinquishing some civil liberties in exchange for security, when in fact it is mainly the Arab and Muslim communities who will give up their rights. And only one newspaper article had presented the perspective of men interviewed after the attacks; others focused on the law enforcement or government side. Conversely, many local journalists had reported comprehensively on post-September 11 discrimination and racial profiling, and done explanatory pieces on Islam, he said.

The Minnesota chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has tried to stem the September 11 backlash through increased community education and outreach. It has partnered with other civil rights groups and worked with the EEOC to resolve discrimination complaints. The chapter’s president spoke positively about some law enforcement actions, noting that the FBI contacted her shortly after September 11 to inquire about backlash and offer assistance investigating any suspected hate crimes, and she described the local police department’s follow-up to bias incidents as “good.” But protecting the rights of Muslims and Arab Americans will be an ongoing challenge as the war on terrorism continues.

Proceedings

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. The second part of our meeting today is a briefing on a subject that is not directly related but, in fact, is indirectly related at least to the subject of what our study is going to be. And the briefing will be from two persons on the subject of civil rights issues since the events of September 11. And without anything further, I will introduce to the SAC Soraya Amra. And why don't you start, Soraya, and then we'll introduce your colleague.

Soraya Amra, President, Minnesota Chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

MS. AMRA. Okay. Well, I just would first like to begin by thanking you all for having us here to let you know what's going on in our community. My name is Soraya Amra. I'm the president of the Minnesota chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. And that is a national organization that promotes civil rights in the Arab American community. And I'm glad to be here.

As we know, after the events of September 11, our community has suffered a great backlash throughout the United States and also specifically here in Minnesota, and I would like to just kind of address some of those concerns that we have. We, as a community, have experienced harassment in many different arenas, from the school to the workplace to out and about in the community. And this ranges from verbal harassment, physical abuse, to death threats and, in one case, a death. And just to kind of bring some of these things closer to home, I'd like to describe some of those events that have happened here that a lot maybe has not been publicized and partly because, I think, in our community, people have a great fear to report these things, whether to the media or to the police or the FBI, for fear of greater backlash.

A couple of these incidents, beginning with, on 9/11, many women who wear hijabs, which is the head covering of devout Muslim women, were verbally harassed. There was an incident of one woman coming out from a mall parking lot and somebody tried to run her down. Also, people have pulled on the headscarves of women, even pulled them out from their cars, pulled the headscarves from these women. There were incidents also of Somali women being attacked and verbally abused. In Minneapolis, we have probably the largest number of Somali immigrants, and these women wear traditional Muslim covering, headscarves, and long, flowing dresses, and so they are easily targeted as Muslims. And so they've had significant amounts of death threats. I know of one incident where a single woman, in her apartment, was attacked by four men. She wasn't physically attacked. They tried to beat down the door of her apartment and told her that they would be back for her later. And that was in Minneapolis.

At the University of Minnesota, there have been numerous incidents, especially, again, after September 11. The president of the Arab Student Association received a death threat on his voice mail. A University of Minnesota professor was chased by a couple of students. He was a Sikh. He's not Arab American, but, again, the Sikhs have been targeted in our community as well. They have a smaller community, but they are highly visible because of their headdress, and they've been targeted, the men and the women, in their community. An Augsburg College professor received a written death threat on his car at his home. And on campus, there had been, especially in September, much verbal harassment of Arab American students, including Iranian students and Indian students as well. One

Iranian woman, in a class at the University of Minnesota, was called a terrorist by someone in the class.

On to workplace harassment. There have been numerous workplace discrimination issues. A hospital worker was repeatedly chastised and verbally harassed by his supervisor, as well as other employees. Another person was terminated from his job as a trucker because of security issues. He is, again, a person who is an American citizen, has been in America for 30 years, and was let go for no apparent reason. We are working on that issue with the EEOC, and we'll take that to a higher level. That is a major company that terminated him for no probable—no cause. Also after September 11, there were a lot of verbal threats and harassment, especially phone calls, to local Arab-owned businesses as well. A business on the university campus in Dinkytown received a rock through the window. The persons who perpetrated that crime were identified later by a bartender across the street. And nothing has come of that again. So we're seeing some people reporting but then nothing coming of it. A lady was punched in the stomach at a grocery store parking lot in Eagan. And in the schools, there has been harassment of students. And again, especially Somali students at Richfield had been given a few specific incidences of that.

