

Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate

2024 Civil Rights Report

This report text was completed in early January 2024 and reflects developments up to that point. Cover image used with permission.

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CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights 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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The Resurgence of Islamophobia in 2023” is reproduced here. All text from previous CAIR documents is used with permission. David Rodriguez copyedited the report.

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Note on Language

CAIR defines Islamophobia as a fear, hatred, or prejudice toward Islam and Muslims that results in a pattern of discrimination and oppression. Islamophobia creates a distorted understanding of Islam and Muslims by transforming the global and historical faith tradition of Islam, along with the rich history of cultural and ethnic diversity of its adherents, into a set of stereotyped characteristics most often reducible to themes of violence, civilizational subversion, and fundamental otherness. Islamophobia must also be understood as a system of both religious and racial animosity that is perpetuated by private citizens as well as cultural and political structures.

Anti-Palestinian racism has been defined as “a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives.”¹

While anti-Palestinian racism is certainly not synonymous with Islamophobia, Muslim and Arab identities have long been conflated, particularly by those who seek to villainize both, making anti-Muslim hate part and parcel of anti-Arab, and specifically, anti-Palestinian racism. Anti-Muslim rhetoric is used to justify anti-Palestinian racism, and anti-Palestinian racism is also weaponized against those who are presumed to be Palestinian, including Muslims. In instances of this report, we therefore analyze how the use of anti-Muslim, as well as anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab rhetoric, deeply impacts the lives of American Muslims.

Executive Summary

CAIR received 8,061 complaints nationwide in 2023, marking the highest number of complaints CAIR has ever recorded in its 30-year history. Nearly half of all complaints received in 2023 were reported in the final three months of the year. The 2023 wave of anti-Muslim incidents, a 56 percent jump over the previous year, surpassed the period following the implementation of President Trump's Muslim Ban, which saw a 32 percent jump over the previous year.

CAIR received 8,061 complaints nationwide in 2023, marking the highest number of complaints CAIR has ever recorded in its 30-year history.

The primary force behind this wave of heightened Islamophobia was the escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine in October 2023. Employers, universities, and schools were among the central actors suppressing free speech by those who sought to vocally oppose Israel's genocidal onslaught on Gaza and call attention to Palestinian human rights.



CAIR's Nihad Awad speaks at a rally for Palestinian humanity.
Source: CAIR

The number of complaints in 2023 is a 56% increase over 2022. At 1,637 complaints, immigration and asylum cases comprised 20% of total complaints received in 2023. Employment discrimination (1,201 complaints, or 15%), education discrimination (688 complaints, or 8.5%), and hate crimes and incidents (607 complaints, or 7.5%) are among the highest reported categories.

Behind these numbers are human tragedies. In October, six-year-old Palestinian-American boy Wadea Al-Fayoume was stabbed and murdered by his family's landlord in Chicago. According to his mother, who was also attacked, the landlord yelled "you Muslims must die!" before attempting to choke and stab her.

In another incident of a child being targeted, a teacher threatened to beat and behead a seventh-grade Muslim student in Warner Robins, Georgia, in December. After the student asked about the teacher's Israeli flag, the teacher was overheard, in part, threatening to "slit [the student's] god***n throat" and "cut her head off" by several students and witnesses. Meanwhile, a Muslim and Palestinian woman was reportedly threatened by a man while riding the D.C. Metro in October. The woman had been riding the Metro on her way to a demonstration for Palestinian rights when a man reportedly asked her, "How'd you like to lose your life?" On video, the man is then heard asking the woman, "How'd you like to have your head beheaded?" According to the victim and witnesses, the man also reportedly possessed a firearm, which he slightly removed from his pocket.

While this wave of Islamophobic bias dominates this report, the status of Muslim civil rights proved precarious in other ways in 2023.

CAIR was given access to copies of the No-Fly List and Selectee List, subsets of what is colloquially known as the "terror watchlist." An expert statistical analysis estimates that

Nearly half of all complaints received in 2023 were reported in the final three months of the year.

at least 98.3% of the names on the watchlist are identifiably Muslim. More than 350,000 entries alone in the portion of the watchlist acquired by CAIR include some transliteration of Mohamed or Ali or Mahmoud, and the top 50 most frequently occurring names are all Muslim names.

A Muslim-American Air Force veteran, Saadiq Long, knows the consequences of being watchlisted well. Long had been pulled over by Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) officers numerous times, most notably a stop on January 12, 2023, which resulted in Long being handcuffed and arrested at gunpoint while his vehicle was searched. In May, Mayor Mohamed T. Khairullah of Prospect Park, N.J. was barred from attending the White House's

annual Eid al-Fitr celebration likely due to his prior watchlisting.

Over several months, CAIR, Muslim families, and other community partners called for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland to restore the school district's opt-out option for certain types of instructional material. In the fall of 2022, MCPS implemented opt-outs when it introduced curriculum and classroom discussions into English classes that some parents consider age-inappropriate, violative of their religious beliefs, objectionable, or otherwise inappropriate. In November 2022, MCPS initially insisted that the "readings are not mandatory and that they will not be scheduled for use until families are notified." As we detail later in this report, opt-outs are common in public schools.

In teacher discussion guides, MCPS makes it clear that English teachers are expected to teach concepts related to gender, family life, and relationships, contrary to claims MCPS had made in federal court. Teachers are told to scold, debate, or "disrupt the either/or thinking" of only students who express traditional viewpoints or ask critical questions about those topics.

Positive outcomes were achieved. The recognition of Muslim religious identity by allowing mosques to broadcast the call to prayer, celebrating Muslim Heritage Month, and observing Eid as school holidays granted American Muslim communities equal social opportunities to practice their faith. In 2023, Minneapolis and New York City permitted mosques to broadcast the *adhan*, or call to prayer, over loudspeakers. Also in 2023, New Jersey and Georgia adopted the practice of

recognizing a Muslim Heritage Month. North Carolina joined the list of states observing Muslim American Heritage Month in early 2024, bringing the total to at least eight states. School districts in at least six states added the observation of one of two major Muslim holidays to their yearly calendars.

While the treatment of incarcerated and detained Muslims continues to be an area of concern, progress has also been made to preserve their freedom to practice their faith. The California chapter of CAIR, alongside The Church State Council, Exodus Project, Jakara Movement, and Tayba Foundation, sponsored SB 309, a bill that would create a statewide policy ensuring the right of religious headwear, clothing, and grooming to those in California's carceral system. The bill was signed by Governor Newsom in October 2023.

Based on these and other developments, CAIR makes several recommendations in this report. Public officials at all levels of government, corporate leaders, and those speaking on behalf of places of education must respect free speech on Palestine and the value of human life. If they choose to comment on international affairs such as events in Israel and Palestine, then equal weight and attention should be given to Palestinian suffering. The Biden administration must suspend the FBI's dissemination of the watchlist. Congress must enhance anti-doxxing laws. We also reiterate some previous recommendations including our insistence that the U.S. government tie police funding to the submission of hate crimes data and that banks must end the wrongful targeting of American Muslim, Arab, and Persian families.

Data Findings

1. CAIR received 8,061 complaints nationwide in 2023. This marks the highest number of complaints CAIR has ever recorded in its 30-year history.
2. Previously, the highest-recorded number of complaints occurred in 2021. The number of complaints received in 2023 marks a 20% increase from the 6,720 complaints reported in 2021.
3. The number of complaints in 2023 is also a 56% increase in total complaints since the 5,156 complaints CAIR received the previous year in 2022. CAIR previously noted that 2022 was the first ever recorded drop in complaints since the organization started documenting complaints in 1995.²
4. At 1,637 complaints, immigration and asylum cases comprised 20% of total complaints received in 2023.
5. Employment discrimination (1,201 complaints, or 15%), education discrimination (688 complaints, or 8.5%), and hate crimes and incidents (607 complaints, or 7.5%) are among the highest reported categories.³
6. CAIR received 3,578 complaints in the final three months of 2023, following the escalation of hostilities in Israel and Palestine and an associated campaign of anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-Palestinian racism targeted at supporters of Palestinian human rights. This marks 44% of all complaints received in 2023.
7. Among this subset of complaints from October to December, employment discrimination (662 complaints, or 19%), hate crimes and incidents (472 complaints, or 13%), and education discrimination (448 complaints, or 13%) were the three highest reported categories.



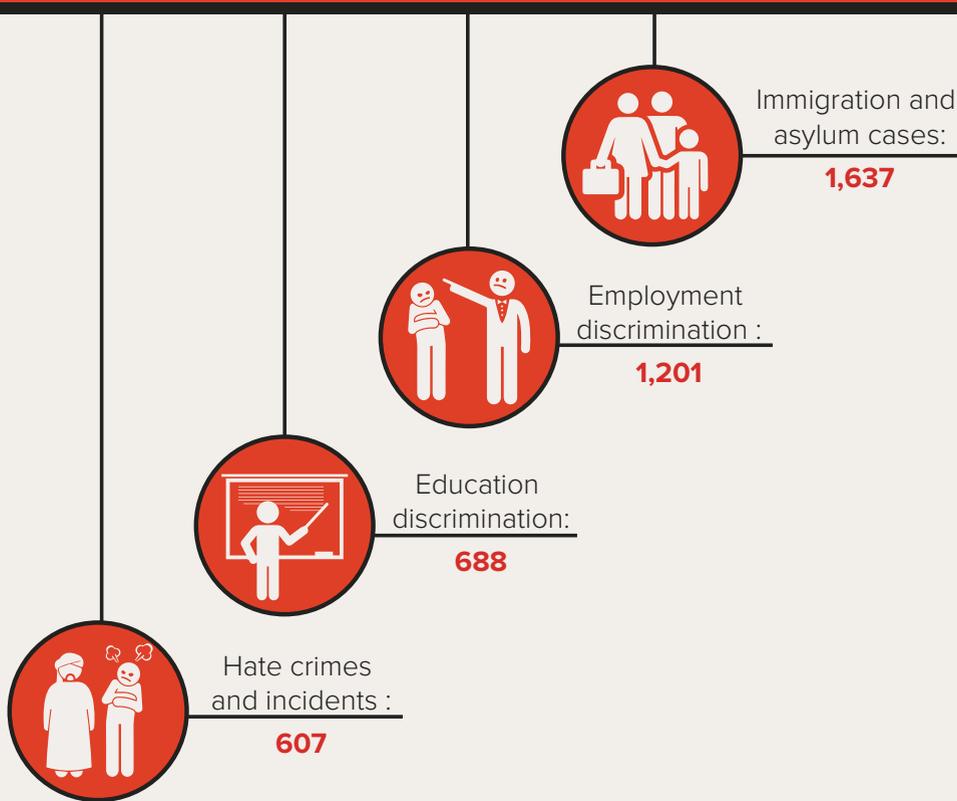
Edward Ahmed Mitchell, Esq., CAIR's Deputy Executive Director, speaks at a press conference in front of the U.S. Capitol.
Source: CAIR

IN 2023

CAIR received a total of

8,061

Complaints



Observations on the Data Findings

In 2023, CAIR received 8,061 complaints nationwide, the highest number of complaints ever recorded in its 30-year history. We received 3,578 of those complaints between October 1 and December 31. In other words, nearly half of all complaints received in 2023 were reported in the final three months of the year. In our previous 2023 Civil Rights report, CAIR marked a decline in the total complaints reported to our offices. As we wrote then, the report's findings could be considered a return

to a “pre-Trump administration baseline,” an indication of progress made toward mitigating the impact of Islamophobia in the US.⁴ However, what was then welcomed as a “positive sign” for the future of Muslim civil rights and civil liberties quickly disappeared as anti-Muslim hate resurged across the country in the final quarter of 2023.

This wave of anti-Muslim incidents surpassed the period following the implementation of President Trump’s Muslim Ban. In January of 2017, President Trump signed an executive order effectively issuing a “Muslim Ban,” barring travel from several Muslim-majority countries. That same year, CAIR received 5,650 total complaints of anti-Muslim bias, a 32% increase compared to the year

In December, CAIR-NJ joined the Islamic Center of Passaic County (ICPC), the Palestinian American Community Center (PACC), and the New Jersey chapter of the American Muslims for Palestine to speak at a press conference alongside Palestinian American families in New Jersey who lost more than 1,000 family members in Israel’s war on Gaza. Source: CAIR-NJ



preceding it.⁵ In 2023, amid the Israeli government's apparent intent to commit genocide against the Palestinian people and American leaders continued support of the Israeli government, CAIR received 8,061 total complaints of anti-Muslim incidents, a 56% increase from the number of complaints reported in 2022. These findings demonstrate that, even amid moments of perceived progress, Islamophobia persists as an underlying force that is always capable of reemerging to significantly impact the lives of Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim.

