

CAIR's "Hate Crimes"

CAIR has created a niche for itself in the American-Muslim community by documenting what it perceives as anti-Muslim incidents,¹ challenging the "stereotyping" of Muslims and connections between Islam and terrorism on grounds that these depictions make Muslims vulnerable to harassment and hate crimes. As Executive Director Nihad Awad wrote in his 2003 testimony before a U.S. Senate panel, "there has...been an astonishing increase in the volume of anti-Muslim rhetoric in the media and politics today."²

Each year, CAIR bemoans the "anti-Muslim hysteria" that has turned Muslim-Americans into "second-class citizens." For example, in its 2004 report, "*The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2004: Unpatriotic Acts*," CAIR states, "Last year marked the highest number of Muslim civil rights cases ever recorded by CAIR's annual report...Reports of harassment, violence, and discriminatory treatment increased nearly 70 percent over 2002."³

But CAIR considers law enforcement investigations involving Muslims to be anti-Muslim acts. It has repeatedly included such investigations in its annual report on alleged civil rights abuses and discrimination against Muslims.⁴

In its 2002 report, CAIR included the closure of HLF, GRF, and BIF and wrote, "Those who oppose the government closure of the charities believe the government violated the Fourth Amendment of the Bill of Rights."⁵ The report also included the 2002 SAAR raids. CAIR wrote, "No criminal charges were filed and no evidence was produced to back up the government's actions."⁶ The report later stated, "In the view of many Muslims, what transpired was a form of collective punishment targeting Arabs and Muslims."⁷

In the "Anti-Muslim Agitation" section, the 2002 report also listed the following: "Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) made a public statement that Oregon has been a hub of terrorist fund-raising activities. Smith, citing unclassified information he learned in confidential security briefings, said terrorism-related fundraising has occurred in Corvallis and at Portland State University."

More generally, the report tries to persuade American citizens that government policy has resulted in an undeserved backlash against ordinary Muslims. By doing so, CAIR hopes to muster opposition to the anti-terror laws it finds objectionable. A June 2003 *US News and World Report* column elaborates on CAIR's motives:

¹ <http://www.cair-net.org/ireport/> (accessed October 20, 2004).

² Nihad Awad, Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security. *Terrorism: Two Years After 9/11, Connecting the Dots*, September 10, 2003, 4.

³ *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2004*, CAIR Research Center, 2004.

⁴ *Rush to Judgment: A Special Report on Anti-Muslim Stereotyping, Harassment and Hate Crimes Following the Bombing of Oklahoma City's Murrah Federal Building April 19, 1995; The Price of Ignorance: The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States, 1996; Unveiling Prejudice: The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States, 1997.*

⁵ *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002*, CAIR Research Center, 2002.

⁶ *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002*, CAIR Research Center, 2002.

⁷ *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002*, CAIR Research Center, 2002.



Why do CAIR and other groups push the ‘bias’ button so hard? Well, the victim stance works. It attracts press attention and has made the ‘bias against Muslims’ article a staple of big-city dailies. It encourages Muslims to feel angry and non-Muslims to feel guilty. It raises a great deal of money, garners a lot of TV time, and gets the attention of Congress. And by pre-positioning all future criticism as bias, it tends to intimidate or silence even the most sensible critics. From a lobbying point of view, who would want to give up a set of advantages like this?⁸

As *US News and World Report* indicates, there are serious problems with CAIR’s claims of a “growing Islamophobic prejudice.”⁹ *The Weekly Standard* blasted CAIR after it released its 2004 report for its “shoddy information gathering” and “its politicized interpretation of the ‘data.’”¹⁰ The article added that CAIR “clearly has an axe to grind,”¹¹ that it relies entirely on self-reporting, and that it makes “molehills become mountains.”¹² *The Washington Times* notes that CAIR “unashamedly exaggerates the number of such incidents” and that “the data is phony.”¹³

Responding to CAIR’s 2003 report, the Justice Department called the group’s claims irresponsible: “We’re talking about unfair criticism based on a lot of misinformation and propaganda,” a department spokesman said.¹⁴

CAIR allows people to file complaints online, or download the complaint form and mail it in with optional supporting documents, such as photos and police reports. The group urges the complainant to file a report, “even if you believe it is a ‘small’ incident.”¹⁵

CAIR impedes federal rights investigations to further promote its agenda of “Muslim as victim.”

