

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

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

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**Executive Summary and Transcript of Briefing  
Held in Milwaukee, April 11, 2002**

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## **Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

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## Executive Summary

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In the hours and days after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Muslim and Arab American groups denounced the attacks, issuing press releases and taking out full-page advertisements in major newspapers across the country. Nevertheless, for many Muslims and Arab Americans, and those perceived to be, an immediate consequence of September 11 was fear of reprisal from fellow citizens. And in the months that followed, their concern about civil liberties protection grew as the government began its war on terrorism. Many of the state advisory committees to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held briefings after the attacks to investigate local civil rights issues arising from 9/11.

On April 11, 2002, seven months after the attacks, the Wisconsin Advisory Committee held a briefing to assess the civil rights implications of 9/11 for Muslims and Arab Americans in Wisconsin. Speaking before the Committee were representatives from the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, and the University of Milwaukee's Muslim Student Association. Panelists discussed the aftereffects endured by Muslims and Arab Americans, including hate crimes, discrimination, and civil liberties concerns. They discussed misperceptions of Islam, how these misperceptions can inflame anti-Muslim sentiments, and efforts to educate the public. They also recounted acts of tolerance and kindness from the Milwaukee community. The full transcript of the briefing follows this summary.

### **Hate Crimes and Discrimination**

Despite the widespread condemnation of the terrorist attacks by Arab and Muslim groups, many people of Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian descent were victimized for sharing a similar appearance or cultural or religious background of the terrorists. Civil rights groups reported a surge in hate-related incidents in the weeks after 9/11. Acts of retaliation against Muslims, Arab Americans, and others have included vandalism, verbal threats and intimidation, physical assault, and even murder. Reports of discrimination in employment, housing, education, and other areas also soared after the attacks.

Some Wisconsin residents became targets after 9/11, part of what the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has called an "unprecedented backlash." Ahmed Quereshi, secretary of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, reported that the Islamic Center, which houses a K-8 school, received about a dozen threatening or profane telephone calls in the days after the attacks. One caller threatened to blow up the building. Another caller was arrested by Milwaukee police when his address was traced through his telephone number left on the center's caller ID. Before the school was temporarily closed on September 11, parents stood guard at the entrance and were subjected to drivers hurling profanities and comments like, "Go Home." A Muslim woman driving near the center was confronted by a man who beat on the hood of her car with a flagpole.

People mistaken for Muslims also have been attacked, especially Sikh men because they wear turbans and beards. On the night of September 11, two Sikhs working at a Milwaukee gas station were beaten. The attackers reportedly told them, "This is what you get for what you did to us," Mr. Quereshi said. Milwaukee was "fortunate," he said, that this was the worst retaliatory act in the city.

Muslim women and girls have faced an “inordinate amount of hostility” since 9/11, according to Mr. Quereshi, because their headscarves, or hijabs, make them easily identifiable as Muslims. Passing comments and stares led many Muslim women to refrain from leaving the house alone. A few stopped wearing the hijab altogether. “Some of them I know were . . . either divorced or widowed and felt they had no one to protect them,” he said. Because many Muslims view the hijab as religiously mandated, a decision to take it off can cause anguish.

Janan Najeeb, director of the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition, discussed civil rights issues of particular relevance to Muslim women. Many of the issues existed before 9/11 but were exacerbated by the attacks, which ignited prejudices that had seethed for years. Employment discrimination is among the biggest problems for Muslim women, according to Ms. Najeeb. “This is a very big concern in our community because we have a lot of very intelligent women who unfortunately have many problems finding employment because of their hijab,” she said. Sometimes the discrimination is subtle and hard to prove. Many women call the Muslim Women’s Coalition saying they applied for a job, submitted their résumé, and spoke on the telephone with the employer, who appeared ready to hire them on the spot. When they showed up for the interview, however, suddenly the employer was no longer interested. Some face a similar situation when trying to find housing, especially around Islamic centers. Several years ago, the coalition sent out “testers”—one with and one without a headscarf—to try to rent an apartment in a four-unit building on Milwaukee’s south side. Despite providing matching information to the prospective landlord, only the woman without the hijab was offered an apartment.

The Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition refers many complaints of discrimination to the Equal Rights Division, the state agency charged with enforcing Wisconsin’s equal employment and housing laws. But panelists said many Muslims and people of Arab descent are reluctant to file formal complaints with a government agency, often because of immigration concerns and especially since 9/11. Even those who are U.S. citizens are hesitant, because they “feel that at any time [citizenship] can be just ripped away from them,” Ms. Najeeb said. “I gather some of the recent events in the name of fighting terrorism and some of the recent actions that our government has taken have put more fear into them,” she added. When complaints are filed, Muslim groups often lack the resources to follow-up and ensure that action has been taken. Ms. Najeeb said Muslims do not have a liaison in the mayor’s office or, she thought, in any state agency. “We really don’t see anything materialize” from the complaints, she concluded.

### **Civil Liberties Concerns**

Attacks against Muslims started to taper off eight weeks after 9/11, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations. But for many, fear of hate crimes was replaced by concerns that the government was compromising civil liberties in its war on terrorism. “Lately we feel that the same agencies that we thought would protect us are, in fact, the same agencies that are now responsible for violating our rights,” Janan Najeeb said. To counter further terrorist attacks, the government has initiated legislation, federal agency rule changes, and law enforcement policies—measures some contend potentially affect such civil liberties as freedom from discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, and national origin; the right to a fair trial; and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure. Finding the right balance between protecting public safety and safeguarding civil liberties in times of national emergency is challenging. In the context of the war on terrorism, panelists discussed FBI interviews in the Muslim community, indefinite detention by law enforcement officials of Middle

Eastern men on criminal or immigration charges, secret hearings, and the freezing of assets of charitable Islamic organizations.

After 9/11, the government announced plans to interview more than 5,000 men of Middle Eastern background in the United States on visas in hopes of developing leads and gathering information to prevent future attacks. Agents both arrived at Muslim homes unannounced and used the more restrained approach of mailing letters requesting voluntary interviews. Two hundred Wisconsin residents received such letters, according to Zeeshan Habeeb of the University of Milwaukee's Muslim Student Association.

Panelists Naahed and Maqbool Arshad, longtime Milwaukee residents and active members of the city's Islamic Society, said two FBI agents rang their doorbell around 6 p.m. on September 13, an experience Mrs. Arshad described as "unexpected" and "scary." "I have never had so much as a speeding ticket in 21 years," she said. "And I think the nature of what happened that evening set the tone for how we felt Muslims were being treated." Her husband, who she called home from work, "just wanted to get [the questioning] over and done with because it looked like they could take anyone and everyone in that day without giving us any information," she said. The agents did not provide a reason for the visit, according to Mr. Arshad, but asked broad questions about Milwaukee's Muslim community.

Ahmed Quereshi, secretary of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, characterized some FBI interviews as "intimidating" because of the timing of the visits and questions asked. Agents, he said, had arrived unannounced at area homes extremely early in the morning or late in the evening, and at times when there would be "a Muslim woman at home who culturally and for religious reasons wouldn't feel comfortable inviting a man who is not part of her family into her house in her husband's absence." The Islamic Society emphasized to Muslims the importance of giving the government any information that might help apprehend the terrorists. However, he alleged, some of the FBI's questions were not easily relatable to the terrorist attacks, such as those regarding views on the Mideast peace process and frequency of mosque attendance.

Panelists also discussed the government's detainment of more than 1,000 Middle Easterners and Southeast Asians, many for overstaying their immigration visas. The USA Patriot Act, passed in October 2001 to combat terrorism, gave the executive branch expanded power to detain immigrant suspects for long periods of time. Mr. Quereshi said he was aware of only "a couple of" people in Wisconsin who were detained temporarily, but observed that of all those taken into custody, only one, the so-called 20th hijacker, has been publicly linked to the September 11 attacks. Nevertheless, many have been incarcerated for months without access to an attorney. The government has not released the names of the detainees and has held their trials behind closed doors. "Detaining people in secret, allowing the use of secret evidence, allowing secret hearings . . . it's against our great tradition in this country of due process, of a right to a public trial," Mr. Quereshi said.

In another effort to combat terrorism, the government in December 2001 froze the assets of the three largest Muslim charities in the United States for suspected terrorist links. No evidence had been made public showing these groups were funneling money to terrorists, Mr. Quereshi said. "None of us sitting here in Milwaukee have any knowledge of what the boards of directors of these organizations were planning," he said. "But we believe from their publications that they were all engaged in reputable activities." That the charities were shut down during the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims are instructed to increase charitable giving, was for some an outrage. Many Muslims had

donated money to these organizations days before the assets were frozen, leaving them wondering whether they had fulfilled their religious obligation to help those in need. They were also left fearing that they would be connected to a now-designated terrorist organization.