The primary force behind this wave of heightened Islamophobia was the escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine in October 2023. An analysis of this staggering rise in complaints is inseparable from events abroad, particularly the apparent intent by the Israeli government to commit genocide against the Palestinian people. Indeed, in the final months of 2023, a wide range of actors – both domestic and abroad – invoked Islamophobic rhetoric, alongside racist anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab rhetoric, to discourage criticism of and justify the Israeli government's assault on Palestinians in Gaza.⁶

Importantly, while violence undertaken against the Palestinian people abroad evidently triggered a wave of anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Arab hate across the country, CAIR emphasizes that these forms of hate are a pervasive feature of American society that have long been in operation. The actors responsible for the present wave of anti-Muslim incidents noted here did not begin to rely on or promote Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian rhetoric in October 2023 but have rather been key instigators of such rhetoric in past years.⁷

Employers, universities, and schools were among the primary actors suppressing free speech by those who sought to vocally oppose Israel's genocidal onslaught on Gaza and call attention to Palestinian human rights, particularly Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. As detailed in our special sections below, employees and students who called for Palestinian human rights faced clear repercussions. Employers have reportedly fired employees who express political speech in support of Palestinian rights and threatened not to hire students who do the same. For example, in response to a statement critical of the Israeli government released by Harvard students, on X/Twitter, Pershing Square Capital Management CEO William Ackman publicly called for Harvard to release a list of signatories to CEOs so that they do not "inadvertently hire any of their members."⁸ Multiple other CEOs, including those at FabFitFun, EasyHealth, Dovehill Capital Management, and Sweetgreen, have publicly supported him in threatening the career prospects of students.⁹

Meanwhile, some universities have reportedly failed to support Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian students targeted for their speech in support of Palestinian rights, while others have shut down pro-Palestinian student groups. In November, Brandeis University became the first private university to ban a student chapter of National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).¹⁰ Columbia University administrators also reportedly altered event policies seventeen days before suspending Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace student groups for violating university policies.¹¹ Rutgers University became the first public university to suspend a chapter of SJP in December.¹²

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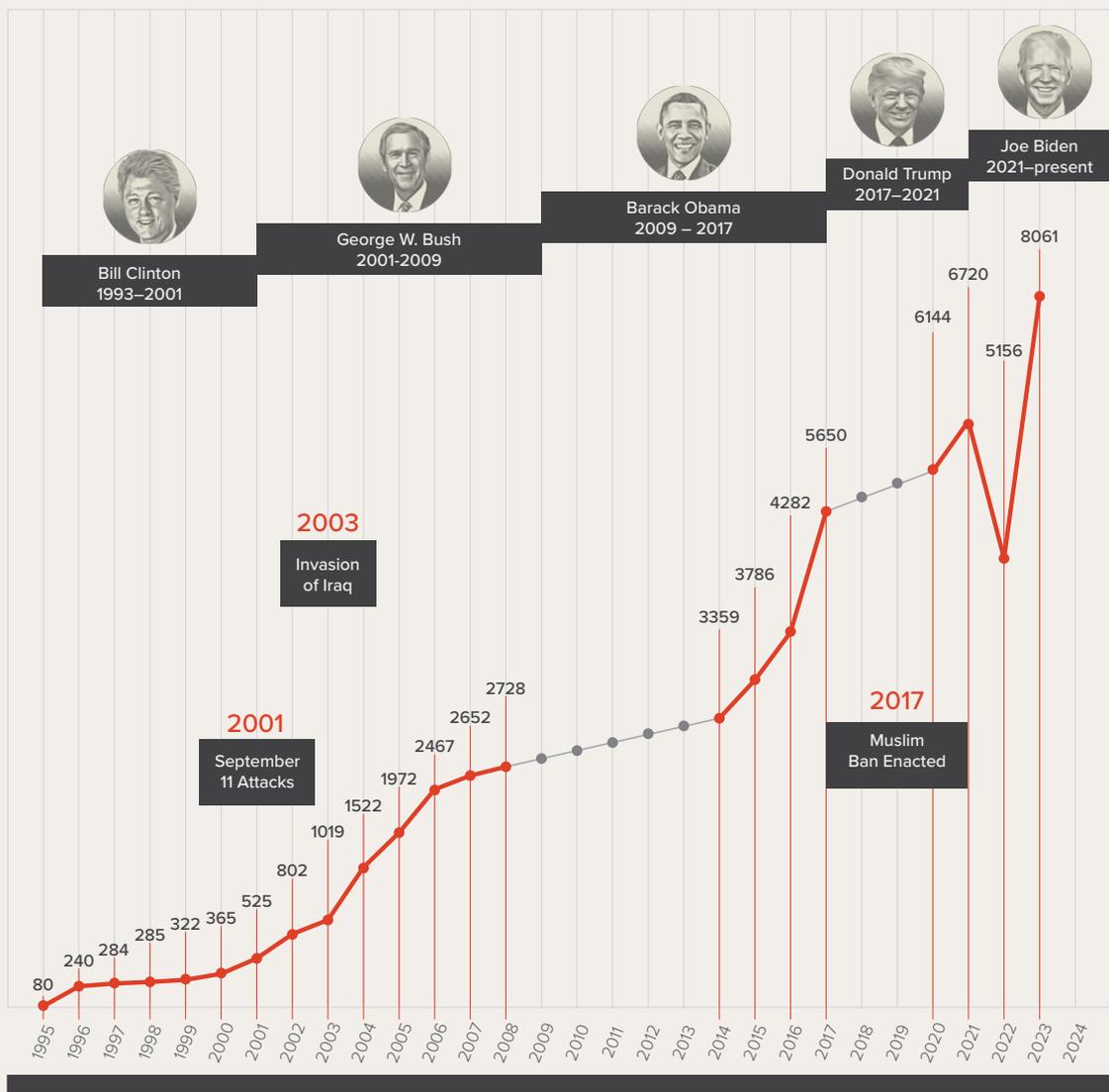
These actors were also empowered by external civil society organizations, who played a role in targeting a large coalition of supporters of Palestinian human rights. Indeed, groups have attacked university student groups in particular for their activism on behalf of Palestinians in Gaza. A conservative organization Accuracy in Media (AIM) reportedly funded digital trucks to doxx students.¹³ The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in collaboration with the Brandeis Center, also released a letter to the presidents of nearly 200 colleges and universities calling on them to investigate pro-Palestinian student groups, a move the American Civil Liberties Union called “unwarranted and dangerous.”¹⁴

CAIR-Cleveland hosts a press conference to address the surge of violence in Israel and Palestine in October 2023.
Source: CAIR-Cleveland

The efforts to repress support of Palestinian rights and justify the violence against Palestinians in Gaza have encouraged anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Arab hate crimes to proliferate. In 2022, CAIR received 117 complaints related to hate crimes. In 2023, 607 such complaints were reported to CAIR, marking a 419% increase from the previous year. These incidents include the brutal murder of the six-year-old Palestinian-American boy Wadea Al-Fayoume, whose landlord stabbed him 26 times after yelling “You Muslims must die” at his mother in mid-October.¹⁵ CAIR notes that this surge in anti-Muslim hate crimes is likely directly related to the use or promotion of Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian rhetoric by American political leaders and media executives to justify the genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.



Total Complaints CAIR Received by Year



Note: Gray dots represent years CAIR did not publish complaint data.

Complaint Categories

CAIR staff nationwide use the following definitions to categorize the incidents that are being reported to them. The types and definitions changed in 2022. As a result the 2024 and 2023 reports are slightly different from our 2022 report.

Airline Discrimination: Incidents involving travelers and passengers that are not initiated by government agencies. This type of discrimination can include an airline pilot having passengers removed from a flight for speaking a non-English language or because of their religious clothing. It also includes passengers being removed after being harassed by other passengers. If the community member is an employee of the airline and performing their work duties, then the incident is classified as Employment Discrimination.

Banking Discrimination: Banking-specific discrimination based on perceived identity/social class such as religion, race, ethnicity, or disability. This type of discrimination may result in an individual's bank account or credit being closed for unexplained reasons. It includes peer-to-peer payment apps such as Venmo, CashApp, and Zelle and money transfer services like Western Union.

Bullying: Sustained abusive treatment in a K-12 or higher education setting such as physical force, hurtful teasing, and intimidation leveled at someone with relatively less social power by someone with relatively more.

Denial of Service: Discrimination by a place of business open to the public, like a restaurant or store, that denies service to an individual. This type of discrimination could include, for example, refusing to serve someone wearing hijab or denying them access to a bathroom.

Education Discrimination: Islamophobic school curriculum, failure to accommodate a reasonable religious request, and holiday denials in a K-12 or higher education setting. This does not include instances of Bullying or instances involving Sports Discrimination.

Employment Discrimination: Discrimination by an employer based on age, race, sex, religion, national origin, or physical/mental disability. Examples of employment discrimination cases include an employer refusing to allow an individual to pray or undertake another religious practice, an employer creating or fostering a hostile work environment that targets an individual based on their ethnicity, race, or religion, or terminating or otherwise taking action against an individual because of their ethnicity, race, or religion.

Family Law Discrimination: Discrimination based on perceived identity/social class such as religion, race, ethnicity, or disability in family law proceedings. This type of discrimination may include being treated unfairly in custody or divorce proceedings.

FBI Interrogation: An FBI agent approaches an individual and conducts, or attempts to conduct, an interview. FBI agents commonly approach individuals at work, school, or their home. The individual who has been approached may not know why the FBI is interested in speaking with them.

First Amendment/BDS: Violations of an individual’s right to free speech and expression, frequently as it relates to the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement. Violations may include being required to denounce the BDS movement as part of a contract with the state. Other examples may include violations of an individual’s right to practice and express their religion in public, including the right to wear hijab or other religious clothing.

Hate Crime/Hate Incident: A crime committed against someone based on perceived identity/ social class such as religion, race, ethnicity, or disability. This type of crime can include violent assault, harassment, and threats. It also includes verbal harassment such as a person entering a mall and being called a “terrorist” or told to go back home, other non-criminal acts of hate, and also mosque vandalism.

Healthcare Discrimination: Denial of access to healthcare based on perceived identity/ social class such as religion, race, ethnicity, or disability. This type of discrimination may include outright refusal to treat a patient, but also other poor treatment, like dismissal of a patient’s symptoms, assumptions about a patient’s health based on perceived identity, or refusal to provide care in a patient’s preferred language.

Housing Discrimination: Denial of access to housing based on perceived identity/ social class such as religion, race, ethnicity, or disability. This type of discrimination may include a landlord or listing agent’s refusal to rent to an individual, charging them higher fees, or refusal to show properties to tenants based on perceived identity.

Incarcerees Rights: Violations of a prisoner’s rights to personal property, privacy, mail, civil rights, and constitutional rights. An incarcerated person has the right to practice their religion in prison. Examples of common violations of a prisoner’s right to practice their religion include a prison’s refusal to provide halal/kosher meals upon request, refusal to allow a prisoner to pray Friday prayer, refusal to provide religious materials like a Quran or prayer rug, and refusal to allow a prisoner to wear religious clothing like hijab or kufi. Also includes women being denied wearing hijab by law enforcement, not while incarcerated but while being arrested or during mugshot pictures.

Immigration/Asylum: Immigration is the process of an individual who wants to leave their current country of residence and live permanently elsewhere. Asylum is a protection grantable to foreign nationals who meet the legal definition of a “refugee.” For those fleeing persecution, violence, war, or famine, they may seek asylum in another country for safety. Depending on the country of origin, cases can get delayed or intentionally stalled for the fear of the individual being a “terrorist” or involved in “terrorist activities.”

Law Enforcement Encounter: Excessive use of force by local, state, or federal law enforcement against an individual, such as beating, shooting, improper takedowns, and unwarranted use of tasers. Also includes community members otherwise appearing to be inappropriately targeted by law enforcement and includes overseas questioning. It does not include FBI interrogations or incarcerees rights.

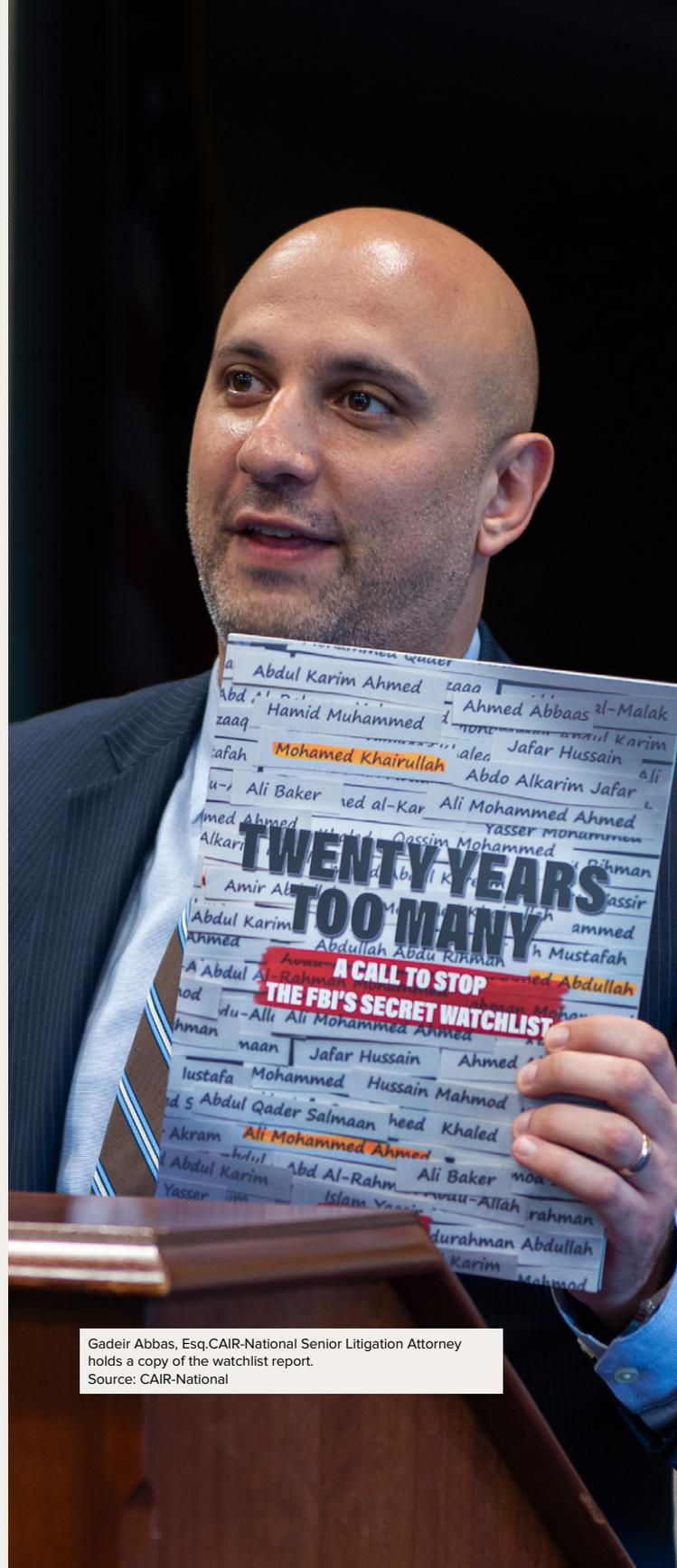
Other Discrimination: Any other mistreatment of an individual based on their ethnicity, race, religion, disability, sex, or other characteristic or perceived characteristic not already mentioned by a non-government entity. It does not include other government discrimination.