According to the FBI, CAIR purposefully ignores the request of its agents to keep quiet about ongoing investigations.

Ross Rice, a spokesman for the Chicago FBI, cited the 2005 case of a local Muslim family who received telephone death threats from an unidentified individual. The FBI was investigating the complaint and the caller, if found, could face felony charges, Rice said.

Rice told the *Chicago Tribune* that the FBI had asked CAIR not to publicize the case. But CAIR issued a release anyway, which drew local media coverage. By failing to heed the FBI’s wishes, he said, CAIR “compromised or impeded our investigation.”

⁸ John Leo, “Pushing the Bias Button,” *US News and World Report*, June 9, 2003.

⁹ “Arsonist Torches Muslim Store in Washington,” CAIR Press Release, July 10, 2004, <http://www.cair-net.org/asp/article.asp?id=1107&page=NR> (accessed October 14, 2004).

¹⁰ David Skinner, “Behind CAIR’s Hate Crimes Report,” *The Weekly Standard*, May 6, 2004.

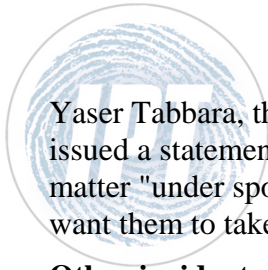
¹¹ David Skinner, “Behind CAIR’s Hate Crimes Report,” *The Weekly Standard*, May 6, 2004.

¹² David Skinner, “Behind CAIR’s Hate Crimes Report,” *The Weekly Standard*, May 6, 2004.

¹³ “Reporting ‘Hate Crimes’ Against Muslims,” *The Washington Times*, May 15, 2004, <http://www.washtimes.com/op-ed/20040514-083300-9056r.htm>

¹⁴ “DOJ Calls Allegations of Anti-Muslim Discrimination ‘Unfair,’” *Associated Press*, July 16, 2003.

¹⁵ “Reacting to Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes,” <http://www.cair-net.org/ireport/> (accessed October 20, 2004).



Yaser Tabbara, then executive director of CAIR's Chicago office, said his organization issued a statement to make the FBI and other agencies "more responsive" and to put the matter "under spotlight." He added, "That makes them take this as seriously as we would want them to take it... We believe we did this in the best interest of the victim."¹⁶

Other incidents that CAIR has labeled “hate crimes” have turned out to be dubious.

On July 9, 2004, a fire caused \$50,000 in damage at the Continental Spices Cash & Carry, a Pakistani-owned grocery store in Everett, Washington, specializing in Pakistani, Indian and Middle Eastern foods. After putting out the fire, Everett police and firefighters found a gasoline can and a derogatory message directed toward Arabs spray-painted on a wall. A white cross was spray-painted on a refrigerator in the back of the store.¹⁷

Police cautioned against hastily labeling the incident a hate crime. The department spokesman, Sgt. Boyd Bryant, said, “We need to give the detectives time to do their job.”¹⁸

Rejecting that advice, CAIR issued a press release the following day that “called on local and national leaders to address the issue of growing Islamophobic prejudice following an arson attack on a Muslim-owned business in Washington State.”¹⁹

But on August 19, police arrested the store's owner, Mirza Akram, on a federal arson warrant. He was accused of setting fire to the store to collect insurance on the building and its contents. The U.S. attorney alleged that mounting financial losses led Akram to stage the arson and then make it look like a hate crime.²⁰

Jurors deadlocked 10-2 in favor of conviction at Akram's 2006 trial. He subsequently was convicted of food stamp fraud and is scheduled for release in March 2008.