### **Misperceptions of Islam**

Misperceptions of Islam abound and are fueled by the media, according to panelists. “The truth is that most people in this country know little about the religion. . . . The only image they have of Islam is the image that some portions of the media portray of Islamic terrorism,” Mr. Quereshi said. Because knowledge of the real Islam is scant, assertions that it condones violence sometimes go unchallenged. And when people view Muslims in general as a threat or somehow responsible for 9/11, civil rights abuses are more likely.

After 9/11, Muslim groups expanded efforts to educate the public about Islam and cultural issues. “The challenge for the Islamic community here in Wisconsin,” Mr. Quereshi said, “is to try to educate as best we can the public and others about our religion and tell them that our religion condemns terrorism. It condemns suicide.” Janan Najeeb said the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition “quadrupled” its education and outreach activities, which include lectures and workshops. The response has been positive. “Overwhelmingly, people are open to learning new things, to understanding, particularly within the interfaith community,” she said.

### **Conclusion**

Because the briefing was held to gather information on the civil rights implications of 9/11, panelists focused on issues of discrimination, hate crimes, and civil liberties concerns. Some spoke of personal experiences after 9/11 and others about fallout across the Muslim and Arab communities. But they also related instances of support from the Milwaukee community—acts intended to show Muslims and Arab Americans that they were still welcomed members of the community. For every hostile telephone call the Islamic Center received in the days after 9/11 were 10 supportive calls, Mr. Quereshi said. Panelists also noted a willingness on the part of Milwaukee residents to foster a better understanding of Islam and in the process stem anti-Muslim bias.



## Proceedings

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CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Time to begin so we can get our show on the road. Our first speaker is not here today, so—we'll have her give her name and then tell a little bit about yourself for the purposes of the court reporter and then—

### **Zeeshan Habeeb, Muslim Student Association of the University of Milwaukee**

MS. HABEEB. I'm Zeeshan Habeeb. I'm pleased to be here. I'm a student from the University of Milwaukee doing chemistry and I've been here two years. Should I begin?

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Yes.

MS. HABEEB. Ladies and gentlemen, first of all the Muslim Student Association of the University of Milwaukee would like to express its gratitude towards the United States Commission on Civil Rights for organizing this forum and for giving a voice to the Muslim community.

We are gathered here today because of the events that took place on September 11, the impact it had not only on America, but on the entire world is such that a mere mention of the day is enough to trigger the memories of the horrific images of the attacks. I remember those days. Never before had I ever felt my life to be so threatened by so heinous a crime. I learned that a hundred Muslims were among those whose lives ended so abruptly. Like the other victims, they were either peacefully at work at the World Trade Center or they were aboard the planes or they were just passing by. It is clear that these men were not set upon attacking Americans. They say that love is blind, so is hate, as religion, race, and gender became oblivious that day. These people were simply after human lives.

In the aftermath of September 11, the Muslim community was also the target of another kind of crime, hate crime. The Salam School, a middle school located at 13th and Lincoln Avenue, received anonymous threatening phone calls and,

a result, the school was closed for one day. What explanation was given to the children as to why they could not come to school that day? Sahara Restaurant, the Garden of Eden, and the Holy Land Grocery Stores were also closed for one day, as they feared an attack on their premises. Some women who wear headscarves, being easily identified as Muslim, were victims of verbal attacks, intrusive security searches, and, for a few, physical attacks.

However, I wish to commend the law enforcement authority, as many hate crimes that have been reported have gone through the court system; the perpetrators persecuted and sentenced. Most notably was the case in Texas of a man who was sentenced to death for killing a Sikh because his beard and turban looked Islamic. I cannot say the same thing about my home country of India. I've seen during the recent communal violence in the state of Gurah, there often is a complete lack of law and order. It's very comforting for me to hear that I can seek protection and justice from the law enforcement authorities. I felt at ease until I heard about 5,000 people being arrested for immigration violations, mostly of Middle Asian origin as reported by the media. The whereabouts, the well-being, even the reason of detention is unknown, as their lawyers, let alone their families, have not been able to meet with them. Shortly afterwards letters were sent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to Muslim and Arab men between the ages of 18 and 35 seeking voluntary interviews. Two hundred of those letters were mailed in Wisconsin.

During Ramadan and also recently, many Islamic charity groups have had their assets frozen, their premises raided, and equipment confiscated, often without a warrant, as they were suspected of funding terrorist groups overseas. Many Muslims depend upon these groups to perform one of the pillars of Islam, to give charity to those who need it. This year it was difficult.

I heard of the new security proceedings being implemented at points of transport, especially at airports. I feel that the increased security checks are for everyone's benefit as I was very surprised that I did not even walk through a metal detector when I was boarding a flight in San Jose Airport in California. Therefore, I was not surprised at how the hijackers managed to conceal their weapons on board the planes. However, there was an incident of a Muslim woman who was asked to strip simply because the security staff of Chicago's O'Hare Airport were not satisfied that she was not carrying illegal arms. A minority of pilots have refused to fly their aircraft because someone on the plane has a Middle Eastern name or just looks suspicious. Even an agent of the government Secret Service who was a member of President Bush's security staff was asked to get off a plane because the agent's paperwork requesting to carry his government-issued firearm aboard the plane was deemed suspicious. The agent also happened to be of Middle Eastern origin. However, all Muslims I know who have flown recently have had nothing to complain of this treatment, thus the incidents that I've described are rare. All of us must be patient, as it is for our own safety that these checks are being done.

But there is always a feeling of dread to have the eye of suspicion focused upon us for simply being Muslim. I fully understand that the authorities are too human. Yet the media has done very little to remind me of this, often portraying valiant officers of the law as cold-hearted mavericks. From the media it appears that there's a persecution of Muslims occurring, thus, many have very little faith in either the authorities or the media.

I myself am in a very deep dilemma. The UWM campus was also affected by September 11. In the days that followed, posters outside the emissary office were torn and the door to the office was defaced. Members of MSA, including its president, received abusive, threatening phone calls at their residences. It was a difficult crisis for many of us, as we felt very isolated and vulnerable. The campus police was very supportive to us. When these acts of vandalism were reported, they would treat it very seriously and penalties were issued. Other student organizations on cam-

pus, including the Student Association and the Student Government, provided much needed moral support. MSA also received letters from Senator Russ Feingold, community members, and our neighbors offering their moral support. MSA is deeply indebted to those who helped us during this time. September 11 has brought the UWM community even closer, such that we feel like a very large family. In the time of need, friends help indeed.

There was one incident that occurred on campus on September 11 known as the Black September incident. At 9 a.m. on September 11 the words Black September were found written on a marker board in one of the computer labs in Bolton Hall. Black September is a military group from the Middle East. And given the coincidence that day, the campus police were notified and the FBI was also involved in the investigation. It was found that a Caucasian graduate student had written those words the night before intending for it to be a joke and meaning no harm. The incident was immediately dismissed by the campus police as "crazy timing" on the part of the student. No penalties were issued. We ask that if given the same scenario, had the student been Muslim or Arab, with the same harmless intention, would the outcome have been the same?

September 11 has even affected linguistics. The other day I was reading an article on the British Broadcasting Cooperation about new slang that has developed after September 11. If you have a hard time trying to find someone, you call him or her bin Laden. If your room is a mess, you call it ground zero. If you don't like someone, you call him or her a terrorist. Never before have I heard the word terrorist being used so frequently as it is now and often being used indiscriminately. Why is it that the mastermind of September 11 are called terrorists and the boys who masterminded the Columbine High School shooting were simply boys of deprived childhoods? Did not both events inflict terror upon its victims? Were not innocent lives taken in cold blood? What of the childhood of someone who grow up in Palestine, Kashmir, Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Ireland, Columbia, Sri Lanka? By no means am I endorsing the activities of these militant groups,

but it seems that in order to be called a terrorist certain criteria in race, religion, and nationality and other characteristics must be fulfilled, regardless of the crime committed. Why is it that there has become a negative stereotyping of Muslims in general? Meanwhile, after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, why are not white males who drive trucks stopped on the road and searched?

This is my analysis of the world after September 11. I conclude that mankind has become divided and I am deeply saddened by this. I read the Koran for comfort and I would like to share with you an extract of a verse that deeply affects me. In chapter 5 from verse 32 it reads: "If an innocent life is killed, it would be as if the whole of mankind has been killed. If a life is saved, it would be as if the whole of mankind has been saved." These are not light words. September 11 was a direct attack on mankind. So was Hiroshima, as were the crusades, as are the rebel armies fighting in central African countries, as was the mother who drowned her five in Texas. Mankind is killed every day, every hour, every minute, yet we choose to turn a blind eye.

