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## **Agreeing to Disagree About the Death of Osama Bin Laden**

# **PRESS STATEMENT**

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## **Agreeing to Disagree About the Death of Osama Bin Laden**

*By Khalilah Sabra*

The recent press release of the Muslim America Society meant one thing only. We hope that the death of Osama bin Laden's will stem terrorism and eliminates one of the causes of violence in the world. With Bin Laden's death, one of the reasons for which violence has been practiced in the world has been removed.

We hope every person in this country, whether they agree with the death of Bin Laden or they disagree with, whether they themselves would made the decision to eliminate him or not, will come together and step up beyond press releases and statements, and continue the meaningful work that highlights the benefits Islam and American Muslims contribute to society.

When Osama Bin Laden died, he was not the same man who came to fight against the occupation and solely connected to the struggle for which he had committed to; despite. With his wealth and ability, he could have done almost anything he wanted to do. At that time he supported the anti-occupation forces by providing housing for the thousands of volunteers who converged on the small border town on the edge of Pakistan. At that time, Osama Bin Laden cared unrelentingly about the Afghan Muslim children in the same way he cared about his own children, and believed in the right to liberate the Afghan people from their Russian aggressors, who raped innocent women and who tried to destroy the country in order to control a country they did not have rights over. He was a visionary who believed in the possibility of an Islamic state in Afghanistan and the possibility that this thing might someday be. There was nothing wrong with that dream, even if it differs from that one that all Americans have here for themselves.

That dream of a pure and merciful Islamic state in a Muslim land, never realized itself in Afghanistan, and for the man that dreamed of it created a nightmare on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden became someone we did not know and could not understand. He, by his own testimony, designed a plan and promoted acts that led to the deaths of thousands of Africans and Americans; and direct and indirect repercussions listed below:

### **Chronicled by Leslie Berestein Rojas**

1) The end of INS, the beginning of DHS: Criticism of the decades-old Immigration and Naturalization Service, after it was discovered that some of the 9/11 hijackers were here on visas that shouldn't have been granted, led to the end of the INS in early 2003. The agency, which at the time governed all immigration functions from visas to border security, was replaced by the much broader Department of Homeland Security. Three sub-agencies within DHS were given authority over immigration matters: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (overseeing customs and border security, including the U.S. Border Patrol); U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, overseeing functions such as naturalization and the granting of legal residency; and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, which is responsible for immigration enforcement in the United States, oversees immigrant detention and deportation, and is responsible for enforcement policies such as Secure Communities and 287(g).

2) The Patriot Act: Less than two months after the 9/11 attacks, Congress passed the "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001," what's referred to as the Patriot Act. This controversial piece of legislation expanded the federal government's ability to conduct surveillance on Americans. Among other things, it allowed law enforcement agents greater ability to conduct wiretaps and to search telephone, e-mail, financial, medical

and other records, as well as to conduct property searches without advising the owner. The law made it easier for law enforcement and immigration authorities to detain and deport immigrants suspected of being connected to terrorism and placed greater scrutiny on foreign students. It has long been criticized by civil rights groups, who have alleged misuse and constitutional violations and complain that Middle Eastern immigrants are singled out. Some Patriot Act provisions, including a "roving wiretap" provision, are set to expire later this month unless extended.

3) The REAL ID Act: This 2005 national security legislation that followed the Patriot Act revolved around establishing national standards for driver's licenses and identification cards, but it also made it more difficult for immigrants to obtain asylum, and broadened the definition of terrorism-related activities that could lead to detention and deportation. There was also a border security component, most notably a provision that allowed the Department of Homeland Security to waive any laws, environmental or otherwise, and litigation standing in the way of border fence construction. A precedent was set in the fall of 2005, when then-Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff exercised the waiver authority in San Diego, allowing for lawsuits challenging the filling in of a deep canyon with dirt in order to build fencing to be thrown out of court. Other waivers cleared the way for additional U.S.-Mexico border fencing (much more of it, including a failed "virtual fence," funded under the 2005 Secure Border Initiative); one REAL ID Act waiver authorized a roughly 470 mile stretch of fence. Immigrant advocates have long criticized border fencing as driving human smuggling into rougher terrain, leading to border-crossing deaths.

4) Increased immigrant detention and deportations: Under the Obama administration, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has carried out a record number of deportations. Behind these numbers are a series of ICE policies that kicked in after the agency's creation in the wake of 9/11, policies that after the attacks focused on weeding out immigrants thought to pose a danger to society. Among these has been a push starting in 2003 to track down "fugitive" immigrants, people who missed an immigration hearing or ignored a deportation order. The embattled Secure Communities program, also intended to weed out people with criminal records (though many detained have lacked these) is another product of the post-9/11 focus on immigrants believed to present a security threat. In the intervening years, the number of ICE detainees has skyrocketed, as have government contracts with private detention contractors. While detention demand began ticking up in the late 1990s following policy changes, just between 2005 and 2008, the ICE detention budget tripled. In fiscal year 2010, which ended last Sept. 30, ICE deported more than 392,000 people, about half of whom had criminal records.

5) A rise in anti-Muslim attitudes: In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes jumped to a record 481 in 2001, according to one news report. The number of hate crimes against Muslims hasn't been as high since. However, Middle Eastern immigrants in the United States, along with other groups, have since felt targeted for numerous reasons. Among the many incidents in recent years have been a rash of protests against the building of new mosques in the United States, from the heated protests that took place in New York City near Ground Zero last year to smaller protests in places like Temecula. Earlier this year, an angry mob shouted "Go back home!", among other things, to Muslims attending a fundraising dinner in Yorba Linda. Several non-Muslim Sikhs, who wear turbans, have also been targeted by mistake over the years, most recently two elderly men who died after being shot in March by an unknown assailant as they went for a stroll in their Sacramento suburb.

Osama Bin Laden singlehandedly undid some of the most significant Islamic work done in America and disseminated the rights of Muslims here and forced the world to ignore the rights of our other brothers and sisters on the other side of the world. He knew there was a price to pay for his actions and ideas. He paid. I do not believe that any human being relished the terror and the loss of blood that came with his death, but most believe he would not have wanted to be arrested, brought to America and tried in our courts of law. In the end, he died on his own terms.

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Muslim American Society is America's largest Muslim religious empowerment, civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage spiritual development, dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice, mutual understanding and religious tolerance.  
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