Other Government Discrimination: Incidents involving discrimination by a local, state, or federal entity, but not covered by other categories.

Out of Scope: Anything outside the parameters of our work and mission.

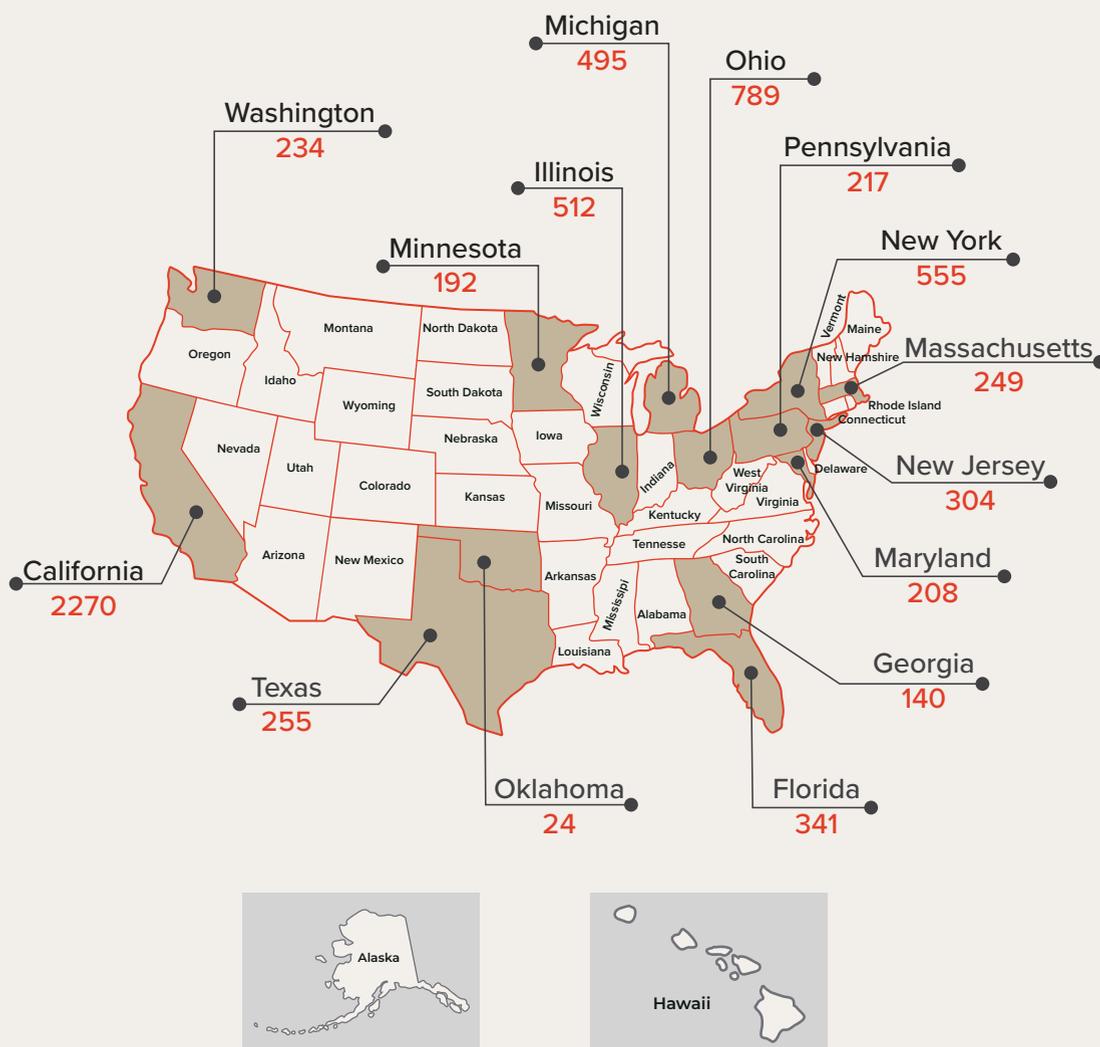
Sports Discrimination: Incidents involving an individual participating in organized sports. Examples include inappropriate use of ethnic clothing, chanting slurs, failure to accommodate reasonable religious requests such as wearing a headscarf or allowing players to hydrate at sunset during Ramadan.

Watchlist/Travel: Placement of an individual, group, or family on the U.S. Terrorist Screening Database (a.k.a. watchlist). The government does not provide reasons and documentation to the individual(s) involved. Individuals are often placed on a watchlist after international travel to Muslim-majority countries. Indicators of watchlist placement include “SSSS” printed on a boarding pass, excessive screening and searching, being pulled to an office/area of airport and asked a series of questions, and other indicators that someone is being singled out by officers. This can include improper questioning, secondary screening, or denial of boarding irrespective of immigration status. This category does not include airline discrimination.



Gadeir Abbas, Esq., CAIR-National Senior Litigation Attorney holds a copy of the watchlist report.
Source: CAIR-National

2023 Complaints by CAIR Affiliate



Note : CAIR's headquarters processes all complaints from states where we do not currently have an affiliate . Those complaints account for the rest of the 2023 total. Totals should not be read as indicative of hot spots. See our limitations section.

Lived Experiences of Islamophobia

This section provides examples of the effects of Islamophobia on the lived experiences of American Muslims and efforts to secure justice for them. These anecdotes are the human face of the data presented earlier. All incidents occurred or reflect key actions taken in 2023. Litigation can require years to resolve. This section contains sensitive material that some people may find disturbing including violence and harassment.

Stock photo. In early 2024 CAIR welcomed a settlement with Mesa Airlines. Previously, a pilot had reportedly refused to fly with two men onboard due to their ethnicity.

Airline Discrimination

Texas: In 2019, two Muslim men were prevented from flying on a Mesa Airlines airplane based on the pilots' concerns about their race. The pilot reportedly brought up what she assumed to be the passengers' "Arabic, Mediterranean" identity and refused to fly with them on board, telling security that she was "not flying this plane with a brother named Issam on it."¹⁶ CAIR filed a lawsuit against Mesa Airlines and, in August 2023, welcomed a ruling from the Fifth Circuit to allow the lawsuit to move forward.¹⁷ In January 2024, CAIR announced a settlement with Mesa Airlines, including a financial payment to the affected parties.¹⁸



Anti-Mosque Incidents

Minnesota: In April, two mosques in Minneapolis were reportedly targeted by arson attacks in the span of two days by the same individual. The man reportedly started a fire on the evening of April 23 at the Masjid Omar Islamic Center. The following day, the same individual was seen in surveillance footage going into Masjid Al Rahma, or Mercy Mosque, after which another fire damaged the third floor of the mosque. Several people, including about 40 children, were reportedly evacuated. The individual was arrested and charged with arson in May.¹⁹ In November, a second fire at Mercy Mosque led to extensive damage to the property. The cause of the fire is currently unknown, and law enforcement are reportedly investigating the incident.²⁰

North Carolina: In early 2023, a university in North Carolina reportedly refused to reopen the King Khalid Mosque to the public, which had been closed in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The university had reportedly submitted a request to the Raleigh City Council to rezone the property that includes the mosque for mixed use development.²¹ CAIR worked alongside mosque leadership and the mosque's attorney Nigel Edwards, who, in August, came to an agreement with the university to reopen the mosque to the public.²² The future of the mosque is still undetermined.

Pennsylvania: A man reportedly vandalized the Masjidullah Center for Human Excellence in Philadelphia in February. The man was seen on video approaching the mosque and painting the name "Jesus Christ" and other words and symbols associated with other religions on the doors of the mosque.²³

An individual was reportedly arrested and charged in connection to the vandalism.²⁴ A number of other mosques across the area have also reportedly been vandalized by other individuals in 2023, including the United Muslim Islamic Center, the Khair Community Center, and the Masjid Al-Jamia mosque.²⁵

CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Director Ahmet Tekelioglu joins local interfaith and political leaders to speak at the Khair Community Center after the mosque was vandalized in November.
Source: Khair Community Center



Banking Discrimination

Maryland: In November, a Maryland-based Muslim submitted a complaint after a routine transaction to an Islamic place of worship in Ohio was reportedly delayed by PayPal “[i]n light of the ongoing national emergency in Israel.” The complainant’s family had

A Maryland-based Muslim submitted a complaint after a routine transaction to an Islamic place of worship in Ohio was reportedly delayed by PayPal “[i]n light of the ongoing national emergency in Israel.”

reportedly benefited from online classes provided by the Ohio-based mosque and donated on a monthly or bimonthly basis for nearly two years, at times using a PayPal account. However, a November donation to the mosque was reportedly flagged for review by PayPal. In a screenshot provided to CAIR, PayPal reportedly posted the following message to the complainant’s account: “In light of the ongoing national emergency in Israel, there may be delays in both the delivery of your purchase and communication

from sellers.” The message was reportedly removed from the account the following day. CAIR sent a letter to PayPal on behalf of the complainant in January 2024, after which the platform reportedly immediately released the complainant’s funds, while denying that they posted the message to the complainant’s account. CAIR sent the screenshot of the message to PayPal. As of January 2024, PayPal has not responded to CAIR.²⁶

Bullying

California: An eighth-grade student from Corona Del Mar Middle and High School was allegedly suspended for saying “Free Palestine” in November. According to public reports, the student, who had himself reportedly been bullied due to his ethnic origin, was accused of violating two education codes prohibiting students from harassing and threatening others reportedly due to the fact that he said “Free Palestine” to another student. CAIR-LA issued a letter to urge the school to investigate the claims of bullying against the suspended student, remedy the harms caused to the student, and take appropriate action to ensure a safe, inclusive environment for all students.²⁷ The superintendent reportedly commented at a school board meeting that the district does not consider “Free Palestine” to be hate speech but noted that the district cannot disclose further details about the incident.²⁸

Connecticut: In November, Muslim and Palestinian student groups at the University of Connecticut’s Stamford and Storrs campuses reported receiving a series of racist, threatening, and anti-Muslim emails and voicemails. The messages contain violent language celebrating the potential deaths of

Muslims. The email received by the Stamford Muslim Students Association states in part: "If any of your students have family members who were killed in Gaza, I volunteer to fly over their (sic) to sh*t on their loved ones corpse before burial. Let me know." CAIR-CT and student groups reported these messages to law enforcement.²⁹ The university released a statement announcing that they were aware of the messages and condemned their hateful sentiments. In mid-November, Muslim students at the university reported that they had not been approached by university administration to ensure the safety of the Muslim community.³⁰

Georgia: A teacher threatened to beat and behead a seventh-grade Muslim student in Warner Robins, Georgia, in December. After the student asked about the teacher's Israeli flag, the teacher was overheard, in part, threatening to "slit [the student's] god***n throat" and "cut her head off" by several students and witnesses. The teacher was suspended, arrested, and charged with making terroristic threats and cruelty to children in the third degree.³¹ In January 2024, school officials reported that the teacher was no longer employed at the middle school.³²

Maryland: Several Afghan refugee students were reportedly subjected to racist bullying in the Prince George's County Public School System in May. The students were reportedly confronted by a group of men who allegedly approached them in a threatening manner and told them to "go back to where they came from." During another incident, some of the students were reportedly physically assaulted, with some having to seek medical attention for injuries sustained during the attack. CAIR called on the school district to launch a probe into the bullying.³³

Michigan: An eighth-grade Palestinian Muslim student was reportedly referred to as a "terrorist" by a guidance counselor at his school in December. The student asked if he could leave the office to get a drink of water, after which the counselor reportedly said that he could not because she does not "negotiate with terrorists." The student reportedly complained that the comments were discriminatory and inappropriate based on his religion and ethnicity, after which the counselor reportedly did not apologize and instead elicited participation from other counselors. When complaints were reportedly made to the school and to the school board, the school seemingly took no action and indicated that it was a private personnel matter and that they considered the issue closed. The district had reportedly not expressed interest in meeting with the affected student and his family despite repeated requests. CAIR-MI filed a complaint with the Department of Education in December.³⁴ In January 2024, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights reportedly opened a formal investigation into the incident.³⁵



Stock photo. The late 2023 wave of Islamophobic bias involved a targeting of students unlike any CAIR has seen in the past.