Flags were lowered to half mast for the American military personnel who died in service during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. But who lowered the flag for the Afghani mothers and others who died protecting their children? I say that we put aside all that divides us, for mankind is certainly above nationality, race, and religion. All humans feel love and hate, feel comfort and pain, feel secure and absolute fear. Is this not enough to unite mankind?

The general feeling amongst the Muslim community is that we are being isolated as a group to fundamentalism, willing to declare holy war as willing to die as martyrs taking innocent lives with us, all in the name of reaching heaven. Islam condemns the killing of innocent lives. If a war must be declared, it must only be to free society from oppression and persecution, but that, too, only as a last resort. If a war must be fought, God commands to fight only those who have come to fight with you. Forbidden is to harm men who have not come to fight with you, women, children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. Any-

thing outside these limits is outside Islam. Islam seems to be a most misunderstood religion, and negative stereotyping is common. But such stereotyping does not promote cooperation. Muslims died too on September 11. Along with the many foreigners who were also killed, we too seek justice. It is time that we came together as a mankind to confront the greatest enemy that faces all of us, ignorance. Only as a united mankind can we hope to bring an end to hatred, intolerance, terrorism, our own self-destruction.

I close reciting the verse 135 from chapter 4 of the Quran: "Oh, ye who believe, stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to God, even as against yourself, or your parents or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor, for God can best protect both. Follow not the lust of your heart, ye be swerved or if ye distort justice or decline to do justice, verily God is acquainted with all that you do."

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time and attention and may we come together to build a better world for our children and future children. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Thank you.

MS. HABEEB. Is there a question-and-answer session?

MS. PRIDE-EULER. Thank you for sharing your views and your concerns. Very interesting.

MS. HABEEB. Thank you for letting us speak.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. It's very good coming from a student. We certainly did not expect such in-depth analysis. We are very grateful for that.

Janan Najeeb is the director of the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition and she will now address the Commission.

### **Janan Najeeb, Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition**

MS. NAJEEB. Hello and thank you for inviting us here today. I really didn't prepare any specific remarks other than coming to discuss a few of the issues that my organization has encountered. My organization is predominantly an educational organization, an outreach type of organization. But we also do advocate on behalf of the Muslim community. If an individual runs into a particular

problem, we try and help them resolve that problem. We've had issues. Some of these issues that I'm going to present are issues that were of concern to us before 9/11 and became of greater concern after the 9/11. These are issues that I think most of the individuals within the Muslim community encounter, particularly Muslim women.

As a Muslim women's organization, one of the biggest problems is our religiously mandated dress or head garb. We run into a number of issues regarding that. We teach people and educate people that this, in fact, is something that we believe was commanded by God to Muslims. We are each responsible for the social health of society. We don't think that our religiously mandated dress is something that is particular just to Islam. We believe that in fact, God revealed this particular dress to every religious community, but Muslims continue to practice that. Rather than giving the impression, as many people believe that our hijab is some type of repressive form imposed upon Muslim women, we believe that it's rather liberating. It forces people to deal with us based on who we are, based on our character rather than our physical appearances.

Amongst the biggest problems we have as Muslim women is in the area of employment. It's a very common concern with Muslim women. They often call us and tell us that they applied for a particular job, they submitted their résumé, they speak on the phone, the employer was basically willing to hire them right there and then, but then when they come to the employer for the interview, immediately after being seen things change. So, this is an issue and oftentimes this is something that's tough to put your finger on and to blatantly come out and tell an employer that this is a type of discrimination because they will often find something else that they can say is the reason for not hiring the candidate. "Oh, we have so many qualified candidates." Sometimes it's something very minor that would come up. This is a very big concern in our community because we have a lot of very intelligent women who unfortunately have many problems finding employment because of their hijab.

Another issue that often comes up because of our dress are sometimes simply things like getting

a driver's ID. Every individual needs to get a driver's identification card. Women encounter problems going for passport photos. This is something that my organization has dealt quite a bit with. We've called some of the main headquarters as far as getting our driver's license photos because what happens is that the individuals taking the photos often ask the women to remove their headscarf saying that this is required or at the very least they ask them to at least uncover one of their ears so that one of their ears would show for the photo. This is something that Islamically is not appropriate or acceptable for us, and we have frankly for years been trying to deal with this issue. We have spoken, I personally have spoken to, Frank Madison regarding the driver's identification card, and I said that something needs to be done. Minor specific details, what is allowable and what is not allowable. They do have a small insertion regarding religious head covering, but it's very nonspecific and this continues to be a big problem with us, whether it's passport photos or driver's identification type photos.

As far as again going to issues of employment, we have a number of women that have sought employment at places such as nursing homes, at hospitals. Some of the issues that arise have been blatant forms of discrimination, and the concern that we have is that when you go to management regarding that, nothing happens. We had one incident where a Muslim woman who was a nurse, has her master's degree in fact, is very well qualified, who wears her hijab, she was at [a local hospital] in the nursery and a physician entered and asked that the person with "the rag" on their head please leave the nursery because they were going to bring in contamination in the nursery. She addressed people in management regarding that and basically nothing was done about it. So, I'm bringing this as an example. These are not isolated examples; these are frankly examples that we encounter all the time.

One problem that we have within our community because we do have many Muslims that have been born and brought up here in the United States, but there also are a significant number who are immigrants. Many of them are fearful to basically fight for their rights on these issues.

They fear that they will lose their standing here as American citizens. Many of them are coming from countries where standing up for your rights is not commonly done. So, they fear that the government will somehow get involved, and it continues to be a problem.

Another problem that we have as Muslims, areas where there tends to be a large concentration of Muslims, particularly around Islamic centers, housing tends to be a problem. You're going to find that when an advertisement for a housing unit is put up, usually to rent, many times when a Muslim family applies, they will not be able to rent that unit once the owner sees that that family happens to be a Muslim family. Several years ago, we did a little certification experiment with some women and we had a woman who was an American Muslim and did not cover and she, in fact, went to a four-unit rental house by the Island Islamic Center on the south side. And she was looking at it and she wanted to rent that particular place and she gave basically the exact same information as another woman who was an American Muslim, but had a scarf on. And so we had her then basically go and ask the same questions and present herself in the same way and it was then that we realized that it was clearly a problem. We found that the door was wide open for the Muslim woman who was not wearing the headscarf, but the door was completely closed in the face of the Muslim woman that did wear a headscarf.

So, these are some of the issues that we encounter. Also in schools; you normally think that students should be safe in school. There really should be something that is personal to them and only to them. But we had numerous complaints from a variety of school students at a variety of schools where they have had teachers oftentimes degrade them in front of the rest of the class because of the clothing that they wear. And we have approached some of these schools and some of these teachers—I want to say about two years ago once it had become relatively public with a teacher basically almost prophesizing to a Muslim student. Again, the problem that we encountered is that when you go to the proper authorities, they say they're going to look into it and when you

follow-up with them, they say they're looking into it and then that's it. But if that had been any other community other than ours, some attempt, something would be done about it.

These are just a few of the issues that we as the Muslim community often encounter. I would like to just say that I as a Muslim after 9/11 having been brought up here my entire life, I've always felt very comfortable in this country. I consider it my country. I know I don't have any other country, but after 9/11 we were very encouraged by remarks that were made by the President, but lately we feel that the same agencies that we thought would protect us are, in fact, the same agencies that are now responsible for violating our rights. We've had incidents, all around the United States, where individuals or federal authorities are breaking into homes looking for particular terrorist activities, so to speak. Most of it is unfounded or not evidence of such activity in the immediate area.

We're quick to say that whatever we do is for the benefit of our country and we'd like to feel that we should be comfortable enough in our country that we don't have to keep looking over our shoulder, but we really don't want to feel that way. We feel that the government has turned this war against terrorism into a war against Islam. But it's been shielded under the guise of a war against terrorism. We hope that this is something that is temporary. We know that our country through its history has had setbacks regarding two races during different periods of its history. We hope that we will come out stronger. But at the same time we're fearful. We're fearful that we will always be blacklisted and looked at and felt not welcomed in American society.

I'm ready for any questions you may have.

MR. EASTMAN. I have one. Both of you can answer it. I just hadn't thought of it yet, but I'm wondering, how is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affecting discrimination against Arabs and Muslims in this country? I just need some light shed on that.