And as far as airline discrimination, Northwest Airlines, in Minneapolis, made three Iraqi men disembark from a plane and reconnected them with another airline because, I believe, the pilot was uncomfortable with having them on the plane. After all of this, this also creates a climate of fear and suspicion among the community, having others in the community fear anyone that looks different from them. Whether they be of Arab descent or Muslim Americans or other Middle Easterners, such as Iranians, they have all been feeling this backlash. The Arab community has been very accepting of the FBI voluntary interviews and has been more than happy to go along with those. We had seen a small rise in incidents after those interviews, because the FBI had interviewed neighbors and friends of the people they chose to interview, without giving them advanced notice. And so that, again, created that fear and suspicion among neighbors and coworkers. And it, again, led to an increase in hate mail and death threats after those interviews. And those are just some of the incidents that we've recorded here with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Minnesota.

We have been working with other civil rights groups locally to deal with these issues of discrimination. We have the EEOC involved in the workplace discrimination issues. We have tried to outreach into the community to promote understanding of Islam, Arabs, and culture. We have tried to work with the media, and I believe Fouzi will talk a little bit more about that. And I think that is really all that I have for you at this time. Again, I think we need to work together a little bit more to promote peace and understanding here in the community but also to deal with these issues of discrimination and not take them lightly. And that's really what I have to say.

Question-and-Answer Session

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Thank you. Before we hear from the media director, let me ask you if there are any members who have any questions of the president.

MS. AMRA. Yes.

MS. KOZLOWSKI. Do you know if any of the perpetrators were people of color? Were they of European descent or—

MS. AMRA. That, I don't know. I believe they were—from at least the reports I had from the students at the university campus, these were white males that did a lot of the verbal harassment. And, you know, some white elderly male was the one who tried to run down the lady in the parking lot. And the same with the students who chased the professor. The death threat that the university professor received on his car at home, he believes that was one of his neighbors, not necessarily a student.

But again, he's been in that community and in the same house for over 30 years. And that's what happened. And as far as follow-up by our local police, they have been good. The FBI had talked to me immediately after September 11 to inquire about the community, to see if we've had backlash, if there were any hate crimes that they could help us out with. And so they were helpful in that way. Again, at least the one incident where they identified the perpetrators of the crime where the person had thrown a rock through a window, that wasn't followed up on, even though the police had the name and the information on those criminals. And I don't know why that was left alone.

MS. ORWOLL. How long has your committee been in existence?

MS. AMRA. Here in Minneapolis?

MS. ORWOLL. Yes.

MS. AMRA. In Minneapolis, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has had a chapter here, I would say, about 20 years. So really since its inception on the national level, they established a chapter here. So we've been around for a while dealing with different issues over the years. And after September 11, we've done a lot more outreach, sending letters, posting information about the rights of the people here and where to go for help and who to contact for help. So we've done that kind of work especially. And again, after September 11, we've done a lot more community outreach, speaking at schools and universities and churches. And we've had a lot more requests from people for those kinds of presentations.

MR. LOUIE. I don't know if you were in the area about 10, 11 years ago, but how does this compare with the reaction after the Gulf War or during the Gulf War?

MS. AMRA. I was here at that time. I think, after the Gulf War or during the Gulf War, there were incidents of hate crimes. But again, I don't think it was quite like this. And that was, I guess—and I can't really comment, because I wasn't involved in the organization so I was not privy to that information. But I don't believe it was quite like this. And because—

MR. LOUIE. You mean this is more vitriolic, the level, more hateful?

MS. AMRA. It appears like it's going to be longstanding and that it will be harder to change the opinions and promote understanding. I think it's going to be quite a challenge for us now. At that time, I think, you know, it's one point in time, one war, one—but right now, with Bush's longstanding campaign against terrorism and, again, continuing to mix things up between a war on Islam or, you know, not really identifying who they are targeting, it continuously raises the suspicions and the fears of the people, not only the Arab Americans but also everybody else in the community. And I think that's going to be ongoing, and that's why I think we'll feel it more now than we would have back after the Gulf War.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. I have a couple of questions. You identified at least one factor that my ear picked up, and that was clothing, garb. It also sounded as if more of the incidents you described involved women than men. Is that as a result of the difference in garb?

MS. AMRA. It may be. We've had reports of women, we've had reports of men receiving, again, verbal harassment. I think women are easy targets, especially because they are more visible because of the clothing that they wear that identifies them as devout Muslims. And so I don't know if it's a disproportionate amount of women or if we've just had reports from women more than men. I can't be sure.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Some of the victims, the recipients of this treatment you described, are Somali?