Texas: A group of Muslim students at the University of Texas-Austin were reportedly harassed by three men during a Palestine Solidarity Committee meeting on campus in October. The men reportedly confronted the student organizers and repeatedly called them "f***** terrorists." Before the event, the students had also reportedly received a hateful message in their inbox. In October, the university reportedly claimed that they believe there was no "criminal offense," although they later noted that the men "could be subject to a criminal trespass violation." In November, the university reported, however, that it had not yet been able to identify the men, even though both the students and NBC News have reportedly been able to identify them and noted that at least one of them is not difficult to reach online.³⁶

Education Discrimination

Arizona: A high school's UNICEF and Amnesty International student groups reportedly experienced intimidation from the state superintendent due to their support for Palestinian rights in November. The state superintendent reportedly warned Arizona schools to avoid UNICEF and Amnesty International, allegedly calling them a "desperate cabal." He also reportedly called materials used in a presentation by the two student groups at Desert Mountain High School "anti-American." The materials supported Palestinians in Gaza and accused Israel of human rights violations.³⁷

California: Anti-Palestinian groups targeted a high school ethnic studies curriculum in Los Angeles for its overview of historical events in Israel and Palestine. The Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD)'s new

curriculum reportedly included an article that acknowledged the forced removal of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian homes as "ethnic cleansing." CAIR-LA and other groups organized community members to defend the curriculum.³⁸ In May, SAUSD ultimately decided to maintain the curriculum.³⁹

New Jersey: In December, Rutgers University reportedly suspended its chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine, making it the first public university in the country to suspend a chapter of SJP. The students reportedly learned of their organization's suspension through a media inquiry. Although the chapter was later reinstated, students were subject to a probationary period and were called in for disciplinary hearings.⁴⁰ CAIR-NJ's Civil Rights Attorney Ayah Zaki worked with the Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee to challenge the suspension and protect the students' on-campus safety and First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and protest. Close to the time that the SJP was suspended, Rutgers University was also added to a federal probe of alleged discrimination.⁴¹ CAIR-NJ will offer guidance to the students as the university pursues individual hearings.

Oklahoma: In September, Oklahoma State Superintendent announced an ongoing partnership with Prager University (PragerU). PragerU is known for being a right-wing educational website that has produced videos spreading anti-Muslim rhetoric and conspiracy theories.⁴² In one such video, the host reportedly claims that "Islam is not a religion of peace."⁴³ CAIR-Oklahoma called on the Oklahoma State Department of Education to reject partnership with PragerU.

Employment Discrimination

District of Columbia: A Muslim man was reportedly refused religious accommodations during his employment with the Department of State in 2022. Devin Brooks kept a well-maintained beard, as is required by his sincerely held religious beliefs, when he was hired in a security position by the State Department. He was reportedly told that his beard would not be an issue. However, during mandatory training for the position, Brooks reports being told that he would be sent home if he did not shave his beard. Brooks made the painful decision to shave and asked for permission to maintain a beard the length of which would be determined by holding it with his fist, a traditional length supported by many Islamic scholars. The State Department reportedly denied Brooks' request, citing safety concerns, and later terminated his employment. In May, Brooks reportedly worked in a similar security position at another federal agency while maintaining a beard without issue. CAIR filed a lawsuit against the Department of State for its refusal to provide religious accommodations to Brooks in May.⁴⁴

Florida: A Palestinian-American woman Dr. Maha Almasri was reportedly fired from her tutoring job, and her son was expelled from a private school following her social media posts critical of the Israeli government's violence against Palestinian civilians.⁴⁵ Pine Crest School claimed that Dr. Almasri posted "hateful and incendiary material" on social media.⁴⁶ However, CAIR-Florida's lead attorney reports that Dr. Almasri made "non-violent, non-disruptive comments on her social media platform that criticized atrocities against innocent civilians in Gaza."⁴⁷ The school also

reportedly expelled her tenth-grade son. CAIR-Florida called on the U.S. Department of Education to investigate the matter.⁴⁸

Kansas: In 2021, a female Muslim employee at a Chipotle in Lenexa was reportedly harassed and assaulted by her manager. The manager reportedly demanded to see her hair and attempted to pull her hijab off. Over the course of a month in the summer of 2021, the manager asked the employee to let him see her hair "approximately 10 to 15 times." The employee reportedly complained about her manager's actions multiple times to no avail. CAIR-Kansas supported the employee in holding her manager and Chipotle accountable, and in late 2023, the EEOC filed a lawsuit against Chipotle on her behalf.⁴⁹

Image. A Muslim employee at Chipotle was reportedly harassed and assaulted by her manager.



Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate

Maryland: In November, a Muslim teacher was placed on administrative leave reportedly due to her email signature tagline, which expressed support for Palestinians. Although many of her colleagues had political speech in their email signatures, she was reportedly the only teacher reprimanded. Just prior to being placed on leave, an unknown individual also tore the teacher's Palestinian flag from her car. CAIR filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in December.⁵⁰

Michigan: In April, a female Muslim student was reportedly rejected from an internship interview after declining to shake hands with the CEO of PGF Technology Group Inc. due to her religious beliefs. The student had reportedly refused to shake hands with the CEO because of her sincerely held religious beliefs regarding abstaining from unnecessary physical touch between members of the opposite gender who are not close family relations. The CEO reportedly told the student to "keep [her] religion at home" before throwing her resume in the trash and leaving the room. CAIR-MI filed a complaint of religious-based discrimination with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).⁵¹

First Amendment

Florida: In October, the Chancellor of the State University System of Florida issued an order deactivating Students for Justice in Palestine chapters across the state. The directive was reportedly issued in consultation with Governor Ron DeSantis. The following month, CAIR-FL, the CAIR Legal Defense Fund, and Erchid Law Firm announced a lawsuit on behalf of the University of South Florida's SJP

chapter challenging the order and seeking to protect the student group's First Amendment right to express and advocate political views.⁵²

Minnesota: In October, two Muslim students at Edina High School reported that they were suspended for three days following their participation in a walkout for Palestinian human rights. The students reportedly participated in chanting common pro-Palestinian phrases.⁵³ CAIR-MN and the legal team of De León & Nestor, LLC announced filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education in November, claiming that the district discriminated against the students on the basis of religion and national origin.⁵⁴

CAIR-Minnesota Executive Director Jaylani Hussein speaks at a press conference announcing legal actions against Edina Public Schools in November.
Source: CAIR-MN Facebook Livestream



Hate Crime/Hate Incidents

California: A man allegedly tried to murder members of the Muslim community at a park in Rancho Cordova in August. The man reportedly tried to run over Muslim community members of South Asian heritage while yelling racial slurs and allegedly threatening to “shoot and bomb” them.⁵⁵ The suspect was reportedly arrested on two felonies and a hate crime charge.⁵⁶

California: An Arab Muslim student at Stanford University was reportedly targeted in a hit-and-run on campus in November. The driver had reportedly made eye contact with the student and accelerated and hit him, after which the driver reportedly yelled “f*** you and your people.” The student, who was hospitalized following the incident, reports having seen the driver at a pro-Palestinian rally in the month before the incident. The Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Office reportedly opened a hate crime investigation into the incident.⁵⁷

District of Columbia: A Muslim and Palestinian woman was reportedly threatened by a man while riding the D.C. Metro in October. The woman had been riding the Metro on her way to a demonstration for Palestinian rights when a man reportedly asked her, “How’d you like to lose your life?” On video, the man is then heard asking the woman, “How’d you like to have your head beheaded?” According to the victim and witnesses, the man also reportedly possessed a firearm, which he slightly removed from his pocket. He allegedly made other aggressive remarks toward the woman and her acquaintances before leaving the train. Law enforcement reportedly refused to investigate the incident.⁵⁸ CAIR sent a letter

to D.C. Metro police, after which they released footage of the suspect on their X, or Twitter, account to identify him.⁵⁹

District of Columbia: A Palestinian staff member at American University reportedly received a hateful death threat slipped under his office door in October. The note said, in part, “You might get lucky with a missile and meet your Allah sooner! Death to all Palestinians!” A complaint to CAIR offices reports that the staff member has not received adequate security and protection from American University administrators following the incident. The American University Police Department and federal law enforcement are reportedly investigating the threat.⁶⁰

Illinois: In October, six-year-old Palestinian-American boy Wadea Al-Fayoume was stabbed and murdered by his family’s landlord in Chicago. According to his mother, who was also attacked, the landlord yelled “you Muslims must die!” before attempting to choke and stab her. After she attempted to call for law enforcement, she found that the landlord had stabbed her six-year-old son to death.⁶¹ The landlord has been indicted by a grand jury on first-degree murder, attempted murder, battery, and hate crime charges.⁶²

Illinois: A man reportedly threatened to shoot two Muslim men after allegedly shouting anti-Muslim statements in October. The man reportedly approached one of the victims, who had arrived in his vehicle to an apartment complex to meet with a friend, and began shouting obscenities that targeted his Muslim faith and telling him he didn’t belong in the country. The man then allegedly punched the first victim’s car window before going into the lobby of the apartment building,

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where he encountered the second victim and threatened to beat him. A short time later, one of the victims was sitting on the bench outside the building when the man reportedly lifted one side of the bench such that the victim fell off. The man reportedly told the two victims that he called four of his friends to come and shoot them. A hate crime charge was reportedly brought against the man in October.⁶³

New Jersey: A Princeton University staffer allegedly assaulted protestors for Palestinian human rights in October. The staff member was reportedly seen yelling at protestors, making obscene gestures, and filming them. She is also seen grabbing another protestor's phone and running off with it, apparently pulling the protestor's hair in the process.⁶⁴

New York: In 2016, an Uber driver was reportedly attacked by his passengers, two intoxicated men. One passenger punched the driver in the jaw and both hurled expletives and racial slurs at him. As a result of the attack, the client suffered a fractured elbow and a dislocated neck, among other injuries. In May 2023, after years of litigation, and with the assistance of co-counsel at Cravath, Swaine and Moore, LLP, CAIR-NY secured a six-figure settlement for the client.⁶⁵

North Carolina: A Muslim member of the North Carolina Democratic Party was reportedly subjected to Islamophobic remarks by other party members. Following his public support of Palestinian human rights in 2022, other party members reportedly spread Islamophobic remarks about him, reportedly

CAIR-Minnesota holds a press conference with Ms. Sabrina Yahya, who was reportedly attacked by an individual expressing anti-Muslim sentiments in November. Source: CAIR-MN



including the claim that he may be an "Iranian spy." In early 2023, the man made a complaint to party leadership, which he claims was not addressed in a timely manner. In late 2023, CAIR sent a letter on his behalf, requesting that party leadership investigate and address his complaint.⁶⁶

Ohio: A man reportedly targeted Arab, Palestinian, and Muslim students at Cleveland State University for their pro-Palestine human rights activism in early 2023. The man had previously been accused of reportedly cyber-harassing Palestinian students or students with pro-Palestinian views the previous year, after which a CSU student reportedly filed a protection order against him, which was granted. However, in January, the man reportedly returned to campus and stole the banner belonging to the CSU student organization Students for Palestinian Human Rights.⁶⁷ He was also arrested by CSU police in January for reportedly violating the protection order.⁶⁸ In February, he was reportedly banned from the campus, and in July, he reportedly entered a plea to reduce his charges and was sentenced to probation, a community orientation program, and anger management classes.⁶⁹

Ohio: In October, a man driving a truck reportedly physically and verbally assaulted participants in a pro-Palestine march in Columbus. While members of student organizations and community supporters conducted a peaceful march in downtown Columbus, the man reportedly began shouting obscenities about Palestinians and then swerved out of his lane to hit a demonstrator on a bike. A suspect was reportedly taken into custody.⁷⁰

Pennsylvania: In October, a man reportedly brandished a firearm against Muslims at a pro-Palestine protest at the footsteps of the Pennsylvania State Capitol. The rally had been organized by the Central Pennsylvania Committee of Masajid, a network of mosques and Islamic organizations. The man reportedly approached the crowd in his vehicle, started yelling racial slurs, and then pointed a gun at the protestors.⁷¹ The suspect has reportedly been taken into custody and faces a felony count of ethnic intimidation and misdemeanor charges of making terroristic threats and simple assault by physical menace.⁷²

Housing Discrimination

Georgia: In September, a county commission voted to remove zoning protections for the Gullah Geechee community in Hogg Hummock on Sapelo Island, endangering a historic community descended from Bilali Mohammed, one of the first enslaved Muslims in the United States. The new zoning proposal by McIntosh County severely weakens protections for Hogg Hummock, potentially raising property taxes and driving indigenous landowners away.⁷³ Residents argue that the meetings to discuss the proposal were reportedly scheduled for times when they were unable to attend due to reliance on state-operated ferries to reach the mainland.⁷⁴ CAIR-GA organized legislative and community action against the zoning proposal.⁷⁵ In October, the residents, represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center, filed a lawsuit against McIntosh County officials for violating laws governing zoning procedures and public meetings.⁷⁶

Incarceree Rights

California: In late 2022, a Muslim woman booked into a county jail facility reportedly had her hijab removed and returned only when she was released from custody a few days later. In 2023, the client, who was represented by CAIR-SFBA, reached a \$90,000 settlement with the County of Santa Clara. The Sheriff's Office also collaborated with CAIR-SFBA to implement a new religious services policy that reportedly would have given their client the opportunity to have her search conducted in private or outside the presence of men, to take her booking photograph wearing her hijab, and to be permitted to keep her hijab or receive a jail-issued religious covering during her custody stay.⁷⁷

Minnesota: A Muslim woman incarcerated at a federal correctional institution was reportedly photographed without her hijab and has been forced to carry that photo on her ID card. The photo, which features her head, ears, and neck, is reportedly on full display each time male officers need to identify her during headcounts, at commissary, and other check-in points at the prison. While she is able to wear her hijab throughout the facility, prison officials have reportedly forced her into a situation in which she must identify herself to male staff without her hijab. She has reportedly been repeatedly ordered to remove her hijab for transfers and photographs between facilities, with the constant threat of solitary confinement should she refuse. In October, CAIR filed a lawsuit in partnership with CAIR-MN and the Law Office of Deborah M. Golden against FCI Waseca.⁷⁸