MS. NAJEEB. Well, personally, as one of Palestinian descent, I believe that what's happened with this war against terrorism, particularly because our President has chosen to make it such a

very black-and-white issue, either you're with us or against us with no room for disagreeing with our foreign policies, what this has led to is basically any despot or any tyrannical regime in the name of fighting terrorism is squelching the legitimate political aspirations of our people. And we feel that the media does not accurately portray what is going on. We feel that it is not being handled in an evenhanded way. I think our foreign policy is very frustrating to us when we look at when Iraq occupied another country and it thumbed its nose at the U.S., we basically were determined to go and bomb it back in the stone age. But when another country does something similar, as in what Israel is doing to the Palestinians, there is no reaction. This to us is as much the same. Why are we acquiescing? Why are we not doing more to change this situation? So, I think that 9/11 was one thing, but I think that this is exasperating the Muslim community in the sense that we feel that not only are we prejudiced, but also our blood is basically not equivalent to everyone else's.

MS. HABEEB. Well, with regards to MSA, UMW campus, there was a protest held on Tuesday about this incident in Palestine and Israeli and unfortunately, the president, the MSA president, was telling me that before and after the rally, members of a Jewish organization group, there was actually an organization group that actually rather raised a fuss—not only towards him, but to other members of MSA. You know, we tried this. This is the land of free speech. Everyone should have their say so. Why is it just because we are Muslims it's not accepted? So, what we did say, it's being hindered.

MS. MCFADDEN. Janan, how long has your coalition been in existence?

MS. NAJEEB. For about eight years.

MS. MCFADDEN. You described a lot of discrimination complaints. Who do you refer those to?

MS. NAJEEB. Most members—actually it's a relatively loose knit organization. We worked between ourselves. We have a group of 19 within the organization that basically worked handling these complaints and we work with the Islam Center and we have a couple of Muslim organiza-

tions. And we also talk to a number of Muslims and help them to direct to someone, to the proper person concerning whatever the issue is.

MS. MCFADDEN. Okay. When you do counsel those individuals, you know you described some discrimination cases. Did you ever inquire into those—

MS. NAJEEB. What we did is I had asked the woman that was involved in this particular issue to file a complaint and she said she would. Then she felt pressured from other family and she did not go ahead and do that. She didn't feel comfortable. She was of Middle Eastern descent. And she just felt that this might create more harm than it would good. That's a problem that we encounter that even with some of the employment issues, with a problem with individuals willing to go forth verbatim and we will talk to particular authorities, but to actually go and make a lawsuit is different. Oftentimes within our community we are not willing to do that. A lot of times our community doesn't have the confidence in the judicial system. They don't assume that they would just be able to have their rights taken care of.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. I have a question. Public accommodation and for employment, did you contact the Equal Rights Division, is that the agency?

MS. NAJEEB. Yes.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. And what was—

MS. NAJEEB. Depending on the issue that, you know, we've had a number of issues. Depending on the issue that came up, many times they will take all the information and tell us that they will look into that and we will send—a lot of times giving information, but we don't really see anything materialize.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. So, you don't have anyone to advocate for you as far as you see at that point?

MS. NAJEEB. Right.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. And then you don't hear back—

MS. NAJEEB. Right.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. So you're working with one person?

MS. NAJEEB. We're usually working with one person.

MS. PRIDE-EULER. And that person does nothing?

MS. NAJEEB. Right. Sometimes members from my organization will follow-up then with that and again we will be promised that someone will get back to us.

MS. GAMEZ. I know you're kind of a community that you're self-sustained because you're a small community. Do you have the presence of any number, your alderman as one who can take up those issues and bring them to a public arena and get it to government? Have you ever done that?

MS. NAJEEB. I have, in fact, met personally with Congressman Barrett and I mentioned some of these issues and I asked that he get back to me and see if maybe the government can, particularly when we're dealing with these issues of the photo for driver's ID card. This was a time when we were having just a hard time with this, especially in the city where women were being asked to remove their scarves and I asked him if he would go ahead and deal with this and see if something more permanent can be done, you know, something inserted in the rules that these individuals would then have it saying, you know, Muslim women or whatever religious group that wear headscarves and so on. And he said he would look into that. And he said that maybe I could come to Madison, and I asked him to try to get just some more specific information in there.

This is sort of what we encounter all the time where someone says we'll talk to someone or yes, we'll let them know or we'll discuss it or this type of thing. But to say that, okay, here's a new rule or something new that's been inserted, we don't see that.

MS. GAMEZ. Thank you.

MS. DICKMAN. Have you encountered any greater understanding of your beliefs? I know that the newspapers did a series explaining different tenets of Islam. Has there been any sort of positive effects in that?

MS. NAJEEB. I think there have been unfortunate things, but I can give you one that I was encouraged by the positive, particularly because the organization, one of the main things that it does is outreach. We do lectures, workshops, these types

of things, and I can say that our work has quadrupled since 9/11. And people genuinely want to know. Then genuinely want to understand. We do run into problems, but these are, again, specific problems and I think that there are things that with proper legislation, etc., they can be taken care of. You're going to have your racists or your bigots, but I think overwhelmingly people are open to learning new things, to understanding, particularly within the interfaith community. We've found the interfaith community to be the most open after September 11.

One problem we've had though is that we're running into people that are the more, how can I say without insulting anyone, the more very right wing evangelical type group that tend to be more of a problem, where they have control of our airwaves, you know, with particular talk shows or certain television programs. These particular groups tend to be more of a problem. Others are not that much of a problem. But like I said, what is happening is we were very encouraged by what the government's stance was after 9/11 and asking people not to clump everyone into one particular group. But what we have seen more recently is that the government is now the one responsible for some of these violations.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Janan, in some of the events that happened in your community in the hesitancy of some of the members to take it any further, is it always that way within the organization?

MS. NAJEEB. A lot of it has to do with immigration. Even individuals which I find, you know, and they're U.S. citizens, you know, they're American citizens, they just have in the back of their heads, whether it's through some unfortunate experience, whatever the case is, they just feel that at any time it can be just ripped away from them and I gather some of the recent events in the name of fighting terrorism and some of the recent actions that our government has taken have put more fear into them.

MS. HABEEB. Can I add something to that, please? I'm here on a student visa and I'm on a nonimmigrant status, yet I'm feeling a bit afraid myself because I don't know what my rights are and I'm getting the feeling that I don't have the

same rights as American citizens. Like with the example of the 5,000 people who were arrested on immigration violations. I too could disappear and I'm really afraid. I'm planning to go back to my country during the summer for a visit and I'm really scared of whether I can come back or not. I'm just here on the education visa and that's my only intention.

MR. EASTMAN. I have a question. Weren't there interviews sometime shortly with students where Muslim students were interviewed? Please clarify. Explain what the government did, what the question was.

MS. HABEEB. I know what I heard was it was only for Muslim men or Arab men so I did not have any of it myself.

MR. EASTMAN. Any stories?

MS. HABEEB. Yes, I heard at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, letters were sent to their students who were Muslim and Arab men. They refused to participate, to give any information on their students to the FBI or any investigating agency. They can agree to any authority, as I understand it, but the written permission of the student is needed before any files can be released.

MR. EASTMAN. How does the student here from other countries—do you see the whole lack of integrity, putting fear into them? You see where I'm going with this? I'm just wondering if it's putting the whole student population—we're supposed to be coming together—if it's putting everyone, whether their Muslim or not, whether they're from Ethiopia or anywhere else?

MS. HABEEB. Well, it doesn't seem to be just Muslims. It's also foreigners from Asia because not everyone in Asia is Muslim or any of those parts. So, it's just, you know, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan is branded as a terrorist country or potential beyond.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. I'm a member of the association in southeastern Wisconsin where we meet once a month and the composition are foreign students, advisors, so we evaluate schools, colleges, and universities in the area and we do discuss issues of that nature. And some children feel that schools have received, especially the feeling that schools received direct visits from the FBI looking at the files. I mean it's not—they've

got to call to say that they're coming. There are schools that have gotten letters purporting to say, how many hours is this student here? I come from the Philippines and we are identified by the American government, the President, as one of the al Qaeda 10. So we are one of them. The countries that are allegedly identified have a difficult time getting their students here under a visa. I work in the registrar's office and oftentimes as it happens, once you help one foreign student, they will refer you to other foreign students, so your clientele does increase. And I had a student who went home to his country and he was coming back because he was graduating that following semester. He did not get back because you get a visa from the American Embassy from the country that you're at. He would call me and say, "Is there anything that you can do?" I said, "All I can do is send the American Consulate a letter that you are expecting to graduate, but it's not up to me to say you should be given the visa because you try to seek an education."

So, there are many cases and it's very difficult. I know, I work with a lot of African Americans in my office and I'd say to them and I'm sure all of you experienced this, "Oh, you all look the same." And they say that to me, "Oh, I just met some Asians, oh, you all look the same." I'm sure we all experienced things like that. And I guess to think that it can happen in this country, we just don't look the same to everybody else.