Similarly, CAIR issued a press release on August 13, 2004 titled, “Texas Muslim Store Torched, NY Muslim Beaten.” The release stated:

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) today called on the FBI to investigate an intentionally-set fire at a Muslim store in McAllen, Texas... According to the Texas grocery store owner, a U.S. resident of Jordanian origin, the fire occurred late last week and followed two separate incidents in which unknown parties painted the phrase ‘Go Home’ on the door of the store that sells halal meat and

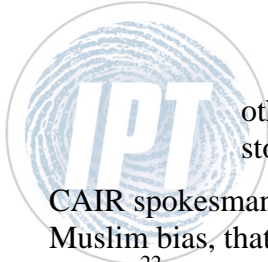
¹⁶ Jennifer Skalka, “Threatening calls to Muslim couple spark FBI probe,” *The Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 2005, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/nearnorthwest/chi-0504090167apr09,1,3150349.story?coll=chi-newslocalnearnorthwest-hed> (accessed April 11, 2005).

¹⁷ Jennifer Sullivan, “Police Unsure About Fire Motive at Pakistani-Owned Market,” *The Seattle Times*, July 10, 2004.

¹⁸ Jennifer Sullivan, “Police Unsure About Fire Motive at Pakistani-Owned Market,” *The Seattle Times*, July 10, 2004.

¹⁹ “Arsonist Torches Muslim Store in Washington,” CAIR Press Release, July 10, 2004, <http://www.cair-net.org/asp/article.asp?id=1107&page=NR> (accessed October 14, 2004).

²⁰ Christopher Schwarzen and Jennifer Sullivan, “Attorneys: Owner Set Store's Fire to Collect Insurance,” *The Seattle Times*, August 21, 2004.



other items...Jewelry kept in the store was reportedly stolen.²¹

CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper added, “If whoever set this fire was motivated by anti-Muslim bias, that person needs to be brought to justice before he or she can strike again.”²²

In September 2004, Amjad Abunar, the owner of the store, was arrested and charged with setting the fire himself.²³ The case remains open – Abunar disappeared shortly before his December 2005 trial date and a bench warrant for his arrest remains in effect.²⁴

CAIR Supports Totalitarian Islamic Regimes in Iran and Sudan

CAIR is silent regarding human rights violations committed by Islamists, failing perhaps most notably when it comes to the plight of women under fundamentalist regimes in Iran and Sudan. In fact, CAIR has attacked critical reports on this subject by *The New York Times*, CBS and anti-slavery groups and activists. Whenever any such issues are brought to light in the media, CAIR launches campaigns attacking those who report these atrocities as being biased against Islam.

- **CAIR supports the totalitarian regime in Iran**

CAIR has consistently lobbied to normalize U.S. relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. When the U.S. government hinted at a change in policy in early 2000, the organization declared Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s effort an attempt “to heal the wounds of the past,” and declared that the change in official policy “could be the beginning of a new chapter in relations between America and the Muslim community.”²⁵

Anisa Abd El Fattah, who served as a member of CAIR’s board of directors, has led its campaign to rehabilitate Iran in the United States. In a series of articles and interviews in 1998-2000, she portrayed Iran as a moderate, democratic, and unfairly demonized nation.

For example, in a June 1998 letter to the editor of the *Washington Times*, she wrote:

The United States has only one strategic asset in the Middle East, namely Israel. This is ludicrous when the region consists of nearly 25 other countries, mostly Arabian. Iran, though not Arabian, is by far the most prosperous and stable of them all. It is also the only one of these countries that is truly democratic. In fact, an Iranian representative

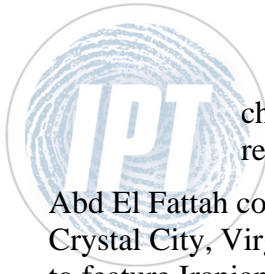
²¹ CAIR Press Release, “Texas Muslim Store Torched, NY Muslim Beaten,” August 13, 2004, <http://www.cair-net.org/asp/article.asp?id=1165&page=NR> (accessed October 14, 2004).

²² CAIR Press Release, “Texas Muslim Store Torched, NY Muslim Beaten,” August 13, 2004, <http://www.cair-net.org/asp/article.asp?id=1165&page=NR> (accessed October 14, 2004).