Missouri: In 2021, guards with the Missouri Department of Corrections reportedly attacked Muslims who had been praying together in their housing unit. The Muslim inmates had reportedly received permission from the prison to conduct daily prayers together. However, on one occasion, guards demanded that they stop their prayer and allegedly doused five of them in pepper spray and viciously beat one. They were reportedly isolated in their cells with pepper spray still covering their clothes and body. Following the attack, the inmates were reportedly charged with a minor conduct violation. Muslim inmates were also reportedly transferred or otherwise retaliated against. In March 2023, CAIR-Missouri and the CAIR Legal Defense Fund announced a lawsuit against several officials of the Missouri Department of Corrections.⁷⁹

Virginia: A Muslim inmate was reportedly denied Ramadan accommodations by officials at Green Rock Correctional Center in Virginia. Alexander Crichlow converted to Islam in January 2023 and had since asked prison officials to provide him with accommodations

This left these people of faith to choose between religious observance or borderline starvation when adhering to Ramadan without proper meals.

during Ramadan, which included breakfast before dawn, a double serving during dinner, and permission to gather for the evening prayers with other Muslims. However, prison officials refused, arguing that Crichlow converted after the arbitrary deadline to request accommodations in November 2022 – over four months before Ramadan began. Rather than provide Crichlow – and reportedly approximately twenty other Muslims who had not signed up for the list before November 18, 2022 – with timely Ramadan meals, prison officials declined. This left these people of faith to choose between religious observance or borderline starvation when adhering to Ramadan without proper meals. In April, CAIR filed a lawsuit against the Virginia Department of Corrections and officials at the Green Rock Correctional Center, seeking a federal court’s immediate intervention to provide accommodations for Crichlow.⁸⁰ The lawsuit was unsuccessful due to a technicality. CAIR wrote Virginia Department of Corrections Director Chadwick Dotson in September and October of 2023 in a good faith effort to ensure the problem did not repeat itself in 2024. CAIR staff received no response.

Kentucky: In April, a Muslim woman was reportedly forced to remove her hijab during a booking photograph at the Warren County Regional Jail in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The photograph of the woman without her hijab was reportedly allowed to remain publicly available online. She was also reportedly subjected to an unnecessary full-body strip search that was filmed and projected on a TV screen for all those present in the jail lobby to see. CAIR, in partnership with attorney Roula Allouch of Bricker Graydon, filed a lawsuit against the jail in November.⁸¹

Kentucky: In July, a Muslim woman was reportedly forced to remove her hijab after being detained by the University of Kentucky Police Department. The woman was reportedly detained over a minor issue and was asked to remove her hijab for a booking photograph in a public hall. When she reportedly refused and asked for a private room, she reported being taken to a room with only half a wall. She was reportedly forced to sit bent over to cover her hair from public view. When her back began to ache, she reports that she used her dress as a headscarf so she would be able to sit straight. The woman was eventually released on bond, which she says was taken from her purse. CAIR called for an investigation into the treatment she received while detained in a letter to the police department and the Lexington-Fayette Division of Community Corrections.⁸² Later that month, Kentucky’s Fayette County Detention Center notified CAIR that they would update their policies to incorporate accommodations for religious attire.⁸³

The woman was reportedly detained over a minor issue and was asked to remove her hijab for a booking photograph in a public hall.

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New York: A Muslim man was hospitalized after reportedly being denied religious accommodations by the New York City Police Department's 103rd precinct. The man, who is a diabetic, was reportedly refused halal food during booking, leading to his hospitalization. He was also reportedly denied a clean space for prayer. CAIR-NY, alongside Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP, filed a lawsuit in federal court in December.⁸⁴

Law Enforcement Encounters

California: A newly-arrived Afghan-Muslim teenager was shot twice and hospitalized after a police shooting in January. The police had reportedly been called by a neighbor, who reportedly saw the boy pursuing his brother while holding a knife. Both boys

were in traditional Afghan clothing. When the police officer arrived, he reportedly instructed the boy to drop the knife. The boy did not understand him, so he did not comply. The boy was shot twice and badly injured, requiring two surgeries. While recovering from surgery, CAIR-Sacramento Valley/Central California learned that the boy was being criminally charged, and retained expert counsel for him. CAIR-SV/CC also argued that the shooting could have been avoided by using "other than potentially deadly force," questioning the decision to discharge a firearm at a minor, rather than using other methods to de-escalate the situation.⁸⁵

Massachusetts: In January, a 20-year-old Bangladeshi-American college student was shot and killed by police in Cambridge.

In January, CAIR-MA Outreach Director Fatuma Mohamed joined the Bangladesh Association of New England and Muslim Justice League at a rally to seek justice for Sayed Arif Faisal, who was shot and killed by Cambridge police.
Source: CAIR-MA



Police were called when Sayed Arif Faisal had been seen injuring himself with a knife. The police reportedly attempted to subdue him with a “less lethal” form of ammunition before shooting him six times. Faisal later died from his wounds at the hospital.⁸⁶ Community members demanded justice for Faisal at a series of protests.⁸⁷ CAIR-MA acted as the family's media contact, represented family members during the district attorney's investigation, and testified before the Massachusetts legislature on a bill to fund alternative responses for people having a mental health crisis. In October, the judge presiding over the inquest determined that the police officer should not be charged with a crime. Faisal's family released a statement contesting the judge's ruling and announcing that they would consider other legal remedies to hold the officer accountable.⁸⁸

Michigan: In 2020, three Muslim men were reportedly falsely arrested by two city of Detroit police officers, who also made Islamophobic remarks about Muslims during the arrest. According to a lawsuit filed by CAIR-MI, the three men had called law enforcement to seek assistance with a woman who was believed to be having a mental health crisis. Police officers, however, reportedly arrested the three men with what appeared to be no probable cause. The policemen were also reportedly caught on body camera footage claiming that “Muslims lie a lot” and that “Muslim men are pedophiles.” CAIR-MI reached a monetary settlement with the city of Detroit for the discriminatory arrest of the three men in 2023.⁸⁹

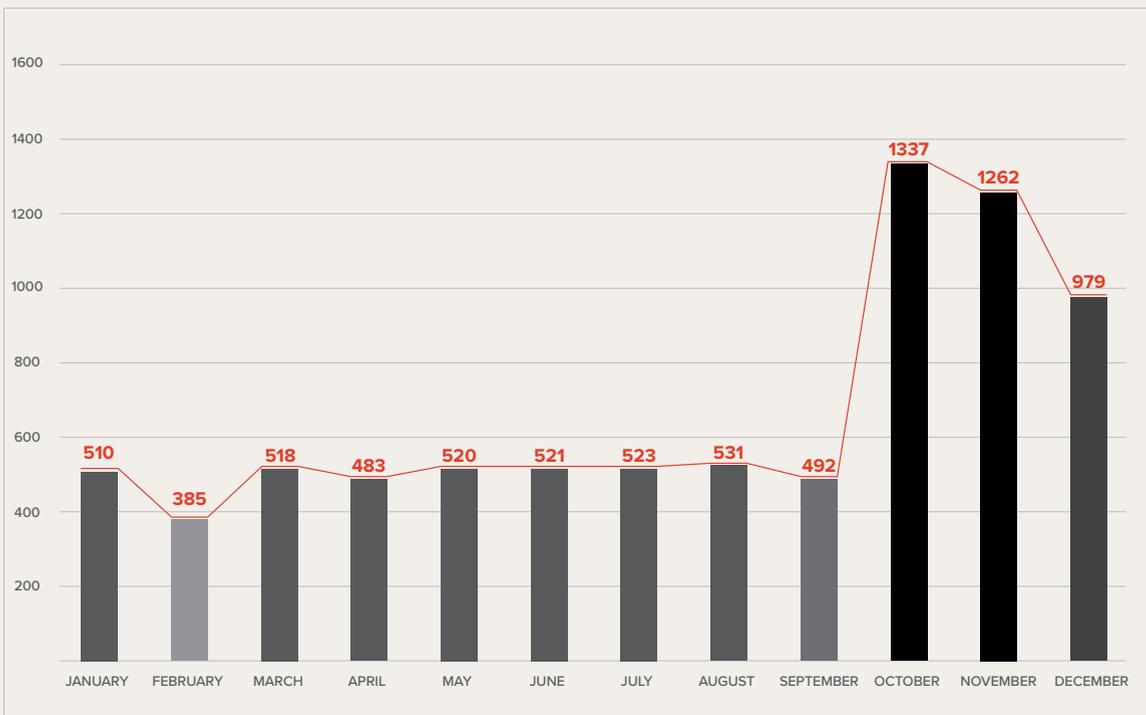
Other Discrimination

Massachusetts: A Muslim man's appointed attorney was reportedly found to have made multiple racist and Islamophobic posts on Facebook while representing his client. In 2016, Richard Doyle was appointed to represent defendant Anthony Dew. By then, Doyle had spent several years posting anti-Muslim and anti-Black messages on Facebook. While representing Dew, Doyle also demanded that he remove his kufi (a cap worn by Muslim men to signal devotion) when speaking to him and in the courtroom. In January 2023, CAIR-MA joined an amicus brief to argue that Doyle's discriminatory behavior justified a new trial for his client. In June, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled to grant Dew a new trial.⁹⁰

Watchlist/Travel

New Jersey: In May, New Jersey Mayor Mohamed T. Khairullah had his invitation to the Eid event at the White House revoked, which CAIR firmly believes is due to his past placement on the federal watchlist. Moments before he was set to arrive at the White House, Mayor Khairullah, believed to be the longest-serving Muslim mayor in the state, received a call stating that he had not been cleared for entry.⁹¹ In 2019, Mayor Khairullah was reportedly placed on the federal watchlist; however, despite believing he had been removed from the list, Mayor Khairullah was also denied entry at the White House Eid event.⁹² In September, CAIR filed a lawsuit on behalf of Mayor Khairullah and other plaintiffs for negative repercussions due to their current or past placement on the watchlist and are calling for an end to its use.⁹³

2023 Complaints by Month



Special Sections

The following sections highlight key developments in the struggle to secure equal social opportunities and equal protection under the law for American Muslims and other communities during 2023.

Watchlist: U.S. Airline Accidentally Exposes 'No Fly List' on Unsecured Server, Analysis Determines That List is 98 Percent Muslim Names (National, NJ, OK)

The existence of the watchlist – a secret list that federal law enforcement claims is designed to record information of individuals suspected of being involved in terrorism

or related activities – continues to pose a significant threat to American Muslim civil liberties, particularly as news emerged in 2023 that a subset of the list was overwhelmingly composed of Muslim and/or Arabic names.

On January 12, 2023, a Swiss hacker who goes by the moniker “maia” reportedly gained access to copies of the No-Fly List and Selectee List, subsets of what is colloquially known as the ‘terror watchlist’ and what the FBI has termed the “Terrorist Screening Data Set.” The breach occurred after a regional airline, just one of the tens of thousands of public and private entities all over the world that receive the watchlist, simply left the list exposed on the public internet.⁹⁴

Mayor Mohamed T. Khairullah, who was denied entry to the White House likely due to past placement on the watchlist, spoke at a CAIR press conference.
Source: CAIR



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The federal government sends the watchlist to federal agencies, over 18,000 state and local law enforcement agencies, over 500 private entities, and dozens of foreign countries, all of which then take actions to harm and stigmatize listed individuals.⁹⁵

CAIR attorneys obtained copies of the breached lists. Their contents confirm what many in the Muslim community long suspected: the FBI's secret lists comprise a vast Muslim registry deployed against Muslims all over the world.

CAIR provided both exposed lists and a list of common Muslim names to a data analysis team, releasing its findings in a report last June, entitled *Twenty Years Too Many, A*

In September, Mayor Mohamed T. Khairullah joined CAIR-NJ at a press conference to announce the filing of a lawsuit with a dozen plaintiffs seeking an end to the government's secret watchlist. Pictured (left to right) is Selaedin Maksut (CAIR-NJ Executive Director), Prospect Park Mayor Khairullah, Dina Sayedahmed (CAIR-NJ Communications Manager), and Ayah Zaki (CAIR-NJ Civil Rights Attorney). Source: CAIR-NJ

*Call to Stop the FBI's Secret Watchlist.*⁹⁶ This expert statistical analysis estimates that at least 98.3% of the names on the watchlist are identifiably Muslim. More than 350,000 entries alone in the portion of the watchlist acquired by CAIR include some transliteration of Mohamed or Ali or Mahmoud, and the top 50 most frequently occurring names are all Muslim names.⁹⁷

This is not by accident. The federal government admits that they consider an individual's race, religion, ethnicity, and national origin when deciding whom to place on the watchlist. The government intentionally targets Muslims for inclusion on the list and considers individuals from Muslim-majority countries, travel to Muslim-majority countries,



More than 350,000 entries alone in the portion of the watchlist acquired by CAIR include some transliteration of Mohamed or Ali or Mahmoud, and the top 50 most frequently occurring names are all Muslim names.