I have a particular experience being Filipino. A large part of the Filipino community came here in the '60s when they were recruiting doctors and nurses all over the world and, of course, a lot of that was the great wave of Filipinos who came to the country. At that time it was not yet divided into Asian Pacific and others. So, we were black or white and we were white because we were not black and did not have 1/24 percent of our blood that was not black. Indeed, we were considered white. When the Asian population increased with Laotians and all the others after '75 is when all the classifications came in, many Filipinos were here before this operation. Because now we got to be Asian Pacific, and they actually want to be considered white.



Like I said, it's going to change the color of your skin. What I'm saying is if everything changes every time something happens and at the time when the Filipinos were here as professionals, they were very proud to be announced as to what they were, that their median education was higher than the white Americans and then all of a sudden it went down because most of the other Southeast Asians were not educated comparatively the way Americans were educated. So, it's very different. I know it's respecting who each of us are who come to this country and not original like Jesse here, have to deal with. And now, of course, you know, as Geri always explains to us, many of our educators are finding that they have come through generations and generations. So, we know that we might get there, but it's going to take a long time for many of us. I mean I hope that that's hopeful for many of us.

MS. NAJEEB. By the way, Arab Americans are designated as white. I always sign "other."

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Wait until they have your classification. They will—

MS. NAJEEB. One thing that I wanted to, it occurred to me I wanted to follow-up on your question about the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is a situation that our community has encountered and we've actually gone to visit the FBI on several occasions regarding that. Whenever there's an incident that takes place in the Middle East and the Arab American or Muslim American community reacts, after that we have an increased amount of visits by the FBI to our community.

So, what happens in the Middle East does directly affect us and our concern where we feel that we are not equal, we are not being treated equally. So many people within our community don't feel that they really have the freedom to voice their opinion even to the political situation. In fact, there was a columnist just the other day that wrote about the newspapers—that there are so many syndicated columnists, about their views and about how many letters to the editor and editorials that they get that are supporting the Islamic views. But his comment was that the Palestinian and Arab American community is dead silent. And the reason that it's dead silent is that they don't feel that if they were to speak out that they

would immediately be targeted. Not so much by others or people that disagree with their political points, but maybe by the government itself.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Then we can continue asking questions. I was just trying to meet my agenda. So, feel free to ask questions.

MR. EASTMAN. As an outreach agency, do you meet with other agencies to see, I guess, governmentally what I heard you say that there was a nonresponse or even a negative response to your community. Are you working closely with the community leaders? What is their cooperation?

MS. NAJEEB. Well, I work very closely with leaders, with interfaith groups within the archdiocese, within other interfaith groups that have agencies under them that sort of help us at least direct us into the right direction. Because as a community, although really Muslims came here from the time of slaves. They say 30 to 60 percent of slaves were Muslim, but the second wave of immigration was sort of us in sort of a younger community and we're still one of the younger communities. Frankly, we don't have that many people that know the ins and outs of the bureaucracy and know really where to go and who to speak with. And when you reach a dead end, whom do you go to?

MR. EASTMAN. So, do you have a liaison in the mayor's office?

MS. NAJEEB. We really don't in any, I don't believe, in any government agency. What we've depended on are basically, you know, your friend is my friend, sort of if you know somebody, then put me in contact with that person, by working with other groups.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Thank you very much for coming to speak to us, for your opinions.

MS. MCFADDEN. Very educational.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. It's up to you who wants to go first.

MS. ARSHAD. What do you want to know?

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. We're here to listen. Just give your name for the purposes of our recorder.

MS. ARSHAD. My name is Naahed Arshad, N-a-a-h-e-d, A-r-s-h-a-d.

**Naahed Arshad, Islamic Society  
of Milwaukee**

MS. ARSHAD. From what I understand when we had the original meeting, we had mentioned that two days after September 11 the FBI had come to our house unexpectedly, and when we had the initial meeting, I had mentioned that, so I presume that's why we were invited today to pretty much state that fact and what has happened.

I guess we were very taken back by surprise that that had happened to us. We have been in the states for 20 years, lived in Milwaukee for 16. We're active members of the Islamic Society and CPAs by profession. But I'm more of a volunteer at the Islamic center. I run the Sunday schools and I'm involved with many other youth activities. So, while we were under so much stress of what was happening on September 11 and what was going on in the Muslim community, we were completely taken back when the doorbell rang at 6 o'clock two days later and there were two people from the FBI standing outside. And we were at home. And when I'm very active, to say I suddenly fame scared for some reason because I didn't expect it. So, actually I called Janan who you have just been speaking to. She lives in my neighborhood and I said there are two FBI guys in my door at this hour. And she said get rid of them. You don't have to talk to them. So, my husband wasn't home, so I told them that my husband wasn't home. So I didn't feel comfortable to talk to them. And they said they would come back.

But when I spoke to Janan's brother, who is an attorney, he's like, you're a U.S. citizen, you've done nothing wrong. They're probably just asking some routine questions, so you don't really need an attorney or anything. And I don't really think you need anyone when you talk to them. So, when my husband, you know, I called him and I explained to him what had happened and, you know, told my husband to come home straight away, the FBI's at our house. I think that was extremely unpleasant. I tell you know what, I was so scared and just, I'd just like to question the motive of how in this country I have never had so

much as a speeding ticket in 21 years. And I think the nature of what happened that evening set the tone for how we felt Muslims were being treated.

They could have just called, you know. We are here. We are active members of the community. They knew where we were. So, we being active people in the community and they wanting to speak with us, that we didn't have a problem with speaking with them and them speaking with anyone in the community, you know, who could create a problem; that are a problem. That I don't have a problem with—just the nature of the visit indicated to me the tone of the way Muslims were being treated. Because I think they could have made a phone call and I think that could have been really good. When we look to the many journals, that's never really been answered that you call somebody before you visit them.

Anyway, I called the number back and my husband just wanted to get it over and done with because he was, you know, it looked like they could take anyone and everyone in that day without giving us any information. You have this whole piece of evidence, somebody could have even planted information against you and they could arrest you. I mean that's the impression that I've been getting since. So, it kind of made us nervous. But then my husband actually wanted to talk to you. They also asked me, is your husband at home?

**Maqbool Arshad, Islamic Society  
of Milwaukee**

MR. ARSHAD. My name is Maqbool Arshad. The thing I asked them was, you know very well where I am. You don't have to go to my home and give a surprise. If you are looking for something, they could have called me and come to my office and I'm there every day right around—particularly, the impression I got from the head of the FBI here in Milwaukee was they like to surprise and, I mean, obviously they like to scare.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. 6 o'clock?

MS. ARSHAD. In the evening. It was in the evening.

MR. ARSHAD. And probably that's the thing that was the factor. That's only I can't say that we

don't give a damn about anything you think and what you practice and they came. They have the right to do that.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Did they give you a reason why they came?

MR. ARSHAD. No, they were just talking abstracts. They wanted to know that—actually the question was very vague and broad. They wanted to know about our community and how many Muslims are here and what type of different—who we are. The way the actions are about our people. So one would be very nice and the other guy was acting smart. He knows the world of politics better than we do and you know who Muslims are, it's a very open type of group. When I look back, it's not a free meal. It's a very different type of thing. It's very broad based, and we have in our community people from basically United Nations, they're people from South Asia, Middle East, Europe to Africa, and all types who, if they wanted to get a feel of it, probably they wanted to talk to somebody. They were actually fishing around.

MS. GAMEZ. I understand that and I may be all wrong in this because I just barely—sometimes in the morning I don't get to read my paper the way I would like to, but I think I heard something on the TV or some radio program, I don't know which one, that there was going to be a representative from the federal government coming here and they were going to set up a task force for, you know, the terrorist. Did you hear anything about that at all? That was happening this week? Anybody?

MS. MCFADDEN. I heard something briefly about that.

MS. GAMEZ. It had to do something with the schools or something. But I heard something. I'm just wondering if there is a task force being put together around this country and these are being done by our congressmen. It seems to me that that would be a real good place to have the representation from the Muslim community to address these issues and they would be like appointed individuals that are on these task forces that are happening all over the United States. I think that would be a real good place to get your information, to voice your concerns about how they are going to go

about investigating in the future. I'm hearing that these task forces are happening all over the United States.

I'm wondering if Congress—I'm wondering if maybe Barrett can shed some light on it for them. That might be a place that certainly you could voice your concern. If they're looking at what they can do for future monitoring or activities of such. I just bring that up because I kind of heard that coming.

MR. ARSHAD. If there is a task force coming to our community or outside, I'm sorry, I have not read or heard it was. These people should be appointed, people coming into these two new members of the task force, so I have no knowledge of that.

MS. GAMEZ. I would think that would give you some firsthand knowledge of what's being planned among that and be able to show a more realistic surpassing concern about these matters.

