



Terrorism Finance Laws Undermine Muslims' Religious Freedom in Massachusetts, Says ACLU

Comprehensive Report Details Effects Of Flawed Policies On Muslim
Charitable Giving

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BOSTON -- U.S. terrorism finance laws and policies unfairly prevent Muslims in Massachusetts and around the nation from practicing their religion through charitable giving, and undermine America's diplomatic efforts in Muslim countries, according to an American Civil Liberties Union report released today. The 164-page report, "**Blocking Faith, Freezing Charity,**" is the first comprehensive report that documents the serious effects of Bush administration terrorism finance laws on Muslim communities, including those in Boston and around the Commonwealth.

"Without notice and through the use of secret evidence and opaque procedures, the Treasury Department has effectively closed down seven of the nation's largest Muslim charities. Disruptive raids of several other charities, including Boston-based Care International, have forced them to shut their doors," said Jennifer Turner, a researcher with the ACLU Human Rights Program and author of the report. "While terrorism financing laws are meant to make us safer, policies that give the appearance of a war on Islam only serve to undermine America's diplomatic efforts just as President Obama reaches out to the Muslim world. These counter-productive practices alienate American Muslims who are key allies, and chill legitimate humanitarian aid in parts of the world where charities' good works could be most effective in winning hearts and minds."

According to the report, for which the ACLU conducted 120 interviews with Muslim community leaders and donors in several states, federal law enforcement agents are engaging in practices that intimidate Muslim American donors, such as widespread interviews about their donations and surveillance of donations at mosques. Those interviewed say the government's actions have a chilling effect on Muslim charitable giving, or Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, and a religious obligation for all observant Muslims.

"Post 9/11 policies have created a climate of fear that intimidates donors and prevents Muslims in Massachusetts from practicing their religion," said Nancy Murray, Director of Education at the ACLU of Massachusetts. "This legacy of the Bush administration tarnishes America's reputation as a beacon of religious freedom."

In his speech from Cairo on June 4, President Obama raised the issue of terrorism finance laws that have an adverse effect on Muslim giving. The ACLU report makes comprehensive recommendations to the

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Obama administration and Congress that are necessary to ensure terrorism-financing policies are consistent with American values of due process and religious freedom.

"Blocking Faith, Freezing Charity" is available online:

<http://www.aclu.org/muslimcharities>

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