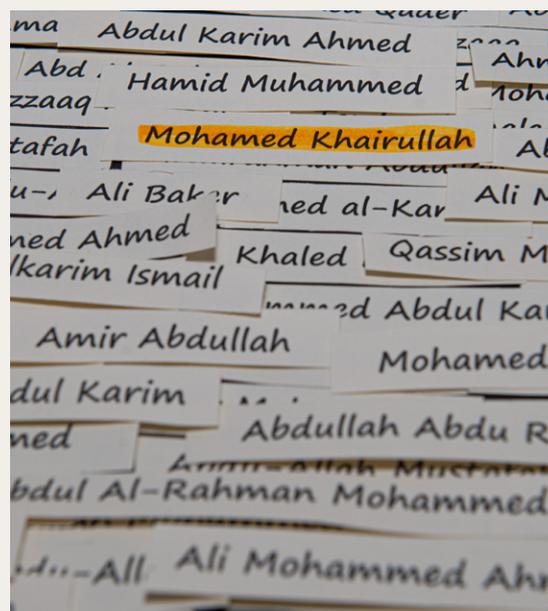
attending mosques, zakat donations to Muslim charities, the wearing of typical Muslim dress, the frequency of Muslim prayer, adherence to Islamic religious practices, Islamic religious study, the transfer of money to individuals residing in Muslim-majority countries, affiliations with Muslim organizations, and associations with Muslims in the United States or abroad to be suspicious.⁹⁸

As a result of being placed on the watchlist, innocent Americans are publicly humiliated, surveilled, and harassed when they travel; prevented from attending weddings, funerals, graduations, and other milestone events; separated from their children; denied jobs, security clearances, U.S. citizenship, visas, gun licenses, and other government benefits; and even effectively exiled from the United States.

Watchlist placement extrajudicially sentences innocent Americans to permanent second-class citizenship.⁹⁹

The consequences of being watchlisted manifested in May, when Mayor Mohamed T. Khairullah of Prospect Park, New Jersey, was barred from attending the White House’s annual Eid al-Fitr celebration. Khairullah, who was sworn into his fifth consecutive mayoral term in January and is thought to be one of the longest-serving Muslim mayors in the state, had helped the New Jersey Democratic Party compile names of local Muslim leadership to invite to the White House’s annual Eid celebration. However, moments before he was set to arrive at the White House for the celebration, he received a call stating that his invitation to the Eid celebration had been revoked as he had not been cleared for entry.¹⁰⁰

A sample of names found on a 2019 portion of the Federal Watchlist .



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Mayor Khairullah was reportedly placed on the federal watchlist in the past; however, despite having been thought to be removed from the list, Mayor Khairullah was denied entry at the White House Eid event.¹⁰¹ CAIR firmly believes that his invitation may have been revoked due to his past placement on the watchlist.

In May, CAIR-NJ held a press conference with Mayor Khairullah and later convened with mayors and elected officials across New Jersey to announce a resolution urging the White House and Secret Service to provide a detailed explanation of their sudden and baseless revocation of his White House Eid event invitation.¹⁰² More than 20 New Jersey mayors also reportedly signed a letter

demanding that the White House apologize and that the watchlist be disbanded.¹⁰³

In 2023, CAIR also challenged the watchlist in lawsuits on behalf of plaintiffs, including Mayor Khairullah, who have experienced negative repercussions due to their current or past placement on the watchlist.

In September, CAIR announced the filing of *Khairullah v. Garland*, a lawsuit with a dozen plaintiffs, including Mayor Khairullah, seeking an end to the government's secret watchlist. CAIR's lawsuit demonstrates for the first time that, even on the rare occasion that the government removes an individual from the watchlist, an individual's past status on the list will continue to haunt them. Indeed, federal

In June, CAIR-Ohio joined delegates for the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations' Muslim Advocacy Day and met with congressional offices to advocate for issues impacting the Muslim community, including congressional oversight of the unconstitutional and discriminatory federal watchlist. Source: CAIR-Ohio



agencies retain records of past watchlist status and use them to deny formerly listed individuals access to government buildings, security clearances, federal employment, and other licenses and government benefits.¹⁰⁴

In January, CAIR-OK and the CAIR Legal Defense Fund (CAIR LDF) also filed *Long v. Gourley*, a lawsuit against the Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) for their targeting of a Muslim-American Air Force veteran based solely on his name being unlawfully included on a federal terror watchlist.¹⁰⁵ Saadiq Long, a Muslim-American Air Force veteran and native of Oklahoma, has experienced more than 10 years of harassment, targeting, and discrimination due to his name being placed on a federal terror watchlist. Mr. Long has never been charged or convicted of any terrorism-related crime.¹⁰⁶

In 2015, Long sued the federal government, arguing that his unexplained placement on the No Fly List and broader federal terrorist watchlist violated his constitutional and statutory rights. As a result, Long's name was reportedly removed from the No Fly List. However, actions by the OKCPD suggested that his name still appeared on federal watchlists.¹⁰⁷

Since November 2022, Saadiq Long had been pulled over by OKCPD officers numerous times, most notably a stop on January 12, 2023, which resulted in Long being handcuffed and arrested at gunpoint while his vehicle was searched. In a stipulation filed with the Oklahoma City federal court in February, the OKCPD acknowledged that “neither Saadiq Long nor any other person should be stopped by officers based solely on that individual's” status on the FBI's watchlist.¹⁰⁸

In December, CBS News released a short-form documentary on the watchlist and its impact, particularly on the lives of American Muslims.¹⁰⁹ Also in December, the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee issued “Misabeled as a Threat: How the Terrorist Watchlist and Government Screening Processes Impact Americans.”¹¹⁰ In a statement accompanying that report, U.S. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), noted that it identifies “how screening practices at airports that build on and expand beyond the terror watchlist have ballooned over time.” “These practices,” he writes, “repeatedly ensnare travelers who may pose no danger to national security.”¹¹¹

Genocide in Gaza and its Impact on Domestic Civil Rights: Doxxing

Throughout late 2023, student activists across the country marched on college campuses and released statements to protest the Israeli government's indiscriminate bombardment and apparent intent to commit genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Employees uplifted news from Gazan reporters and advocated for Palestinian human rights on their personal social media accounts. Many more attended public protests, frequently calling for a permanent ceasefire to protect Palestinian lives and an end to the occupation of Palestinian land and Israel's apartheid system.

In response, students and employees, particularly those who are Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab, who participated in these actions were subjected to doxxing – a form of online harassment in which personally identifiable information about an individual is published

without their consent, frequently with malicious intent. Doxxing has been employed to intimidate and silence pro-Palestinian advocates, often falsely reframing their legitimate critiques of Israeli state policy and calls for human rights for Palestinians as inherently hateful and therefore reprehensible speech. Such attempts at online harassment have in many cases succeeded in intimidating students and employees, who have experienced repercussions to their educational and career prospects due to doxxing.¹¹²

While online harassment has long been used as a tool to repress free speech, particularly when practiced by pro-Palestinian advocates, we have arguably witnessed among the most severe and widespread instances of doxxing against students, employees, and others calling for an end to the apparent genocide of the Palestinian people in the final months of 2023.

Among the most egregious examples of doxxing targeting students was carried out by the conservative group Accuracy in Media (AIM), which reportedly rented trucks

One site published more than 17,000 posts concerning employees of major corporations, such as Amazon and Mastercard.

displaying the names and faces of students who had been involved in pro-Palestinian advocacy across multiple university campuses. The trucks reportedly first appeared in October at Harvard University, where student activists were accused of endorsing hate.¹¹³ In the following months, AIM's 'doxxing trucks' also appeared at several other institutions, including Columbia and Yale.¹¹⁴

The 'doxxing trucks' are, however, only one instance of attempts to silence student activists. In mid-October, at least four online sites emerged publishing personal information of student activists at Harvard. The sites reportedly included full names, class years, past employment, social media profiles, photos, and hometowns. Two sites were reportedly removed for violating Google's terms of service.¹¹⁵

Attempts at silencing Muslim and Palestinian voices have also extended to places of employment. Sites have emerged online to intimidate employees who express support for humanitarian relief in Gaza. One site published more than 17,000 posts concerning employees of major corporations, such as Amazon and Mastercard.¹¹⁶ LinkedIn issued a cease-and-desist letter to the site, after it determined that it extracted content from the platform using automated programs – otherwise known as 'scraping' – a violation of LinkedIn's policies.¹¹⁷ CAIR has itself received complaints in which Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab employees have been let go in connection with their support for Palestinian human rights on social media or at their workplace.

In October, CAIR-SFBA met with California Attorney General Rob Bonta and representatives from the Arab Resource

and Organizing Center (AROC), Maristan, and Muslim Student Association West, as well as local elected officials, professors, students, and advocacy organizations at the DLA Piper Law Firm in San Francisco. A major concern among meeting participants was the impact of doxxing on advocates and anyone who has made statements of support for Palestine. They asked Attorney General Bonta to enforce California laws that prohibit doxxing.¹¹⁸

CAIR-MA also met with state Attorney General Andrea Campbell in November to understand what current laws apply to doxxing and what new ones might help address concerns.¹¹⁹ Continued work must be done nationwide to protect individuals from doxxing, as it continues to pose a significant challenge to

the expression of free speech, particularly by Muslims, Palestinians, and Arabs.

Expanding Equal Recognition of Muslim Religious Identity: Adhan, Heritage Months, Eid as School Holidays

The recognition of Muslim religious identity by allowing mosques to broadcast the call to prayer, celebrating Muslim American Heritage Month, and observing Eid as school holidays grants American Muslim communities equal social opportunities to practice their faith. In 2023, Minneapolis and New York City permitted mosques to broadcast the adhan, or call to prayer, over loudspeakers. Also in 2023, New Jersey and Georgia adopted the practice of recognizing a Muslim Heritage

In April, CAIR-MA joined State Senator Jamie Eldridge to celebrate the passage of the first-ever resolution to commemorate Ramadan in the Massachusetts Senate. Source: CAIR-MA



Month. North Carolina joined the list of states observing Muslim American Heritage Month in early 2024, bringing the total to at least seven states. School districts in at least six states added the observation of one of two major Muslim holidays to their yearly calendars.

Adhan (MN and NY)

In April, Minneapolis became the first major U.S. city to allow broadcasts of the Muslim call to prayer, or the adhan, five times each day throughout the year.¹²⁰ In 2020, the city had granted the Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, home to one of the largest populations of Muslims in Minnesota, a permit to broadcast the adhan five times each day during the holy month of Ramadan. Otherwise, calls to prayer were only broadcast three to four times per day. In 2023, following a unanimous city council vote, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey signed the new ordinance at Dar Al-Hijrah, amending noise restrictions and allowing the call to prayer to be broadcast five times per day throughout the year.¹²¹ The effort came together after the Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque, with the support of CAIR-MN, requested a permit for the call to prayer.

Elsewhere throughout the country, the use of loudspeakers to broadcast the adhan has become more widespread. For example, CAIR-NY applauded Mayor Eric Adams' decision to publicly support the Muslim call to prayer to be freely heard throughout New York City on Fridays and during Ramadan without a sound permit. This support clarifies and removes obstacles previously experienced by some mosques despite the New York City administrative code allowing houses of worship to amplify sound for religious

purposes. In the past, there have been several instances in which the NYPD has harassed mosques for broadcasting the adhan, demanding repeated permits be filed with each use of amplified sound. Churches and synagogues, on the other hand, were not required to file a permit, and are explicitly named in the exception to the administrative code.¹²²

Muslim American Heritage Month (NJ, GA, NC)

At least eight states have now recognized either January or July as Muslim American Heritage Month.

In April, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed a joint resolution from that state's legislature declaring January to be Muslim American Heritage Month.¹²³ Georgia's Governor followed suit in July.¹²⁴ In early 2024, during the authorship of this report, North Carolina's Governor proclaimed January as Muslim American Heritage Month.¹²⁵

These states joined a number of others who had committed to observing Muslim American Heritage Month in previous years. In 2022, Washington and Utah adopted Muslim American Heritage Month in July,¹²⁶ while Illinois opted to acknowledge the month in January.¹²⁷ Wisconsin adopted July as Muslim American Heritage Month in December 2021.¹²⁸ California started in 2016.