MS. AMRA. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. How about other than Somali? What kinds of situations had your organization reported?

MS. AMRA. Some of these women who wear hijabs are Arab Americans. Again, the hijab is the headscarf covering. The Somalis wear the long, flowing dresses. Arab Americans typically just wear either regular clothing, just modest covering, but the headscarf, again, identifies them as Muslim. So some of these death threats—or the woman in the mall parking lot, she was Arab American. And a lot of Muslim women were told after September 11 to remove their headscarves to avoid this kind of harassment. And so a lot of women stayed indoors, stayed at home from that kind of fear. And some, in order to go outside or go to their children's school, removed the headscarf altogether for fear of being targeted for their religious beliefs.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Any questions?

MS. AMRA. Anybody else?

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Thank you so much. Now from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee media subcommittee.

Fouzi Slisli, Media Director, Minnesota Chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

MR. SLISLI. On behalf of the Arab and Muslim community of Minnesota, I would like to thank you for your concern for issues pertaining to our community's civil rights. I don't want to go over the examples that Soraya already gave, but I would like to attract your attention to all of these issues, to a way of looking at these issues which—I would like to bring you closer to looking at all these issues from the eyes of our own community.

I think one of the major problems is that all of these issues from 9/11 to the backlash, to the hate crimes, to the discrimination in airports and schools and everything, to the law enforcement profiling, and now to the Patriot Act and the curbing of civil liberties, I think most of these issues have been—in terms of our debate in this society—fragmented and presented as single issues at specific times.

For your information, as far as the Arab American and Muslim community in the United States, the whole of the saga from 9/11 to the present, as far as all these issues, big as they are a concern, is actually part of one single process or story of almost Kafkaesque proportions, really. The 9/11 terror attacks were, by any criteria, just the utmost horror. They were shocking. The amount of carnage and death was just shocking, regardless of one's ethnicity, race, or color or any of those considerations. Our community has not, in a sense, been allowed to grieve like the rest of Americans since, from the word go, they have had to watch out. That brings a tremendous psychological effect, tremendous fear, which goes immediately after the terror attack, which also itself had a strong psychological impact.

And from there we go to the hate crimes, to the different experiences that people have been having in their workplaces, in dealing with people in the shopping centers—that's what I was describing before—until we end up in the end with the Patriot Act, the law enforcement profiling, on issues like that. I just would like to complement a couple of things that Soraya was saying. I am sure you're familiar with the Patriot Act and with the different issues around it. But mostly what we observed in terms of monitoring the interviews, first of all, was we received two kinds of complaints from people. A, the population. People were not being told, "These are your rights." They were just told, "Oh, you're going to have to provide interviews." Nobody paid attention to our cultural sensitivities. People coming from the Arab world, usually they—not an area of the world known for its civil liberties and human rights considerations. I usually have a lot of distrust of the authorities. In the Arab world, no one would go to see a lawyer, because everybody knows that you don't have any rights, first off. But it's not the same situation over here. But nobody bothers to tell the people, "Look, you can find a lawyer who can tell you your rights. If you want to give an interview or if you don't want to give an

interview, it's your choice. You have to be careful about what you say and what not to say. This isn't just like a little chat or conversation in a bookstore." Nobody told the people that.

Our organization realized this and we just started running around. We run our organization on the basis of volunteer work. All of us have full-time jobs and families and everything. But we were practically running around, networking, calling other organizations, trying to find legal help for people, mostly people who we know wouldn't be able to afford legal help. We did succeed to a certain extent. We advertised it, and we received quite an interesting response from people asking for legal help.

And apart from that, the second kind of complaint we received had to do with the fact that law enforcement officers would just turn up at people's places. There was a certain sense that people were being branded. The authorities did not think of, since these people are not suspects, since these interviews are voluntary, it would just be tactful to send a letter to people and asking them, "Would it be fine by you to provide an interview for us?" It didn't cross people's minds. And in a couple of cases that reached us, law enforcement officers would go and just knock on people's doors and, if they're not there, they would go and talk to their neighbors. And we know the level of consciousness in our own society that people do not follow what's going on in the news. They don't know that these people are not suspects, and, if they hear that, you know, the FBI was here looking for this Arab guy next door, it rings different for the population. So there was a sense of that. And I did ask Mike Hatch, the U.S. attorney general for Minnesota, about this issue, and he, himself, said that they did not want to send letters, because they thought letters from the ministry of justice would be too intimidating, which it doesn't really make sense, because the procedure was used in Illinois and Chicago and it worked very well.