MR. ARSHAD. I don't know that they had set up a commission or not because the attorney general was here in Wisconsin, he did come to our center and talk to the community. He didn't say anything about it and—

MS. GAMEZ. I'm just wondering if you might want to investigate that at some point and connect with the congressman or somebody and say, you know, is this happening in your state or has this happened and who is on this task force?

MR. ARSHAD. Because we had a chance to talk to Congressman Barrett at his home and we also had nobody mentioned about that.

MS. MCFADDEN. I think it's a recent occurrence and what I would also suggest that for our group maybe that's something that we can take up and have some input on—who is going to sit on that task force.

MS. GAMEZ. Okay.

MS. ARSHAD. It seems they want to do something that way, that's the impression I get. Then I'll go and change it, no matter what's been happening for the last six months. If that's something that would take a lot to change, they might sit and say, "Yeah, that's how things go right now. You're not bilingual, your crime rate is high, so you're in America, very loyal, they're good law-abiding citizens"—

MS. GAMEZ. But in the task force, if you look at the issues, and you yourself can take that information back to your community to be aware of what it is that they're looking at so you're not so frightened. You know, things are not going to change overnight. We've been talking about that all day, they're not, but every little bit helps. And you can have a connection, and that's what this is about. You know, maybe connecting more. You might have more of an insight as to why these things are happening or are they going to continue to happen and how.

MR. ARSHAD. What we feel is unfortunate is the people who came and did that thing, they were foreigners. They came here to do something, okay. And the government was taken aback. They weren't clearly ready for it. So they basically did something, which was they said, okay, let's look at the potential for groups that could intimidate somebody. That is part of the process; intimidate a whole section of our community. So that community may say something that they'll be able to use or something. But they like that type of action and then all Muslims on the East Coast where they were stopped had to have a tracking device during that time. It was in the news yesterday—a counting of 1,040 people in that prison and not even a single case has been proven to have any connection to them and it is hard to get out of the prisons. They have one thing or another. They have charges against them, but they have spent six months in order to let them go and there was no charge against them except that they had not filed the application correctly and that punishment was six months. How can you spend six months in the prison? All the cases against, in New York and Washington D.C., all of them have fallen apart. That's something that's actually happened. And fortunately in Wisconsin I don't think we have that type of problem. But that does not mean that it was due to somebody's generosity over time. It's just that we were far away and unfortunately if it had happened close by, the same things would have happened.

So, but what it tells us being a diverse community and keep all of us together, you know, have to get together to prevent these types of things from happening in the community. You

know, any event that happens does not mean that you're going to be investigated.

MS. ARSHAD. The physician on the phone from New York, he said since 9/11 we're being treated like the African American community is being treated. That is what was said; we're being looked at with suspicion. So that really brought home what he was going through in New York. We're a little farther away from New York, so there was some things building on that that you're going on here, but the closer to New York you were, the more it was going on.

MR. EASTMAN. Sure, there probably has been much more out there.

MS. ARSHAD. That's what he said on the phone when I called him. He said that's how they've been treated.

MR. ARSHAD. A lot of things weren't noted after events like that. At least going forward on Washington Road across County Line Road you'd also have African Americans or blacks stopped on by where I used to live. I saw a policeman kind of pushing, shoving. I didn't realize what was happening. So, those things for us—it was a good lesson to understand and get insight to what our community—is it a real community or is it just an area, you know, with our problems. So, it was a good lesson for us to be exposed to. If that's what we are, then we have a lot to do and that probably is what's happened.

MS. ARSHAD. And just not exactly related, but I think then it's going to go away because I think the media has set the tone as well as even just this morning on CNN they were interviewing William Bennett, who is coming out with a new book and was telling the discussion, the Middle East conflict and said, "Yeah, we're all going to be friends, because they're our real friends because on September 12 Israel lowered their flags and the Palestinians were out celebrating." That wasn't true. There were a handful of Palestinians who didn't even know what was going on, but that did not reflect the mood of the world. There were isolated incidents, but now if you give \$4 billion a year to a group, yeah, they probably would lower their flag, too. But for everything we're going out and telling people, the media is coming back and back and back to negate it be-

cause it's—you know, my sister just got back from Spain yesterday and she said it's amazing how the conflict in the Middle East was covered to document the little 20-minute stand of the Palestinian people. Just seeing what is seen or demonstrated. So that most things that we have to deal with living here.

Now we've got a major thing going on in reality where a media that is going to continuously put out information to mislead people. Anyone watching CNN this morning would again not know really what happened September 11. I spoke to thousands of the school kids; I've gone to churches. I've done so much of that. So, for every step we take forward, the media is coming back and saying, "But the Muslims were celebrating." That's not true. So, anyone I know who was watching CNN and has never come across a Muslim will again this morning be reminded, "Israel, our friend, they lowered their flag the next day, but the Palestinians were celebrating." And that was a lie. So, we have a lot to deal with.

MR. ARSHAD. We have problems. I think the press is trying to, you know, always give it to your type people. You know it's two types. The society justifies those. So, you dehumanize people, you stereotype people, you make them feel low, then you punish them. That is what is happening. That's where we are, all of us. It's very pervasive. And another group of people who are in control of those things and take the time for, you know, all of us to get rid of them.

MS. ARSHAD. But it's not a problem for people who know us, but if you go to our children's school, they say, "Mrs. Arshad, whatever you're doing, you should bottle it, package and sell it. That's what your kids are to our school. They stand there. They value who they are. They stand apart. What you should do is bottle it, package it, and sell it." So people will know who the Muslims are, that is not a problem at all. They fully understand our contribution to the community we're in as being such good citizens. And some of the focus on us will bring that more to light. Because that's the truth. If they go and do research on crime rates for the Muslim community in the country, they're not going to find a lot because we know even in our community how

many incidents we have of crime and it's almost nonexistent. But anyway. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Thank you for sharing your experiences. Take care.

Our next speaker is Ahmed Quereshi.

### **Ahmed Quereshi, Islamic Society of Milwaukee**

MR. QUERESHI. My name is Ahmed Quereshi. I'll give you a card with the spelling of my name on it. I actually brought a letter and three copies, which I underestimated the size of the panel that I'd be speaking to. Who should I hand the original to?

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. We'll make copies for everybody. Thank you.

MR. QUERESHI. As you wish. I can either wait until people are done reading the letter or I can just start and kind of without reading the letter actually just work my way through some points and any time we can stop for questions.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Sure.

MR. QUERESHI. Again, my name is Ahmed Quereshi. I am the secretary of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee. We operate two places of worship in Milwaukee; the Islamic center down on 13th at Layton Avenue, which draws approximately 1,000 people for the congregational prayer on every Friday afternoon, as well as another house of worship called the Mussallah, which is over by the UWM campus and draws anywhere from 50 to 100. Perhaps it's more, I don't usually attend there on Fridays.

I think that what I would like to impress upon this committee and have on the record first and foremost is that the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, like all other major Islamic organizations in this country, absolutely condemned the horrible acts of September 11. We put out a press release within a couple of hours following the incident and at least one of the local television stations ran a crawler at the foot of the screen indicating that the Islamic Society of Milwaukee condemned what had happened. Unfortunately, that did not isolate us from a backlash as a result of September 11. And our community felt it both in the form of acts of individuals and we felt ultimately

also in some of the legislation which has been passed or some of the governmental policies or investigations that have followed. I also apologize in advance. I realize I'm the last witness of the afternoon and you might have heard everything that I'm going to say three times already, but be that as it may.

At the Islamic center we maintain an office there and we have a volunteer secretary. We have a religious director. We also have an answering machine. Either in direct phone calls or in messages that were left on the answering machine we received approximately one dozen threatening and/or profane phone calls on that day. The most serious of which was a threat to blow up the building. And ultimately resulted in the Milwaukee police officers who came over to the center within an hour actually after the event had occurred on September 11 recommending that we shut down the building.

We run a full-time school at that building. There are more than 300 students. It's K-8th grade. And because of our responsibility to our students and their staff and their employees as well, we thought that the policemen's advice was sound. Almost all those phone messages, although we did have caller ID, the caller ID was blocked except for one individual who was careless enough not to do that or maybe didn't care and we got his phone number and he was actually arrested and prosecuted by the Milwaukee Police. I don't have that individual's name to include in the report that I have, but I'm sure that somebody from District Attorney McCann's office probably could provide that information to your committee if you haven't received it already. But the immediate effect on our community was not limited to just the phone calls, threats.

What actually was going around our center, our center is located on the corner of 13th and Layton. Both are fairly major thoroughfares on the south side of the city. We were also having cars drive by honking, which is not a usual thing for our community. And we also had drive-bys, where people would roll down their windows and shout profanities out at people who were at the center entrance. We did also have some parents come immediately after this happened, but before

the school shut down for the day to stand guard at the center entrance. And so they were the ones who observed this going on with the honking, although the honking could be heard inside the buildings as well, and with people driving by and rolling down their windows and either shouting profanities or things like, "Go home." That sort of thing.