Cities are also recognizing the role of their Muslims neighbors. In July, Mayor Levar Stoney of Richmond, Virginia, declared that July will be Muslim American Heritage Month.¹²⁹ That same month, Olympia City, Washington, also recognized July 2023 as

Muslim American Heritage Month.¹³⁰ Among others, Los Angeles County’s Board of Supervisors named July as Muslim Heritage Month in June 2020.¹³¹

Eid (PA, CT, TX, NJ, OH, MN)

Eid ul-Fitr, or “feast of fast-breaking,” is the first of the two major Muslim holidays after the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan. The second holiday, Eid ul-Adha, comes near the end of the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. CAIR-Pittsburgh and CAIR-Philadelphia welcomed Eid observance by nine Pennsylvania school districts, who closed to observe the holiday for the first time following advocacy by parents and students. On Friday, April 21, the Radnor, Great Valley,

Unionville-Chadds Ford, West Chester Area, Spring-Ford, North Penn, Upper Darby, Downingtown, and Owen J. Roberts school districts observed the Eid ul-Fitr holiday, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. These districts joined Philadelphia, Pittsburgh Public Schools, and the Tredyffrin/Easttown districts that had already been observing Eid ul-Fitr. Among Pennsylvania districts to observe Eid next year, Derry Township in Hershey, Pennsylvania, is the first in central Pennsylvania to do so.¹³²

CAIR-CT also welcomed decisions by the Waterbury Board of Education and the Norwalk Board of Education to recognize Eid ul-Fitr as an official school holiday on their 2023-2024 academic calendar.¹³³

In September, CAIR-CA met with CA Assembly Majority Leader Emerita Eloise Gomez Reyes to welcome the passing of HR 52 recognizing August as Muslim Appreciation and Awareness Month. Source: Assemblymember Reyes’ office (permission received)



Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate

CAIR-Houston welcomed the first-ever recognition of the Eid holiday by the Houston Independent School District (HISD). The Houston ISD Board of Education approved Eid ul-Fitr as an official spring holiday on the school district calendar. Eid will join Good Friday and Yom Kippur as the only religious holidays recognized by the district aside from those that fall during winter break.¹³⁴

CAIR-NJ also welcomed a recent trend by New Jersey public school districts of adding Eid to the 2023-2024 academic calendar and closing schools in observance of the Muslim holiday. Fair Lawn Board of Education is one of the newest districts to add Eid ul-Fitr to the 2023-24 academic year and close schools in observance.¹³⁵ The board's unanimous decision, which was voted

on in February, comes after parents' and students' advocacy efforts, which recently organized under the umbrella group, Fair Lawn Muslim Community.¹³⁶ CAIR-NJ tracked nearly 30 school closures for Eid ul-Fitr in 2022-2023. Nearly ten districts added school closures in observance of Eid for the 2023-2024 academic year, including Boonton, East Brunswick, Fanwood & Scotch Plains, Holmdel, Livingston, Warren, and Watchung Borough.¹³⁷

CAIR-Ohio commended Beachwood City Schools for adding three new holidays – Eid ul-Fitr, Lunar New Year, and Diwali – to the academic calendar. Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, these holidays will be recognized as days off for students when they fall on a school day.¹³⁸ Beachwood City Schools joins other districts in Ohio, such

CAIR-LA Executive Director Hussam Ayloush speaks at a press conference on the release of a new CAIR-CA report documenting bullying of Muslim students in California schools in October. Source: CAIR-LA



as the Hilliard City School District, which approved Eid as a district holiday in 2022.¹³⁹

Late in 2022, St. Paul Public Schools in Minnesota voted to add Eid ul-Fitr, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah to the district's academic calendar. Students will not have class on any of the dates. The changes will go into effect in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years.¹⁴⁰

Incarceree Rights Struggles Nationwide, California Law Secures the Right of Religious Headwear, Clothing, and Grooming for Incarcerates (CA, MN, KY, MI)

Muslim incarcerated and detainees seeking to practice their faith have also continued to face significant challenges throughout the year. In particular, Muslim detainees, particularly Muslim women, continue to struggle to secure their rights to religious clothing and grooming in jails and prisons.

Throughout 2023, CAIR took actions on behalf of a number of Muslim women who have been forced to remove their hijabs or who have been publicly strip-searched in jails and prisons. In October 2023, CAIR, CAIR-MN, and the Law Office of Deborah M. Golden filed a lawsuit against a federal correctional institution after a Muslim woman was reportedly forced to remove her hijab for a booking photograph and has been forced to carry that photo on her ID card.¹⁴¹ In November, CAIR, in partnership with attorney Roula Allouch of Bricker Graydon, also announced legal action against the Warren County Regional Jail in Bowling Green, Kentucky, which reportedly forcibly removed a Muslim woman's hijab for a booking photo, allowed the photo to be kept on their website, and livestreamed her strip search.¹⁴² In December, CAIR-MI filed a lawsuit

against a Michigan jail for the forced removal of a Muslim woman's hijab for a booking photo, which was published on the Sheriff's Office's public website.¹⁴³

While the treatment of incarcerated and detained Muslims continues to be an area of concern, progress has also been made to preserve their freedom to practice their faith. The California chapter of CAIR, alongside The Church State Council, Exodus Project, Jakara Movement, and Tayba Foundation, sponsored SB 309, a bill that would create a statewide policy ensuring the right of religious headwear, clothing, and grooming to those in California's carceral system. The bill was signed by Governor Newsom in October 2023.¹⁴⁴

In 2023, CAIR-SFBA also worked alongside the Santa Clara Sheriff's Office to implement a new religious services policy that provides clear guidance to staff who are presented with the task of harmonizing important safety objectives, like the need to conduct a pat search or resolving potential mental health concerns, with an individual's right to religious expression. Under the new policy, Muslim women would be offered a pat search in private or outside the presence of men, as well as the opportunity to take a booking photograph wearing their hijab. Unless there were specific safety and security concerns, the new policy would also allow Muslim women to keep their hijab or receive a jail-issued religious covering during their custody stay.¹⁴⁵ The Fayette County Detention Center in Lexington, Kentucky, also announced that it would establish policies accommodating religious attire after CAIR intervened on behalf of a Muslim woman who was refused the right to wear her hijab during a booking photograph in July 2023.¹⁴⁶

Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate

CAIR also continues to work to secure rights for incarcerated Muslims to congregate during prayer and to receive religious accommodations during Ramadan.

Supreme Court's Ruling Strengthens Right to Religious Accommodations in Workplace, SCOTUS cites CAIR's Work in Explaining Importance of Rights to Religious Accommodations

In June, CAIR applauded a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court making it easier for employees to seek religious accommodations in the workplace.¹⁴⁷ In *Groff v. Dejoy*, the Court rejected the “de minimis test” and clarified that an employer denying an employee’s religious accommodation has the burden of showing

that the accommodation would impose a “substantial” hardship on the employer that cannot be avoided through other means.¹⁴⁸

Prior to this decision, as detailed in CAIR’s amicus brief filed in this case, employers could deny religious accommodations to employees if the employer could show anything more than a “de minimis” (minimal) burden the accommodation would place on the employer.¹⁴⁹

The “de minimis” rule has been used to prevent Muslim women from wearing hijab in the workplace based on speculative security concerns or even worries that Islamophobes might disapprove of hijab.

CAIR News Conference Following Oral Arguments at Supreme Court.
Source: CAIR



In announcing the opinion of the Court, Justice Samuel Alito cited CAIR’s amicus brief, explaining how CAIR showed “that the de minimis test has blessed the denial of even minor accommodation in many cases, making it harder for members of minority faiths to enter the job market.” As a result, “Muslim women wearing religiously mandated attire have lost employment opportunities and have been excluded from critical public institutions like public schools, law enforcement agencies, and youth rehabilitation centers.”¹⁵⁰

This is the second time since 2021 that the Supreme Court has cited CAIR’s work in its opinions. In *Americans for Prosperity v. Bonta*, the Supreme Court cited a CAIR amicus brief in a decision protecting the privacy of donors to nonprofit organizations.¹⁵¹

Challenges to Free Speech: Critiques of Israeli Apartheid

Efforts to suppress constitutionally protected free speech criticizing Israeli apartheid, occupation, and apparent intent to commit genocide were widespread. CAIR detailed how students, employees, journalists, and social media users were targeted for voicing support for Palestinian human rights in our previous special report *Gaza: The Resurgence of Islamophobia in 2023*.¹⁵² We reproduce some of this analysis here for context before focusing on legislative efforts to silence critics of the Israeli government, including efforts to deploy the controversial antisemitism definition created by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) against critics of a foreign state, as well as ongoing efforts to penalize supporters of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

In particular, CAIR has noted what appears to be unprecedented involvement on behalf of corporations to restrict speech critical of Israel and supportive of Palestinian human rights, under the false pretense that any critique leveled against the state by Muslim, Palestinian, or Arab actors and their sympathizers is indicative of anti-Jewish racism.

In a special report in October, CAIR noted that following the initial attack on southern Israel, hundreds of top finance, tech, and healthcare companies issued statements or otherwise expressed support for Israel. While companies sought to create spaces of belonging for pro-Israeli employees through the release of such statements, their pro-Palestinian ones, who found themselves significantly impacted by Israel’s subsequent attack on Palestinian civilians, were frequently left without any sense of support.¹⁵³

Image representing efforts to silence criticism of Israeli apartheid, occupation, and genocide.



Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, which many employers adopted in recent years in response to pervasive anti-Black racism, were abandoned, as Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab employees standing up for Palestinian rights were thought to be biased and even fired from their place of work.

Specifically, while many corporate leaders simply refused to acknowledge the existence of Palestinian civilians, others explicitly sought to stifle any condemnation of Israeli attacks on Gaza, specifically painting student activists critical of Israel as biased. Some corporate leaders sought to silence students by speaking to their university's administration, while others have used their public platforms to threaten students' career prospects.

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As examples, Citadel LLC CEO Kenneth Griffin, a major donor to Harvard University, reportedly claimed that he urged administrators to “come

out forcefully in defense of Israel,” seemingly seeking to counter the viral statement released earlier by students.¹⁵⁴ When asked by the *New York Times* if Citadel would ever hire the head of a student group who signed the statement, Griffin reportedly responded with an unequivocal no.¹⁵⁵ Also in response to the statement released by Harvard students, on the social media platform X, Pershing Square Capital Management CEO William Ackman publicly called for Harvard to release a list of signatories to CEOs so that they do not “inadvertently hire any of their members.”¹⁵⁶ Multiple other CEOs, including those at FabFitFun, EasyHealth, Dovehill Capital Management, and Sweetgreen, have publicly supported him in threatening the careers of students.¹⁵⁷

As employees faced workplaces that disregarded or even sought to suppress activism for Palestinian human rights, students across the country faced the same. In October, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis sought to disband two chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), an organization advocating for Palestinian rights, in his state. These chapters were reportedly ordered to “shut down because they violated the state’s anti-terrorism statute.”¹⁵⁸ According to State University of Florida Chancellor Ray Rodrigues, the universities involved obtained legal opinions about dissolving these chapters and found that they “raised concerns about potential personal liability for university actors who deactivate the student-registered organization.”¹⁵⁹ As of CNN’s report on November 9, neither chapter had been shut down.¹⁶⁰ CAIR, in partnership with Erchid Law Firm, filed a lawsuit on behalf of the University of South Florida’s chapter of SJP to challenge the order.¹⁶¹

In October, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in collaboration with the Brandeis Center, also released a letter to the presidents of nearly 200 colleges and universities calling on them to investigate pro-Palestinian student groups for “providing material support to Hamas.”¹⁶² The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) quickly blasted the move, arguing that the accusations were made “without citing any evidence” and that “calls to investigate, disband, or penalize student groups on the basis of their exercise of free speech rights” should be rejected.¹⁶³ The ADL’s call not only threatened students’ free speech but also relied on an anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian trope that supporters of Palestinian human rights are by nature violent and would therefore materially support violent activities abroad.

In November, Brandeis University became the first private university to ban a chapter of SJP.¹⁶⁴ Columbia University administrators reportedly altered event policies seventeen days before suspending Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace student groups for violating university policies.¹⁶⁵ The suspension means that neither group will be eligible to hold events on campus or receive university funding.¹⁶⁶ Rutgers University and George Washington University have also reportedly suspended SJP chapters in 2023.¹⁶⁷

CAIR experts struggle to determine if Governor DeSantis exploiting his role to collectively target students or the Anti-Defamation League calling for authorities to initiate investigations against an entire class of students absent evidence of wrongdoing stands as the most significant challenge to campus free speech in 2023.

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Efforts to Ban Americans from Boycotting the Israeli Government

Attempts to silence critics of Israeli state policy have also extended to legislation, as a number of states have adopted laws to prevent participation in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. An international effort modeled after the successful global South African anti-apartheid movement, BDS is a non-violent movement seeking to end the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank and to pressure Israel to treat Palestinians with dignity and in accordance with its obligations under international law.

In July, CAIR condemned New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu's signing of an order banning boycotts of Israel as "a total assault on our First Amendment rights." Gov. Sununu met with Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and Israel's consul general to New England to sign the order, which bans boycotts of Israel in state procurement and investments.¹⁶⁸

Earlier that year, in February, the Virginia State House narrowly approved HB 1898, a bill that would violate the First Amendment rights of state contractors and their employees by requiring them to sign contracts with a provision banning boycotts of Israel.¹⁶⁹ A similar bill failed to be adopted by the assembly in 2022.

Efforts to challenge anti-BDS or anti-boycott legislation have also continued throughout 2023. In November, the Maryland office of CAIR joined others in urging Governor Wes Moore to repeal the anti-BDS Executive Order that was enacted in October 2017, which unconstitutionally restricts the right to

free speech and political expression within the State of Maryland. The Executive Order requires individuals and businesses entering into a contract with the State of Maryland to first pledge not to boycott the state of Israel. It dangerously chills free speech and undermines constitutional rights. It also infringes on the fundamental rights of business and corporations to engage in peaceful protest and express their viewpoints.¹⁷⁰

In February, CAIR said that the fight against unconstitutional anti-BDS laws will continue after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review an Arkansas newspaper's appeal against an anti-free speech law in that state. The Supreme Court decided not to review a law that forced the Arkansas newspaper to pledge not to boycott Israel as a condition for contracting with the state, leaving in place a lower court's decision upholding that law. The case was unique and distinct from ongoing litigation in other states because the impacted newspaper was not engaged in or planning a boycott of Israel over its human rights violations.¹⁷¹

CAIR press release.



IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Antisemitism is generally defined as prejudice against and/or hatred of those who identify as Jewish or are associated with Judaism. The “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, expands the definition of antisemitism to also include critiques of Israeli policies, including Israeli settler colonialism, occupation of the West Bank, its apartheid leveraged against Palestinians, and the ethnic cleansing and oppression of the Palestinian people. As stated in a letter to the UN from 104 civil society organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, urging the UN not to endorse the definition, “the IHRA definition has often been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and sometimes suppress, non-violent protest, activism and speech critical of Israel and/or Zionism, including in the US and Europe.”¹⁷²

The original drafter of the IHRA definition himself called it a “working definition” and testified to the U.S. Congress that if government bodies “enshrine this definition into law, outside groups will try and suppress – rather than answer – political speech they don’t like. The academy, Jewish students, and faculty teaching about Jewish issues, will all suffer.”¹⁷³

In 2023, several states and cities considered adopting the IHRA definition. The Virginia State House passed HB 1606, a flawed and divisive measure that would have the state assume the IHRA definition.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, CAIR-Kansas joined community partners in calling on the Roeland Park City Council to uphold

the principle of free speech and to reject the controversial definition.¹⁷⁵ CAIR-NJ also joined community partners in calling on the Clifton City Council not to endorse the definition.¹⁷⁶

The American Bar Association adopted a resolution on antisemitism which dropped earlier language that would have included references of the IHRA definition.¹⁷⁷ The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the largest organization of university professors and other academics in the United States, has also publicly, vocally, and strongly opposed the IHRA definition, issuing a policy document explaining how the definition “suppresses discussion and activism on behalf of Palestinian rights.”¹⁷⁸

The White House’s national strategy on antisemitism mentions but does not explicitly adopt the disputed IHRA definition as the sole definition government agencies should use, does not express support for efforts to silence free speech such as the right to engage in BDS, and does not declare that criticism of or opposition to the Israeli occupation is inherently antisemitic, as some civil and human rights groups feared the strategy would. As the strategy states, “When Jews are targeted because of their beliefs or their identity, when Israel is singled out *because of anti-Jewish hatred*, that is antisemitism. And that is unacceptable.”¹⁷⁹ [Emphasis added.]

For example, two years ago, Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker signed a bill that substantially expanded sex education in Illinois. Lambda Legal celebrated the bill becoming law. So did the ACLU. But unlike MCPS, the much-heralded Illinois law, supported by a national Democratic Party leader and liberal advocacy groups, allowed families to opt-out of the lessons.¹⁸²

Community leaders speak about the MCPS's removal of an opt-out option for certain types of instructional materials.
Source: CAIR



Numerous families, including Muslim parents and children, had taken advantage of the opt-out option. While some families may seek to use the opt-out for religious purposes, families and students have opted out of this instruction for several other reasons.

However, on March 23, 2023, MCPS sent a community-wide notice to parents that the district would no longer accept opt-out requests and that schools would no longer give advance notice of the books. They announced their decision absent any transparent process, without an opportunity for public input.¹⁸³

MCPS confirmed its new ban in a March 29th email to CAIR. The school board did not respond to CAIR's request to explain what disciplinary action students might face for not participating or why the school board had suddenly decided to ban parental notice and reasonable religious accommodations. In part, the school system responded to parental opt-out requests with: *"Students and families may not choose to opt out of engaging with any instructional materials, other than 'Family Life and Human Sexuality Unit of Instruction,' which is specifically permitted by Maryland law. As such, teachers will not send home letters to inform families when inclusive books are read in the future."*¹⁸⁴

In response to CAIR's open records request, MCPS provided the organization with a full version of teacher discussion guides about which the MCPS elementary school principals union had previously expressed concern in a November 2022 memo. In the guides, MCPS makes it clear that English teachers are expected to teach concepts related to gender, family life and relationships, contrary to claims

MCPS had made in federal court. Teachers are told to scold, debate or “disrupt the either/ or thinking” of only students who express traditional viewpoints or ask critical questions about those topics.¹⁸⁵

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CAIR also released two sworn affidavits and over 100 pages of internal MCPS emails which contradicted the school district’s claim to a federal court that it canceled the opt-out option because too many students opted out.¹⁸⁶

CAIR’s Maryland office also organized numerous protests and press conferences to assist concerned parents.

During a June school board meeting, Montgomery County Council member Kristin Mink testified that this issue “puts some Muslim families on the same side of an issue as white supremacists and outright bigots” but that she would not include those Muslims who she had personally spoken with before the hearing in that grouping with racists.¹⁸⁷ Mink later apologized for the comment.¹⁸⁸

In a separate incident, Montgomery County school board member Lynne Harris publicly disparaged a Muslim student who testified at a prior board hearing. According to a report, a female Muslim student had “testified to her personal discomfort with the ‘unsettling’ curriculum.” Board member Harris reportedly said that she “felt ‘kind of sorry’ for the girl and wondered to what extent she may have been ‘parroting dogma’ learned from her parents.”¹⁸⁹

In August, just prior to the onset of the 2023-2024 school year, a federal court issued a ruling denying a request for a preliminary injunction by an interfaith group of Montgomery County families who sought to restore the right to opt-out. The lawsuit was filed by the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.¹⁹⁰



EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW

In early 2024, CAIR legal staff argued a federal watchlist case in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Recommendations

The U.S. must accept and adhere to the ruling provided by the International Court of Justice regarding the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians, as well as call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. The ruling declared South Africa's charge of genocide against the Israeli government plausible, allowed the case to proceed, and ordered the Israeli government to take various measures to prevent genocidal acts and provide humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza.

Public officials at all levels of government, corporate leaders, and those speaking on behalf of places of education must respect free speech on Palestine and the value of human life. If they choose to comment on international affairs such as events in Israel and Palestine, then equal weight and attention should be given to Palestinian suffering. As detailed in this document and our report *Gaza: The Resurgence of Islamophobia in 2023*, CAIR has recorded instances of public officials, educators, and corporate leaders showing support for Israel amid a lack of concern for the subsequent loss of Palestinian life, as well as attempts to stifle concern for the plight of Palestinian civilians. CAIR holds that every life has value. Disregarding legitimate concerns of those who value Palestinian life and oppose occupation and apartheid contributes to an atmosphere (created by political leaders, such as President Biden, and other domestic actors) in which Palestinian lives are devalued and hate toward Palestinians, Muslims, and Arabs domestically, as we witnessed in the final months of 2023, is permitted.

The Biden administration must suspend the FBI's dissemination of their watchlist list, which leaked copies show to be "almost entirely lists of Arabic and Muslim names."

The FBI's list not only ruins the lives of people who are on it but it follows them wherever those people go. Congress did not give the FBI this authority. There is no law that made the watchlist. Even the presidential executive order that supposedly gave rise to the FBI's list did not put the FBI in charge. Instead, it was an agreement between several agencies that put this list and all the authorities having a list entails in the hands of the FBI. But neither the FBI nor any other government agency should have a secret list. They have abused the one that they have now, and there is no such thing as a good, lawful kind of secret government list made available to hundreds of thousands of government actors. It is time to bring this practice to a close.¹⁹¹

Congress must enhance anti-doxxing laws.

Doxxing involves releasing a person's private information with the intent to cause harm. Throughout late 2023, large numbers of Muslim and Arabs, with a focus on students and harming people at their places of employment, were doxxed. It is time for the U.S. Congress to place boundaries on this insidious practice. Threatening someone's education, employment, or life because they engaged in political speech violates a core essence of an open, democratic society. The federal statute 18 U.S. Code § 119 provides protections for some Americans, such as U.S. employees or court witnesses. Several states already have laws related to the insidious practice in place.

State and local governments must continue the trend of accommodating Muslim religious practices in America’s routine faith landscape at the same level as other faiths.

This can be achieved by recognizing Muslim American Heritage Months, adopting Eid as a school holiday in areas with sizable numbers of Muslim students, and permitting mosques to broadcast the call to prayer. As recommended in our 2023 report, states should also take action to enshrine religious sports attire inclusion in law. At least three states—Illinois, Ohio, and Maryland—have such legislative remedies that other states can use as a template.

The U.S. Government must tie police funding to the submission of hate crimes data.

CAIR continues to call for the Biden Administration and Congress to work together to require the federal government to condition any aid, grants, training, or other assistance to local law enforcement agencies on their agreement to submit regular and complete data regarding hate crime incidents targeting minority communities.¹⁹²

In October, CAIR-LA held a press conference with the Kaoud family, whose relatives were trapped in northern Gaza when Israel began its assault. Source: CAIR-LA



Mosques and other visibly Muslim institutions should consider taking advantage of security grants.

Muslim community centers, Islamic houses of worship, and nonprofits may be in need of increased security. The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides federal funding for physical security enhancements and other security-related activities to nonprofit organizations that are at risk of a terrorist attack.

If we ever see any signs of discrimination or law enforcement intrusion into community spaces, we will quickly and appropriately address those issues.

In past years, applicants with one physical site may apply for up to \$150,000 for that site. Applicants with multiple physical sites were able to apply for up to \$150,000 per site, for up to three sites, for a maximum of \$450,000 per sub-applicant. CAIR is committed to continuing to monitor DHS's NPSG program to ensure that it remains a benefit to the American Muslim community. If we ever see any signs of discrimination or law enforcement intrusion into community spaces, we will quickly and appropriately address those issues.

Banks must end the wrongful targeting of American Muslim, Arab, and Persian families.

This recommendation was made in our 2023 civil rights report. In March, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding reported “Muslims are the most likely faith group to report facing challenges while banking.”¹⁹³ In April, the Treasury Department released its de-risking strategy and expressed some criticism of the practice which it defined as “financial institutions terminating or restricting business relationships indiscriminately with broad categories of clients rather than analyzing and managing the risk of clients in a targeted manner.” The Treasury found that “profitability is the primary factor in financial institutions’ de-risking decisions.”¹⁹⁴ The federal government and other financial industry regulators should update their practices and guidelines to ensure greater equity in banking. Banks’ ongoing wrongful targeting of American Muslim, Arab, and Persian families and closing their accounts are harmful and discriminatory practices in the U.S. financial sector that must end. This discrimination also extends to other immigrants and communities of color.





Background, **Methodology,** **Limitations**

Background

From 1995 to 2009, CAIR published an annual report on the status of civil rights for Muslims in the United States. After a brief hiatus, during which the organization invested significant resources to improve human resources and case intake, investigation, management, and classification, the annual report was relaunched in 2017. No reports covering 2018 and 2019 incidents were published. To accommodate pandemic needs and staff changes, CAIR reduced the variety of data on which the report draws and began again publishing reports in 2021. This report is the fourth that reflects those reductions.

Methodology

CAIR's research and advocacy department staff reviewed approximately 1,602 statements and videos issued by the organization in 2023. From this information we drew many of the case studies and special sections. Our staff check these cases for updates with those involved or through media sources.

Each year, thousands of Americans contact CAIR through a variety of media, including telephone, email, and our online complaint system. When possible, CAIR staff also may also reach out to offer their services to individuals whose incidents were reported in

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news sources and not directly to CAIR. With each complaint, case intake staffers review preliminary materials and conduct interviews with prospective clients as part of the confidential intake process. These nationwide intake staff will then classify the case using the complaint category definitions provided earlier in this report. Each CAIR office that does intakes then submits their annual totals to the research and advocacy team.

Limitations

This report contains a mere snapshot of the experiences of American Muslims, including children, youth, and families, across the United States.

CAIR knows that bias incidents targeting the community are vastly underreported to both law enforcement and community institutions. In part, this is a reflection of decades of abuse by a number of law enforcement agencies. Desensitization plays a role in non-reporting

as well. CAIR staff often hear of episodes in which individuals are harassed and do not report the incident because the target feels that either nothing can be done, or that such treatment is expected and normal and does not necessitate an official complaint.

Where CAIR is present, the local community is more likely to report cases to the organization. Thus, in states like California and Ohio where CAIR has multiple offices, higher numbers of cases are expected than in states like Tennessee or Montana where the organization does not yet have an office.

Finally, over the course of 2022, CAIR's civil rights team began the process of adopting a new proprietary case management system. As part of that process, they also updated the complaint category definitions. As a result, in many instances we cannot make 1-1 comparisons between our case types in 2021 and 2023.

In 2023 more than 500 American Muslim delegates from 20+ states traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with more than 200 congressional offices.
Source: CAIR





CAIR successfully concludes 8th annual Muslim Youth Leadership Symposium (MYLS)

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Fatal: The Resurgence of Anti-Muslim Hate

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“We received more complaints of hate crimes [in October 2023] than we did for all of 2022.”

- **CAIR-MA Legal Director Barbara J. Dougan, Esq**

“Recognizing Eid as an official school holiday is a significant step toward greater inclusivity and respect for religious diversity in our schools. We are grateful to the school districts that have taken this important step, and we hope that other districts across the state will follow their lead and create more welcoming and inclusive learning environments for all students.” - **CAIR-Pittsburgh Executive Director Christine Mohamed**

“Today I welcome you without incident or counterprotest without any seen hatred to the 20th anniversary of Texas Muslim Capitol Day. I welcome you here with not only one but two Muslim elected House representatives.” - **CAIR-Houston Director William White**

“If these incidents are happening to high-profile and well-respected American-Muslim figures like Mayor Khairullah, this then begs the question: what is happening to Muslims who do not have the access and visibility that the mayor has?” - **CAIR-New Jersey Executive Director Selaedin Maksut**

“This lawsuit is about holding state officials to account and upholding the rights of all citizens. Once a person enters a correctional facility, they do not lose their most basic rights and become an open target for violence and abuse.” - **CAIR Civil Rights Attorney Kimberly Noe-Lehenbauer**

“As we await the official investigation of the local authorities, what we can confirm at the moment is that we have a murdered child in his own home, a six-year old who had just celebrated his birthday a couple of weeks ago, and a mother lying in the hospital in serious condition, both stabbed over a dozen times. And we have testimony from the mother as to the harrowing moments that unfolded in terms of what was done and said – and it is our worst nightmare.” - **CAIR-Chicago Executive Director Ahmed Rehab**

CAIR IS AMERICA’S LARGEST MUSLIM CIVIL LIBERTIES AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION. ITS MISSION IS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM, PROTECT CIVIL RIGHTS, PROMOTE JUSTICE, AND EMPOWER AMERICAN MUSLIMS.



Civil Rights Report 2024

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