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"Islamophobic smear campaign" goes public

(Washington, DC, 11/08/2001)

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a prominent Washington-based Islamic advocacy group, today called for an end to what it says is an "Islamophobic smear campaign" against the American Muslim community and its leaders. CAIR also called on media professionals and elected officials not to allow themselves to be used as unwitting tools in this campaign or to undermine President Bush's efforts to show that the war on terrorism is not a conflict with Islam.

"Since the terrorist attacks on our nation in September, American Muslims and groups that represent them, have been the target of an unprecedented smear campaign. These smears have been distributed by fax, e-mail and direct communication with journalists and government officials in an attempt to create links between legitimate Muslim groups and terrorists," said CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper. "On almost a daily basis, we have been forced to defend our organization to well-meaning reporters who have been given information that is false, misleading or ridiculously out of context."

In its statement on the smear campaign, CAIR wrote:

"One of the first rules of political debate is to avoid restating the charge of an opponent. But these malicious rumors have been spread so far and wide that we've taken this extraordinary step to make sure journalists and politicians understand they are being misled.

"To set the record straight, CAIR is a respected national Islamic civil rights and advocacy organization that since its inception almost eight years ago has had an incredible record of success in defending Muslim rights in the workplace, in schools and in the public arena. CAIR has been instrumental in promoting a positive image of Islam in North America. We have the enthusiastic support of Muslims in this country and the respect of Muslims worldwide. CAIR representatives have over the years met and worked with innumerable elected officials, law enforcement agencies and policy-makers, including Presidents Clinton and Bush, to offer an Islamic perspective on issues of importance to our country.

"CAIR deals almost exclusively with issues related to the American Muslim community. We do not support terrorism in any way, shape or form, whether it is committed by Muslim groups or individuals, or by those who base their violent acts on other religions or philosophies. We condemn by name any individual, group or state that carries out terrorist acts. We do not support directly or indirectly, or receive support from, any overseas group or government. In all its actions and statements, CAIR seeks to reflect the mainstream beliefs and views of the Muslim community in North America. We also condemn all human rights abuses or irresponsible rhetoric, by any party, anywhere in the world.

"CAIR should be judged on its work, not on a few false and distorted slurs promoted by those who would seek to bar Muslims from political participation and influence.

"In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, a number of groups and individuals alarmed at the growing prominence of Muslims are taking shameless advantage of those tragic events to push for their long-term goal of marginalizing and delegitimizing the American Muslim community and its leadership."

To support this assertion, CAIR cited a November 3 article in the Los Angeles Times that, for the first time, laid direct responsibility for the smear campaign at the feet of specific organizations. Times reporter Solomon Moore wrote: "Pro-Israel or Jewish organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Defense League and the Middle East Forum think tank have provided news organizations with reams of critical documentation on Muslim leaders in recent weeks." (Los Angeles Times, 11/3/2001) A number of other media professionals and officials tell CAIR of similar behind-the-scenes slurs.

The Middle East Forum's Daniel Pipes, one of the foremost proponents of the current smear campaign, goes so far as to recommend "vigilant application of social and political pressure to ensure that Islam is not accorded special status of any kind in this country." (November 2001) The "special status" Pipes refers to includes ordinary religious accommodations for Muslims in the workplace and "inclusion of Muslims in affirmative-action plans." (Employment discrimination is one of CAIR's main areas of work.)

Recent media reports also indicate that groups such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) have warned that "the increasingly visible American Muslim lobby posed a challenge to U.S.-Israel relations." (Associated Press, 10/22/2001)

CAIR's statement continued:

STATEMENTS ON THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11TH



We condemn in the strongest terms possible the vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. No cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts.

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CAIR Survey

PASSENGER PROFILING

If you or someone you know has been a victim:

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Anti-Muslim Incidents

Total reported incidents to CAIR National: **959**
(Last Update 10/22)

View incident reports by:

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2. [Donate through the Global Relief Foundation](#)
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Messages of Support

The following are letters of support CAIR has received. View in PDF format.

1. [Rep. Jim Moran >>](#)
2. [Congressman Mike Pence >>](#)
3. [Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Center >>](#)
4. [Congressman David Bonior >>](#)

"This smear campaign is unfair, un-American and outrageous. It is based on distortions, fabrications, outdated and out of context information, and guilt by association. It relies on the amplification of prejudice and stereotyping that resulted from the justifiable rage expressed by the American people, including Muslims and Arab-Americans, following the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. Every major American Muslim group and leader, without exception, has been the target of these unjustified and politically motivated smears.

"Media professionals and elected officials have a responsibility not to let themselves be used as unwitting tools in a campaign of defamation and political disenfranchisement. We ask that journalists and policy-makers examine the agenda of those who are making these false allegations and to refrain from assisting anyone who would seek to silence the voice of an entire American religious minority or to undermine the President's assertions that we are engaged in a war on terrorism, not against Islam or Muslims.

"The seven-million strong American Muslim community can serve as a bridge of understanding to the Islamic world during this time of national and international crisis. It goes against our nation's interests to let a vocal and politically influential special-interest groups dictate American domestic policy or to drag our country into partisan disputes that will impede efforts to form an international coalition against all forms of terrorism.

"We ask our fellow Americans for their support in resisting attempts to divide us as a people or to drag our nation into a wider conflict with the Muslim world."