²³ “Hate-Crime Accuser Charged with Arson,” *The New York Times*, September 30, 2004.

²⁴ *The State of Texas v. Amjad Ahmad Abunar*, CR-1592-05-H, 389th District Court, Hidalgo County, Tex.

²⁵ “Easing of Sanctions Welcomed By American Muslims,” CAIR Press Release, March 17, 2000, <http://web.archive.org/web/20010423101904/cair-net.org/nr.asp?date=2000/03/17> (accessed November 29, 2004).



chairs the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a representative body of the Muslim world.²⁶

Abd El Fattah co-hosted a panel sponsored by UASR at the 1999 AMC convention in Crystal City, Virginia. The panel, entitled “U.S. and Iran, Time to Talk,” was scheduled to feature Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Sayyid Hadi Najad Hossenian, but he was barred from the event by the State Department.²⁷ Advising the audience that Hossenian would not appear, Abd El Fattah spoke out against the pro-Israel pundits who she claimed were responsible for Hossenian’s exclusion. “I don’t know about you, but what that tells me is that I have a challenge; and that challenge is to speak louder than them [the pro-Israel groups], be more active than they are. They love Israel. We love America, and we also love Iran,” she said.²⁸

CAIR as an organization also has backed Iran. In December 1997, it condemned the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance for the museum’s inclusion of Ayatollah Khomeini among other totalitarian leaders such as Adolf Hitler. CAIR, along with MPAC and the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, sent a letter to Wiesenthal Center founder, Rabbi Marvin Hier, stating:

The museum contains several displays that could raise the existing level of intolerance toward Muslims and Islam.

For example:

a) The ‘Wall of Demagogues’ contains a very offensive juxtaposition of Hitler and the Ayatollah Khomeini. Whatever one thinks of Khomeini, to place his image alongside that of Hitler can only serve to equate Islam with Nazism.

b) Both images of Ayatollah Khomeini show his hand extended in a ‘Nazi’ salute....²⁹

It is noteworthy that CAIR and its supporters have themselves frequently compared Zionism to Nazism, and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Hitler.

In a March 1, 1999, Internet posting, CAIR attacked a February 28, 1999 *New York Times* article titled “Trip of Discoveries, Some Unhappy, in Iran,” written by Elaine Sciolino.³⁰ The article criticized Iranian practices of discrimination against women, including foreign visitors. Without specifically instructing its readers what to say, the CAIR posting asked them to contact Sciolino’s supervisor or send a letter to the editor.³¹

- **CAIR supports Sudan despite its human rights violations and endemic slavery.**

²⁶ Anisa Abd El Fattah “Why the United States Should Improve Relations with Iran,” *Washington Times*, June 25, 1998.

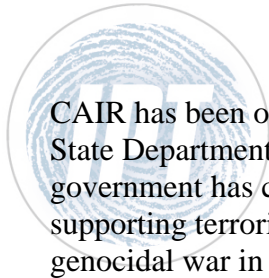
²⁷ Donna Bourne, “UASR’s Session on Iran Carried by C-Span,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, August 1999.

²⁸ “US & Iran, Time to Talk,” AMC Convention, Crystal City, VA, May 9, 1999.

²⁹ “American Muslims Say Museum Associated with Wiesenthal Center Promotes Intolerance Toward Islam,” CAIR Press Release, December 3, 1997.

³⁰ Elaine Sciolino, “Trip of Discoveries, Some Unhappy, in Iran,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1999.

³¹ CAIR American Muslim Media Watch, March 1, 1999.



CAIR has been outspoken in its support for Sudan, a country also included on the U.S. State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism.³² Specifically, the U.S. government has condemned Hasan al-Turabi, the head of the National Islamic Front, for supporting terrorism (including giving sanctuary to Osama bin Laden),³³ launching a genocidal war in southern Sudan, and committing continued human rights violations.³⁴

One of the pivotal human rights issues in Sudan is the presence of a thriving slave trade. CAIR denies the existence of such a slave trade and considers any reference to slavery in Sudan an affront to Islam, because Sudan is governed by Islamic law.