The hostile behavior that day was not limited just to what was going on at the center. In fact, some of the more egregious events occurred away from the center. Although not included in this report because it did not happen to members of the Islamic community, for example, the Sikh community, the Milwaukee Sikhs. They're frequently mistaken by people who don't know anything about Islam or the Sikh religion as being Muslim. The Sikh men wear turbans, for example, have beards. So, they are rather foreign looking in appearance. The president of our Islamic center actually spoke with two Sikh individuals who were employees at a gas station and were beaten up on the night of September 11. The attackers simply saying, as they beat them, "This is what you get for what you did to us." Fortunately, in all Milwaukee that was the most extreme thing that happened. Unfortunately, in other areas of the country there were people who were shot and killed. That, fortunately, did not happen here in Milwaukee.

We did have other incidents on September 11 and 12, however. For example, one of my client's employees told me about how his daughter was trying to board a bus, was actually forcibly prevented by other people who were going to enter on the bus from entering, and the bus driver did not come to her assistance. Another client of mine related a story in which the cleaning person who comes to his house was taking a bus back home and the bus drivers intentionally drove past the bus stop at which she had been standing along, even though the bus itself was not anywhere near full; was more than half empty.

In addition to that, I feel, and this is mostly anecdotal evidence and stories related by women to me in this community, that the women in our community and the girls in it have come in for an inordinate amount of the hostility, not only on

September 11, but also in the weeks that followed. As you know, most Muslim women feel that wearing covering on their head is religiously required and they are immediately easily identifiable as such. Also, I think it made it easier for some men living in Milwaukee to feel that they could accost them in a verbally abusive manner without fear of, I don't know if retaliation would even be appropriate, but they could just say it with impunity. So, not only was there hostility being shown against a religious group, but I also believe there was a sexual component factor involved in this hostility as well.

There was an incident in which a woman who had been driving at close to the center towards her home had a man with a flag on a pole beat on the hood or windshield of her car. There was another incident in which a woman was shopping and this was included in our letter, but there was a woman shopping at Wal-Mart and one of the customers there intentionally bumped into her very hard, walking. This was not a mistake bumping, turning around, this was a hard bumping, jolt in the store. In addition to that, there were many, many stories at the center in the days following the immediate two or three days following about women, the women going up to the store or other quick places and sometimes there would be profanity, sometimes there would be rude comments, sometimes it would be simply, "Go home." Sometimes it would be the perception of a hostile glance or stare. And so what really happened was there was a conscious decision by many Muslim women in the community that they should stay at home and only leave home if they were in the company of their husbands or maybe in a group of other women. I don't know many, but I know a few Muslim women also felt that they had to stop wearing the head coverings. Some of them I know were in the circumstance where they were either divorced or widowed and felt they had no one to protect them and that they had to resort to this, which if you could imagine, would cause considerable internal conflict and anguish in the person.

In addition to those events, a couple of weeks after September 11 when the anthrax matter first came up, there was a letter that was sent to the

center that was taped, but still filled with powder leaking from it. It was sent and received during school hours and the building was evacuated by the Milwaukee Fire Department. This letter came before the bogus mailings of the anthrax really became quite common. We were kind of in the first wave of these bogus mailings. To my knowledge, they have not found the person responsible for sending that letter, although someone at the center was telling me that they thought it might have been the same person who had previously; that is prior to September 11, mailed a letter with bullet casings in it. The Postal Service I think has tightened up their procedures a little since then. But that was before September 11.

In addition to these acts that I've recounted and many of which are set forth in the letter, there is another aspect to the burden that our community has felt and how our civil rights have been affected, and that has to do with some of the government and administration's actions since September 11. While the Islamic community in our original press release was the first to call for the perpetrators of the September 11 terrorist act to be caught and punished and, in fact, we deliberately had a sermon delivered at our congregational prayer emphasizing the responsibility of Muslims to cooperate and if they had any information to relay in apprehending those responsible. There have been some actions by the government that have been very troubling to our community during the last six or seven months.

First of all, there were the intimidating interviews engaged in by the FBI. Intimidating in the sense that these gentlemen would show up extremely early in the morning, sometimes as early, I'm aware of a 6 a.m. show up because this happened to a friend of mine that I eventually accompanied to an FBI interview downtown here. By the way, I'm an attorney by profession. And also we had an instance I know that you had Dr. and Mrs. Arshad here, so I'm not going to relate what happened to them, but there were also inappropriate questions that were asked. For example, some of the questions that were asked had to do with, "Well, how do you feel or view the peace process in the Middle East?" These were interviews that were supposed to be directed at gather-

ing information related to the September 11 events. And, instead, some of the agents took it upon themselves to [say], "No, that's a political question." But, for example, another question that was asked by some of the agents is, how often do you go to the Islamic center? And though some Muslims—we can joke among ourselves about whether somebody has been praying enough or whether somebody has been attending the center enough, to have government agents come in and ask how often you go to the center is highly disturbing. Another question that was asked was whether your wife wears head covering. Now whose business is that of anyone and of what concern is that of the agents?

So, it was not only the fact that sometimes these agents would come extremely early in the morning or late in the evening or they would come at a time when there would be a woman, a Muslim woman, at home and who culturally and for religious reasons wouldn't feel comfortable inviting a man who is not part of her family into her house in her husband's absence. It also had to do with the nature of the questions being asked.

One of the big issues confronting the Islamic community in this country before September 11 and actually for the last five or six years is the provision in the 1995 federal law that allows secret evidence to be used under certain circumstances. It's a provision in the law that is not widely known of or at least some people in the Department of Justice and the FBI who we have spoken to in the past claimed not to have knowledge of such a law, but it was a law of great concern to Muslims. And this verges a little bit into the political realm, but for example, in the 2000 presidential campaign, many Muslim organizations decided to recommend that Muslims voted a block to support the Bush candidacy. And this was because in the second presidential debate, yet in the first, although Vice President Gore eventually came out a few days before the election, but Bush had been the first to condemn the use of secret evidence and racial profiling.

Unfortunately, as a result of September 11, the efforts in Congress to repeal that law ceased. And what happened instead was that the U.S.A. Patriot Act was passed. There's some provisions in the

U.S.A. Patriot Act that Muslims in this country, in this community, believe shelve our First Amendment rights.

Specifically, there are provisions in the act that made it a deportable event for a green card holder, we're not talking about somebody here who is here on a visitor visa, but someone who has permanent resident status, if they had said something in the past, even before an organization was put on the terrorist list, that it would make them subject to deportation now. So, for example, the organization, Hamas, which has been on the terrorist list now for approximately five years, I don't have the exact year. When it originally came into existence, it was viewed quite favorably by Muslims in this country because it was thought of as an organization that was providing education and support to widows and orphans and the elderly and the poor. So, there were a number of Muslims who donated and spoke in favor of Hamas, for example, in the early 1990s. But the U.S.A. Patriot Act makes it a deportable event to have done that in the early 1990s retroactively.

Essentially, as an attorney here in Milwaukee, when I'm approached and asked about this—it's not an issue of jurisdiction because I have to—I recommend to my clients who are green card holders or below that it would probably be in their interest that they have no political opinion. That they simply disavow any political opinions and just refrain from expressing any political beliefs about anything because if something like the U.S.A. Patriot Act can retroactively make it deportable to have said something years before this, who knows which group is going to be put on the list next.

Many Muslims are also troubled, not only by the provisions of the U.S.A. Patriot Act that have a chilling effect on First Amendment freedoms, but also the manner in which the government has utilized these new laws to freeze assets of individuals put on the terrorist and individual organization list. We have no objection in principle to putting the names of individuals and organizations on the terrorist list. We simply ask that this be done carefully. And this came home in Milwaukee. You have to realize although our names sound foreign to you, my first name is the second



or third most common name in the Middle East or among Muslims. I mean it would be the equivalent of not John, but maybe a Robert or a William in this country. My last name is extremely common in Pakistan, in India. In fact, it's probably the most common name there is. So, I'm like Robert Smith. But the point is on the terrorist list they put individuals down and they will be somebody like Abou Ali, which just means father of Ali. Ali is a very common name. Or there may be an Ahmed Ali, which is an extremely common name. There is a Dr. Ali here who has the same name as somebody who was on the terrorist list. And look what happened to him. Even though the person on the terrorist list was from Somalia and there's an ethnic, racial difference between a Somalian and a Pakistani. What happened is, he had his bank account frozen until a congressman intervened on his behalf to get this done.

