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Archives

Mission & Name

Hearing set for Nov. 24 for man who allegedly threatened worker with knife, gun

Conflict Terminology

BREAKING: [Muslim-Basher Feels Heat Over Finances](#)

Editorials

Video: [CAIR Rep Discusses Airport Screening on 'O'Reilly Factor'](#)

Gaza Holocaust

CAIR: ['Museum of Tolerance' Being Built on Muslim Cemetery](#)

Gulf War

(WASHINGTON, D.C., 11/19/2010) --

Isdood

A prominent national Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization is asking that hate crime charges be filed against a Missouri man going to court next week for an allegedly bias-motivated assault last August on a worker at a mosque under construction in that state.

Islam

News

The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said the alleged assailant asked the worker at the Islamic Society of Greater St. Joseph in St. Joseph, Mo., whether he understood that he was building something for "people not from the United States" who are "trying to take over the United States."

News Photos

Opinion Editorials

US Foreign Policy (Dr. El-Najjar's Articles)

According to a signed police statement from the worker, who is not Muslim, the alleged assailant said, "Do you know that this building ain't gonna stand." The alleged assailant also reportedly threatened the worker with a knife and a handgun and claimed he was with an organization that was "going to see to it that the building didn't stand."

Police apprehended the alleged attacker and charged him with 3rd degree assault (Case Number 10BU-CR02149 at <http://www.courts.mo.gov/>). He was later released on his own recognizance. A hearing in the case is set for November 24.

In a letter to the lead prosecutor, CAIR National Legal Counsel Nadhira Al-Khalili wrote that a hate crime occurs "when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group, and in this instant, [the victim] was physically and verbally assaulted because of his affiliation with the Islamic center."

Al-Khalili called for an enhanced hate crime penalty pursuant to Missouri Statute 565.070; subdivisions (1), (3) and (4) of subsection 1 of section 565.090.

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

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