I'm not going to go into the Patriot Act, because I'm sure you probably know it more than I do. This is your work more than mine, really. But in terms of the media, there is this issue of fragmentation of all of these issues, which gives us, in the end, a failure to actually see the Kafkaesque proportion of this nightmare that the Arab and Muslim community has been going through from 9/11 to the present.

And it hasn't ended yet. It has been presented as little issues here and there. And if I have to give two examples, I could probably—there was a failure to open debate about civil rights issues, for example. The question the media has been asking the public basically is, "Do you mind if we curb our"—our, us, our—"civil liberties in exchange for security?" And most people in the United States would respond, "No, we don't." The real question that should have been asked—because we all know that it's not everybody's civil liberties that are going to be curbed, but that's how the issue has been presented. The real question that should have been asked is, "Do you mind if we curb the civil liberties of that specific group, which is the Arab and Muslim community of this country?" And thus, we would be looking at a totally different issue. Is it all right if we scapegoat this community? I think that's one example of the media's failure of opening the debate about civil liberties.

Another example was, again, the issue of law enforcement interviews. I have monitored the local press myself and, apart from one single article by the *Pioneer Press* that tried to present the whole problem of the interviews from the perspective of the interviewees themselves, there was only one single article. Most of what has been written has been from the perspective of the law enforcement agencies or the government perspective. And I think that's also being a neglect of the feelings of an important section of the community. I think I'll stop there.

Question-and-Answer Session

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Any questions by the members of the SAC? Have you noticed in the public media, the newspapers and television, any difference in their treatment of or portrayal of the Arab American and Muslim communities since September 11?

MR. SLISLI. I would say it was prior to September 11. I would just describe it as some kind of benign neglect prior to September 11. After September 11, there has been a lot of very good reporting. It's not that we gave interviews about—there has been a lot of reporting about discrimination and about racial profiling. And a number of local journalists have been doing a very good job. But this isn't just in terms of talking about the public opinion in general, but these issues have not been addressed from the right perspective. I hope I didn't give the wrong—

MS. AMRA. We had a meeting scheduled with the *Star Tribune* for the end of September—and this was scheduled prior to September 11—to discuss some of our issues with them. And that was canceled after September 11 and not to be rescheduled. And so we've had a hard time, in fact, getting that meeting arranged. It was difficult for us. So, when he talks about benign neglect, I think that was the case before September 11. After, you know, they've done some good articles about Islam, about women in Islam, so they've tried to bring some other perspectives. But again, I think there is room for improvement.

MS. ORWOLL. One question. Do you have any feel for the people that were interviewed as to whether they have lived here for a long time or was it more the people that had lived here for only a shorter time or—

MR. SLISLI. Mostly the criteria were for people who haven't been in the U.S. for more than two years. But we did receive a complaint from a Somali person who has been a U.S. citizen for 10 years, who has been approached by FBI agents and asked for an interview.

MS. AMRA. I think, also, to add to that, I think some people were targeted for interviews based on immigration status issues. But also there have been some complaints of the FBI asking questions about people without interviewing them, and these are Americans of Arab descent, born and raised in America.

MS. ORWOLL. They do that to other people too. They don't always interview the person they're trying to find—

MS. AMRA. Right. Again, it raises the suspicions of people, and it brings back that suspicion and that fear and hatred back to that person who is being asked about. You had a question in the corner?

MS. KOZLOWSKI. Yes. I just wanted to know, does your community have a newspaper?

MR. SLISLI. Not locally, no. We have the *ADC Times*, which is published by the Washington office.

MS. AMRA. We have a national newsletter. We send out e-mail bulletins once a month or once every two months.

MS. KOZLOWSKI. I was thinking, if you could inform your community of civil rights lawyers or—

MR. LOUIE. I'm of the opinion that we can always do better, that we shouldn't just sit on any achievements we might have in terms of protecting your rights and all. What's the response, reaction? This is not the way America reacted in the wake of Pearl Harbor, where thousands and thousands of Japanese were put in internment camps. Their property was taken away and all. Even though there are instances of discrimination, this is still a better response in the wake of a national security situation than the wake of Pearl Harbor. America is a better place. What's your response to that? It has been in the media and circulated that the reaction to Pearl Harbor was far worse. Japanese on the West Coast were put under—not just harassment and discrimination, but they were repressed. They were to put into internment camps for several years, until the end of the war.