So, it's just not enough to look at the name—or the government cannot just look at the name and go by this person has the same name. There has to be a little care taken in making sure that it's the same person. And unfortunately, because our names, although they look foreign to you, many of the names are the same. We have names that are just as common as a William Johnson or a Robert Jones and combinations, too, where you don't know whom the individual is. And the government has been sloppy about that.

Another thing that has been of great concern to us is the freezing of three of the largest Islamic charities in this country: Holy Land Foundation, Global, I think it's Global Relief, and Benevolence International. Now, none of us sitting here in Milwaukee have any knowledge of what the boards of directors of these organizations were planning or anything. But we believe from their publications that they were all engaged in reputable activities. But what is especially hurtful is—there are three things that have been troubling in the Islamic community concerning the freezing of assets and putting these organizations on the terrorist list.

Number 1, there hasn't been any public showing of an organizational involvement in terrorist activities. There have been a couple of incidents which some people found some statements that

people said before the first terrorist organization list ever published critical of Israel and supporting some of the families of some of the bombers who or some of the suicide bombers family that they were supporting them. But these individual statements do not change the fact that these organizations were collecting money that was being collected from Muslims all over the country which were usually designated to go to a specific purpose. For example, even in any one of these three organizations you could designate the money to go to Palestine if you wanted it to go there. You could send it to Egypt or you could send it to an African country or you could send it to Pakistan. You would check off the country that you wanted your funds designated to. And the second thing is the three things that occurred during the Islamic month of fasting, the month of Ramadan which is one of the truly most special times during the year for Muslims and it's a time in which we are instructed to increase our charitable giving. So, what's happened is the Islamic community here in this country and in Milwaukee, too, is going to increase its giving and all of these organizations were put on their list and have their assets frozen right in that month.

The viewpoint of Muslims about this freezing of assets is, fine, if you want to freeze the assets, fine, but why not appoint a receiver or something and disburse the assets which are earmarked to go to the poor and the needy. Certainly, some, if not all, of the money could be released for the designated purposes. But no, the money sits frozen in the account. No, the U.S. government hasn't made a showing, the Muslim community has paid attention to this, in this country why these three organizations should have been subject to that. And as a consequence to that, there is reluctance in our community to give to charitable purposes for any cause. The Islamic Society itself frequently has encountered questions as to whether it is even safe for a member of our community to give to us. So, it is something that has had a ripple effect even down to our community and our religious organization here in Milwaukee.

The third thing that has been deeply disturbing were the raids in the last month in northern Virginia on a number of respected Muslim individu-

als and organizations. For example, one of the organizations, by the way, they were raided for their information, but to my understanding there were no arrests. It was simply an information-gathering device of search warrant. But, for example, one of the organizations that was raided was the FIQH Council of North America, which is the preeminent religious organization in this country for mainstream Muslims when it comes to issuing religious rulings on matters of ordinary daily life. I mean they are well established. They are highly recognized and it was extremely disturbing to Muslims to see their offices raided. Again, nobody was arrested. That organization didn't have its assets frozen, but again, there's been no explanation as to why these raids have been conducted. And actually the government has conducted in a way a very closed investigation. For example, there have been thousands of people detained across the country in the wake of September 11 and the government has steadfastly refused to provide the list of the detainees, many of whom are sitting in detention still without access to counsel. And I wonder how many of those people—the fact that they are missing is not widely known at all. In Wisconsin actually I'm only aware of a couple of people who were detained on a temporary basis. One who was eventually deported and wasn't released from detention, but was deported because they were under deportation orders.

But the fact that the government is holding people without saying who they are holding. I don't see what the harm is. I just don't understand what the harm would be for them releasing a list of names of the people, most of whom are sitting in jail, but not all of whom are sitting in jail on immigration violations and having nothing to do with September 11. As a matter of fact, the one who had something to do with September 11, the government proudly trumpeted across the airwaves as we caught this person. This person was the 20th person who was supposed to be on the plane and that's been broadcast. If they can broadcast that, they can broadcast the names of these major terrorists, yet the government can't release or refuses to release the names of people just sitting in jail on an immigration violation,

most of whom have no access to an attorney. And in addition to that, the government has also tried to conduct secret hearings. Fortunately there was a court ruling within the last week and I think it was, the name was Rabib Bousaad [phonetic], but I'm not sure, in which the court refused to allow the secret proceedings in this case. I just believe that detaining people in secret, allowing the use of secret evidence, allowing secret hearings, that's something that's not in the interest of this country, it's against our great tradition in this country of due process, of a right to a public trial and public hearings. And I believe that we, the Muslims as a result, they take a look at this and they wonder, despite President Bush's words trying to tell the people that they must distinguish between Muslims and Islam and the criminals who did what happened on September 11, in their religion, we wonder whether the governmental policies strictly in effect don't have the practice effect in targeting Muslim individuals and organizations as Muslims. And that concludes my prepared comments and I'd be happy to answer any questions that anybody would have.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. One of the things that you did not mention, but affected Milwaukee as a community at the time after September 11 was the cancellation of Arab Fest, which comes at the end of September. Milwaukee is known for its ethnic festivals and the Arab Fest is one of the newer festivals because it's number one indeed and by the summer it's already picked up by all the other festivals. They came about, they sort of like wrapped it at the very end of the season and after September 11 the Arab community that runs the festival decided to cancel it. Most of us are members of other ethnic festivals here in the neighborhood. It was a decision that was felt that it was better for the community to cancel it.

MR. QUERESHI. That's true. Some of the members of our community, of the Islamic community, are involved in putting that together. And as you know, it's an Arab festival. The Arab community, although it's perhaps 90 percent Muslim, most of the other Arabs, the other 10 percent are Christian Arabs. So we had both Muslim and Christian Arabs participating in the planning of that event. And both of them, the entire

group, made the decision that in the wake of September 11 that they should cancel the festival. There were security and safety concerns they felt that they could not handle what might happen or at least there might be—if something very negative happened, it would be beyond their capability to control. That was certainly probably the pre-eminent factor in the decision, at least from their members of the board that I talked to in their decision to cancel.

MS. GAMEZ. Is there anything that this committee could focus on? There are so many things that you presented, but anything in particular that really is a priority of this particular community?

MR. QUERESHI. Well, you know, I'm not sure of the mandate of your committee. I think the most pressing need actually falls in the area of governmental policies and laws. We are most concerned that this country and the congressmen follow through and abolish the Secret Evidence Act that had been in effect for the last five or six years. We are very concerned about the detention of people without access to counsel or having at least having the list of names so we know who is there so they can be contacted. Maybe someone who finds out that a relative that they haven't been in particularly close contact with is in jail. For us in Milwaukee, and I must make this clear, I mean the Milwaukee Islamic community has been relatively more fortunate than the Islamic community in other areas of the country. We, for example, despite the dozen negative phone calls that came in, for every negative phone call there were 10 supportive phone calls. We had many churches and other grade schools write us letters, pay us visits, send flowers, send cards, and expressed support. And I believe that the religious faith groups in Milwaukee spearheaded that effort, and for that the Islamic community is very grateful. We regard that we have a burden upon ourselves.

Unfortunately, the truth is that most of the people in this country know little about the religion. And so when someone stands up and says this is their Quran, this book says that they should

kill all the Christians and Jews and that they want to forcibly convert everybody and they want to do this that and the other thing, which sounds just terrible in every single instance, they're either quoting a half verse or they're ignoring the four or five verses before it or they're ignoring that the fact that this verse is in a particular context and another verse pertains to that. And the challenge for the Islamic community here in Milwaukee that we've taken up since September 11 is to try to educate as best we can the public and others about our religion and tell them that our religion condemns terrorism. It condemns suicide, first of all. It condemns terrorism, the killing of innocent men, women, or children. And it is an uphill battle—I'm not going to say it's an uphill battle because of the government. It's an uphill battle because there are elements of the media and other groups that don't have any interest in having this country understand what the religion of Islam is about.

You see the level of knowledge is so low that people can do this thing that Osama bin Laden and others who planned it can do this thing on September 11 and they can claim to do it in the name of religion and unfortunately there are many people who don't know any better. The only image they have of Islam is the image that some portions of the media portray of Islamic terrorism. You know, I think that's a phrase that doesn't make any sense. I mean, there are people who do bad things in the name of religion and try to justify it in the name of religion. But, yes, because somebody says it's in the name of religion doesn't make it so. But, unfortunately, the level of knowledge among the people in this country about Islam is so low that they don't understand that there's a difference in sometimes between what the religion says and sometimes how people act and claim to act in the name of religion.

CHAIRPERSON KIRAM. Thank you very much, Attorney Quereshi, for your remarks.

MR. QUERESHI. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I appreciate that very much.

[The meeting was concluded at 5 p.m.]

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