In 2000, CAIR's Hussam Ayloush attempted to gloss over the presence of the Sudanese slave trade and also to distort the basis for the conflict in Sudan: "It's really stretching the situation away from the truth if we call them slavery raids by Muslims to enslave Christians. This information had been coming out from certain groups from clear political agendas."³⁵ Ayloush argued that the civil conflict in Sudan was based on factors beyond religion such as ethnic and tribal rivalries and land and water resources.³⁶

In 2001, the U.S. Congress approved the Sudan Peace Act, barring foreign companies operating in Sudan from listing on U.S. stock exchanges unless they fully disclosed their activities in Sudan. The law also put \$10 million at the disposal of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the umbrella opposition group that included the main armed opposition force, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).³⁷

Responding to the congressional action, Awad commented, "American Muslims have grown increasingly concerned that the issue of Sudan is being used by those with anti-Islamic political or religious agendas to stereotype Islam and Muslims worldwide."³⁸

Moreover, in July 2004, despite solid evidence that Arab militiamen were carrying out a genocidal ethnic cleansing campaign against the African Fur, Massaleit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups,³⁹ Hooper stated, "We don't have enough knowledge of the situation to make judgments."⁴⁰

³² The Department of State's Patterns of Global Terrorism Report: Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism, April 29, 2004, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2003/31644.htm>

³³ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 57.

³⁴ "Concurrent Resolution 75," 106th Congress, 1st Session, Committee on Foreign Relations June 15, 1999 <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c106:H.CON.RES.75.RFS> (accessed November 19, 2004).

³⁵ Teresa Watanabe, "Sudan's Abuse of Religious Freedom Assailed," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 2000.

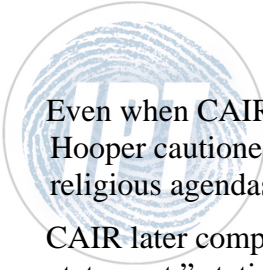
³⁶ Teresa Watanabe, "Sudan's Abuse of Religious Freedom Abroad," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 2000.

³⁷ http://www.house.gov/international_relations/107/72977.pdf (accessed January 3, 2005).

³⁸ Gamal Nkrumah, "New Law, Old Enemies," <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/539/re8.htm>, June 21-27, 2001.

³⁹ Emily Wax, "In Sudan, Death and Denial," *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2004.

⁴⁰ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "In Sudan Crisis, a Duty to Intervene," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 21, 2004.



Even when CAIR added its name to a “unity statement” calling for action in Sudan, Hooper cautioned against “allowing exploitation of the suffering to promote political or religious agendas.”⁴¹

CAIR later complained about a rally sponsored by the group that organized the “unity statement,” stating in a press release that the lack of speakers from the “major American Muslim groups,” demonstrated that the organizers had an ulterior “agenda”:

(WASHINGTON, DC, 4/30/2006) -- The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) today questioned why no representatives of major American Muslim groups are listed as speakers at the Save Darfur Coalition "Rally to Stop Genocide" this afternoon in Washington, D.C.

CAIR and other American Muslim groups, including the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation, are members of the coalition. But no representative from these, or any Muslim coalition member, is listed on the latest rally program. (Several Muslims will speak, but they do not represent Islamic groups that are coalition members.)...

“It is unfortunate that the Save Darfur Coalition chose not to list any mainstream American Muslim groups in the rally program,” said CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad. “This disturbing omission calls into question the coalition's true agenda at the rally.”⁴²

⁴¹ “CAIR Joins ‘Call to Action’ on Darfur Crisis,” CAIR Press Release, August 3, 2004, <http://www.cair-net.org/asp/article.asp?id=1147&page=NR> (accessed August 11, 2004).

⁴² “CAIR Asks Why No Muslim Groups To Speak At Darfur Rally; Lack of Muslim speakers calls into question rally's 'true agenda',” CAIR Press Release, April 30, 2006, <http://www.cair-net.org/default.asp?Page=articleView&id=2127&theType=NR> (accessed May 3, 2006).