

(Translated to English from Arabic)

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April 8, 2009

Salam Al-Marayati, the Executive Director for the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) in California: "There is Islamophobia in the American Government!"

The fifth interview Al-Watan Al-Arabi conducted was with Salam Al-Marayati, the Executive Director for the Muslim Political Affairs Council (MPAC) in California. He asserted that there are double standards where pro-Israel organizations are permitted to raise money, even for extremist movements like the settlers, and to send American children to join the Israeli army, whereas the Islamic organizations cannot raise money for a school or hospital in Palestine.

This is our interview with him.

Q: What is your position on dealing with the F.B.I?

A: The F.B.I. and CAIR must clearly state their positions. It appears that the motive for cutting off relations is political. There are accusations against CAIR and there are many puzzles about this issue.

Q: Isn't the issue according to Senator Kyl that the American government has provided evidence of the relationship of CAIR with Hamas, and that it is one of the unindicted co-conspirators?

A: We are not on the list. There are more than 300 organizations and persons placed on the list of unindicted coconspirators. So, why did they choose CAIR only?

Q: But wasn't the Islamic organizations' consenting to deal with the F.B.I. and not with the political officials the cause of the security viewing of Muslims?

A: No. We did not place ourselves in this difficulty. There are double standards where pro-Israel organizations are permitted to raise money, even for extremist movements like the settlers, and to send of American children to join the Israeli army, whereas the Islamic organizations cannot raise money for a school or hospital in Palestine without there being scrutiny by the government and clouds of suspicion. Whether we cooperate with the American government or not, it doesn't affect this problem. All the minorities in America have suffered racial discrimination.

Q: You are well informed about what happened in the mosque in California. Do you have any more information about it?

A: This is a matter of provocateurs who the F.B.I. inserted in mosques. We are raising this issue with them and we saying to them that this is wrong.

Q: But don't some Imams contact the F.B.I. to inform them of a suspicious person in their midst

A: The Imams do not spy on the worshipers, but if I saw something wrong in my mosque, I would contact the police. We have raised the issue of planting agents provocateur in mosques so that they do not lose the trust of Muslims.

Q: What was the F.B.I's answer to you?

A: They have not answered yet.

Q: What is your opinion about what Senator Kyl said about the Muslim Brotherhood wanting to destroy America from within?

A: Senator Kyl doesn't know what he's talking about. He's in the vanguard of those who fear Islam. (Islamophobia) He's the one who brought the film, "Fitna," in from Europe. Therefore I am not surprised at his comments.

Q: But do his words rest on government sources as he says?

A: There is Islamophobia in the American government too, and this is a problem, since there are people in it spreading fear of Islam and distributing misleading generalizations against American Islamic organizations. This is wrong, and we continuously raise this issue with American officials. We have requested a meeting with the American Attorney General to discuss these matters with him.

Q: Are you requesting a meeting with President Obama beyond photos?

We criticized the Iftars with Bush as the sole entry for close contact with the Community. We said that there must be a dialogue with the American Administration which goes beyond the holding of an Iftar. I believe that the Obama administration understands this.