

Center for Vigilant Freedom

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Center for Vigilant Freedom Transcripts #1 – 2007

Event: Vigilant Freedom received a recording from the April 27, 2007 CAIR briefing on the 6 Imams, at the Muslim ADAMS Center in Virginia. CAIR advertised the meeting as “Cair Hosts Town Hall Meeting on Airport Profiling.” The speakers were Nihad Awad, CAIR Executive Director, Khadija Athman, CAIR Civil Rights Manager, and Imam Magid from the ADAMS Center.

- **Audio file for this excerpt: A brief excerpt on CAIR’s problems getting American Muslims to file complaints of discrimination, presented earlier the same evening by Awad:** <http://www.vigilantfreedom.org/audio/awad1.wma>

Related audio files:

- Audio file for the full briefing, including comments by Athman:
<http://www.vigilantfreedom.org/audio/awad6imamslong.wma>
- Questions and Answers with Awad and Athman:
<http://www.vigilantfreedom.org/audio/awadqanda.wma>
- First part of full briefing, just Awad:
<http://www.vigilantfreedom.org/audio/awad2.wma>

All transcripts are our best efforts. To confirm any part of the transcript, please listen to the audio files. All emphasis is ours. Files are available in the original .wav format on request. Please contact Kyle Shideler, Vigilant Freedom Center Public Information Coordinator, dkshideler@vigilantfreedom.com or 703-879-1784.

NIHAD AWAD, CAIR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIRST PRESENTATION ON DISCRIMINATION INCIDENT REPORTING (EXCERPT)

There were 196 cases reported by the Justice Department for Muslims in civil rights cases. There were over 1008 cases reported by the Jewish faith. We need to do a much better job not only in recognizing our civil rights but also in reporting it to the government. Which is very critical and very important.

And that is why, I think, this kind of program is important to the purpose of being able to inform the government official places ...[garbled].

We will talk about the case, about the case of the imams, about the implications, about where the case is now...we'll talk about the 6 imams case...Muslims who fly within the states, and also the lawsuit that we helped file, and the reaction, both in public, in the media and in Congress. What it means to civil rights and what it means to Muslims. This is very important. You will know that history is being made.

...It is very important for Muslims to understand the law, and it's also very important for Muslims to exercise their legal rights in the country. And it's also important that if these rights are violated, that Muslims recognize that these rights are violated. Many Muslims, they are discriminated against or mistreated, they overlook or ignore or they are afraid to say or challenge or report these mistreatments. Which means, more of the same will take place against the same person or persons or against Muslims. And when people stand up and say something and challenge them, then there will be change.

But the psyche of Muslims have to change. The laws are there, fortunately, but the laws are not utilized. They're not understood and they're not followed by the victimizers or the victims. So there's a lot of ignorance about the law, and that's why Muslims usually find themselves being mistreated or discriminated against. Reporting to an organization like CAIR is important, because it is empowering. It is empowering to the Muslims themselves who report, it is empowering to the organization, and it is important to the status of Muslims within the United States. Also it is a powerful tool and message to the government and the legislators, to those who make the laws in the country, to know that this phenomenon has to be dealt with, it has to be dealt with effectively, and results have to be seen....

The Department of Justice, in their annual report, don't be surprised that if you feel Muslims are not treated well in the country, that the number of reports of incidents against Muslims or hate crimes is very low. Whereas the number of incidents and hate crime cases against the Jewish community is very very high. Maybe dozens of [incidents] against Muslims, but against Jews are in the thousands. But when you examine the situation you say, We really feel our community is more targeted. 54% - this is one of CAIR's surveys - 54% of all Muslims surveyed said they had been subject to discrimination. 54% which if you put numbers down, we're talking about tens of thousands of cases, not dozens, as is reported in the Justice Department's annual report.

So there's a huge gap between where we are as a community and underreporting what goes on, and how we are perceived. So we go to Congress, and testify before Congress, our claim and our statement is weak, because a fair-minded Congressman will ask the question, "How many cases are we talking about?" Well, we're talking about a few hundred cases. You give the specifics, and here's an annual report by CAIR. How many cases are we talking about, well maybe 2000 cases. How many Muslims do we have in the United States? Well, we have 6 million. So if you divide 2000 over 7 million [sic], that's very very small percentage.

Which means Muslims are in good shape. Muslims are not treated badly. But if you ask (garbled) most Muslims nationwide, they will tell you an experience with discrimination. My interaction with Muslims nationwide tells me that most Muslims I know have encountered an incident or an experience with discrimination or mistreatment, whether subtly or directly. But when we ask, have you contacted a civil rights organization like CAIR, the answer is "No." Why? This is very interesting. They will say, "Well, what can you do?"

We can do a lot. At least, we have to report it. If there's a merit to the case, we can intervene. And if we intervene, we can [tell] the party that discriminated against you that it is unlawful and there might be a legal course of action. And second, you empower yourself when you speak up. And when people speak up about their experience, they get support. Socially, psychologically, it feels good when people talk about their experiences, especially to a trusted party... It would feel [be?] even better if there is an institution that intervenes on behalf of these people and helps. It also feels much better if we know that there is a law that some people struggled for that's there to be used. And I think it makes even better sense if the Muslim community is known and identified as a community that stands up for itself. So this whole process of identifying the violation, to understanding it ...and then getting results and resolution, it's very empowering.

This is the experience of African Americans, Jewish Americans, Catholics, all these minorities the non-majority whites in this country, all without exception have gone through what we are going through. The only thing is, the Muslim American experience is much better than theirs. Why? Because we are the last community. The last community benefits from the struggle of all previous communities.

So we are in better shape because there are laws on the books, there's a system and people have showed us the way how to do it, and we just have to wake up and smell the coffee and so, it does not take a lot. Except in some cases, every decade there are new laws. Some of these laws are unconstitutional. They violate the civil rights. And they need some institution, some people to challenge the law, all the way up to the Supreme Court. Now the Supreme Court many times will tell the government, "You're wrong. This is unconstitutional." So the system works, but it needs someone to use it."