



American Muslim Perspective

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The Ottawa Citizen- June 10, 2005

Canadian Muslims, Arabs fear being 'Arar'ed', inquiry told

By Neco Cockburn

Some Canadian Muslims and Arabs have a word that describes having innocent actions interpreted in a stereotypical light, with a lack of cultural understanding.

They call it being "Arar'ed," Reem Bahdi, a University of Windsor law professor said yesterday at the inquiry into Maher Arar's deportation to Syria.

"There is a climate of fear and uncertainty," Ms. Bahdi said, as experts told inquiry head Justice Dennis O'Connor about the impact of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the Canadian Muslim and Arab communities.

Mr. Arar, an Ottawa engineer, came under suspicion during an RCMP terrorism investigation in the wake of the attacks. RCMP information was exchanged with U.S. authorities, and Mr. Arar was detained as he travelled through a New York airport in September 2002. Mr. Arar was deported to his native Syria and held for almost a year. He claims he was tortured.

Three experts told the inquiry many Muslims and Arabs are fearful and mistrustful of Canadian security and policing authorities, largely because of undue questioning and several high-profile detention and deportation cases.

Ms. Bahdi said a Muslim lawyer told her he and his friends felt it necessary to warn the Canadian Security Intelligence Service before they played paintball, in order to avoid coming under suspicion of terrorist ties.

Such a lack of confidence in Canadian authorities can make it difficult for community members to work with investigators, said Sheema Khan, chairwoman of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"If you distrust a body, it's going to be very difficult for you to co-operate with them, especially if you don't know how they might use that information, (and) if that might be used against you," she said....

<http://www.canada.com/ottawa/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=f251e56a-ce0e-49c6-adb3-6d78002982a3>

Toronto Star - June 10, 2005

CAIR-CAN: Religious profiling at work at border

By Maryam Dadabhoy

How ironic. United States Customs and Border Protection couldn't detain Gregory Despres as he tried to cross the border with a blood stained chainsaw because he was "a naturalized U.S. citizen and was not wanted on any criminal charges on the day in question."

Late last year, up to 40 Americans were detained at the border while returning from a conference in Toronto. They, too, were not wanted on any criminal charges; they just happened to be Muslims (including American-born). Has religious profiling become so common that it blinds U.S. border guards from identifying legitimate suspects?

[Maryam Dadabhoy is with Toronto Community Relations, Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations.]

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