MR. SLISLI. That's true. I mean, I wouldn't compare it to the events experienced of the Japanese American community after Pearl Harbor. It's not the same in terms of scale and in terms of suffering for the communities. But I think it is a wrong argument to accept certain transgressions now because things were worse in the past. The civil rights and human rights at that time were not enshrined in our cultures and in our constitutions and in our discourses and in our public opinion as they are now. But you're right, there is always space for improvement. I think there is room for improvement always.

MR. LOUIE. I'm just seeing that that was one of the initial responses that we saw in various print and electronic media initially. So I'd appreciate your feedback on that.

MR. SLISLI. And also there is—

MR. LOUIE. You didn't give much of a response to that. Everybody seemed to be—the general consensus, you know, things aren't bad after all or—you know, for, say, average Americans and all. And that tends to cause, say, neglect or, in this case, maybe not so benign neglect, after 9/11, of the Arab American issues.

MR. SLISLI. Sure. And also I think the central element is that the legal system of the United States, as it stands now, seems to be—from what most legal experts seem to say, seems to be perfectly well equipped to handle the crisis without recourse to the extra judicial legislations.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. I thank both of you. Unless there are any other questions, we want to thank both of our guests for making your—oh, I'm sorry. John, did I miss—

MR. MORROW. Just out of curiosity. Indian communities, certainly, like many minorities, experience these things daily. At times, also, our own people retaliate sometimes. Have there been any incidents of retaliation from your community against these acts?

MS. AMRA. As far as I know, there has not been. I think the general feeling is one of fear, and people have hidden away, stayed at home, have chosen not to respond. And again, that shows by the amount of reporting of these crimes to the FBI. Most people have said, you know, if we maybe just lie low, be quiet, maybe it will all go away. And so that's what I think the bigger response has been. I don't think there has been any lashing out in our community.

MR. MORROW. I think that's good. Our elders continually tell us, "Do not become like the oppressors."

MS. AMRA. Right.

MR. MORROW. But, again, at the same time, it's a shame to live in fear.

MS. AMRA. Exactly. And I think when we talk about that fear, yes, there are no, you know, big roundup of people and putting them in internment camps, but there was a great fear of people. And people did not leave their houses, especially women, who had a fear of going out in the evening alone. People who were going for medical care chose maybe not to go to the hospital because they had a fear that they weren't going to be treated correctly. They had a fear that they were going to have some sort of backlash in the hospital, and so many of the hospitals have put out bulletins to encourage people to, you know, welcome your Muslim and Arab patients and assure them that they won't get secondary treatment. Again, so that fear, most people have stayed away from responding.

MS. KOZLOWSKI. Can I ask one more question?

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Sure.

MS. KOZLOWSKI. I'm interested in your young people. How are they faring through all of this, all your school-aged children? Do they tend to want to be with each other or are they more assimilating or—

MS. AMRA. You know, it really depends, because our community is large in the sense we have the Arab Americans who were born and raised here and you have the newer immigrants who are American or green card holders but maybe have an accent or—and so I think they might feel more of that harassment than those folks who can assimilate more. And I think a lot of parents have encouraged

their kids to be more American than the Americans, whatever that may be, whatever that may mean. I don't know.

MS. KOZLOWSKI. So do they ever try to say that they're something different from your heritage than they really are?

MS. AMRA. No, not as far as I understand it. But there has been some reports, especially like from Michigan. They have larger Arab American mental health services there, and I think there have been a lot of issues in that community because it's a larger community, regarding the psychological fears and—

MS. KOZLOWSKI. And denials?

MS. AMRA.—that kind of thing.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Any other questions?

MR. COLLINS. I was just curious. Have you followed the legislation here lately in this state?

MS. AMRA. Yeah. There are some new bills, in fact, over this past week and last week, that are kind of going through. And we've been monitoring that, and we're hoping that things don't go through, because we don't feel that it's necessary to have the federal government and the local doing similar things or the local government doing more than federal. If it's reported one place, I don't know what benefit we would have from reporting it in more than one place.

CHAIRPERSON WEINBLATT. Again, our great appreciation and thanks to both of you. You've made us more aware of those community concerns.

MS. AMRA. Thank you very much for having us. And if there are any other questions or if you need us for anything, please don't hesitate to contact us.

[Adjournment.]

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