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## CAIR: Islamists Fooling the Establishment

by Daniel Pipes and Sharon Chadha

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<http://www.meforum.org/916/cair-islamists-fooling-the-establishment>



The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), headquartered in Washington, is perhaps the best-known and most controversial Muslim organization in North America. CAIR presents itself as an advocate for Muslims' civil rights and the spokesman for American Muslims. "We are similar to a Muslim NAACP," says its communications director, Ibrahim Hooper.<sup>[1]</sup> Its [official mission](#)—"to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding"<sup>[2]</sup>—suggests nothing problematic.

Starting with a single office in 1994, CAIR now claims thirty-one affiliates, including a branch in Canada, with more steadily being added. In addition to its grand national headquarters in Washington, it has impressive offices in other cities; the New York office, for example, is housed in the 19-story [Interchurch Center](#) located on Manhattan's Riverside Drive.

But there is another side to CAIR that has alarmed many people in positions to know. The Department of Homeland Security refuses to deal with it. Senator Charles Schumer (Democrat, New York) describes it as an organization "which we know has ties to terrorism."<sup>[3]</sup> Senator Dick Durbin (Democrat, Illinois) [observes](#) that CAIR is "unusual

in its extreme rhetoric and its associations with groups that are suspect."[\[4\]](#) Steven Pomerantz, the FBI's former chief of counterterrorism, notes that "CAIR, its leaders, and its activities effectively give aid to international terrorist groups."[\[5\]](#) The family of John P. O'Neill, Sr., the former FBI counterterrorism chief who perished at the World Trade Center, [named CAIR in a lawsuit](#) as having "been part of the criminal conspiracy of radical Islamic terrorism"[\[6\]](#) responsible for the September 11 atrocities. Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson calls it "a radical fundamentalist front group for Hamas."[\[7\]](#)

Of particular note are the American Muslims who reject CAIR's claim to speak on their behalf. The late Seifeldin Ashmawy, publisher of the New Jersey-based *Voice of Peace*, called CAIR the champion of "extremists whose views do not represent Islam."[\[8\]](#) Jamal Hasan of the Council for Democracy and Tolerance explains that CAIR's goal is to spread "Islamic hegemony the world over by hook or by crook."[\[9\]](#) [Kamal Nawash](#), head of Free Muslims Against Terrorism, finds that CAIR and similar groups condemn terrorism on the surface while endorsing an ideology that helps foster extremism, adding that "almost all of their members are theocratic Muslims who reject secularism and want to establish Islamic states."[\[10\]](#) [Tashbih Sayyed](#) of the Council for Democracy and Tolerance calls CAIR "the most accomplished fifth column" in the United States.[\[11\]](#) And [Stephen Schwartz](#) of the Center on Islamic Pluralism writes that "CAIR should be considered a foreign-based subversive organization, comparable in the Islamist field to the Soviet-controlled Communist Party, USA."[\[12\]](#)

CAIR, for its part, dismisses [all criticism](#), blaming negative comments on "Muslim bashers" who "can never point to something CAIR has done in its 10-year history that is objectionable."[\[13\]](#) Actually, there is much about the organization's history that is objectionable—and it is readily apparent to anyone who bothers to look.

### **Part of the Establishment**

When President George W. Bush visited the Islamic Center of Washington several days after September 11, 2001, to signal that he would not tolerate a backlash against Muslims, he invited CAIR's executive director, Nihad Awad, to join him at the podium. Two months later, when Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#) hosted a Ramadan dinner, he, too, called upon CAIR as representative of Islam in America.[\[14\]](#) More broadly, when the State Department seeks out Muslims to welcome foreign dignitaries, journalists, and academics, it calls upon CAIR.[\[15\]](#) The organization has represented American Muslims before Congress. The [National Aeronautics and Space Agency](#) hosted CAIR's "Sensitivity and Diversity Workshop" in an effort to harmonize space research with Muslim sensibilities.[\[16\]](#)

[Law-enforcement agencies](#) in Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Michigan, New York, Arizona, California, Missouri, Texas, and Kentucky have attended CAIR's sensitivity-training sessions.[\[17\]](#) The organization boasts such tight relations with law enforcement that it claims to have even been invited to [monitor police raids](#).[\[18\]](#) In July 2004, as agents from the FBI, Internal Revenue Service, and Homeland Security descended on the Institute of

Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, a Saudi-created school in Merrifield, Virginia, a local paper reported that the FBI had informed CAIR's legal director, Arsalan Iftikhar, that morning that the raid was going to take place.

CAIR is also a media darling. It [claims to log](#) five thousand annual mentions on newspapers, television, and radio, including some of the most prestigious media in the United States.[\[19\]](#) The press dutifully quotes CAIR's statistics, publishes its [theological views](#), reports its opinions, rehashes its press releases, invites its staff on television, and generally dignifies its existence as a routine part of the American and Canadian political scenes.

CAIR regularly participates in seminars on Islamic cultural issues for corporations and has been invited to speak at many of America's leading universities, including Harvard, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, and Columbia. American high schools have invited CAIR to promote its agenda, as have educationally-minded [senior citizens](#).[\[20\]](#)

### **Terrorists in Its Midst**

Perhaps the most obvious problem with CAIR is the fact that at least five of its employees and board members have been arrested, convicted, deported, or otherwise linked to terrorism-related charges and activities.

*Randall ("Ismail") Royer*, an American convert to Islam, served as CAIR's [communications specialist](#) and [civil rights coordinator](#); today he sits in jail on terrorism-related charges. In June 2003, Royer and ten other young men, ages 23 to 35, known as the "Virginia jihad group," were [indicted](#) on forty-one counts of "conspiracy to train for and participate in a violent jihad overseas." The defendants, nine of them U.S. citizens, were accused of association with Lashkar-e-Taiba, a radical Islamic group designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State in 2001. They were also accused of meeting covertly in private homes and at the Islamic Center in Falls Church to prepare themselves for battle by listening to lectures and watching videotapes.[\[21\]](#) As the prosecutor [noted](#), "Ten miles from Capitol Hill in the streets of northern Virginia, American citizens allegedly met, plotted, and recruited for violent jihad."[\[22\]](#) According to [Matthew Epstein](#) of the Investigative Project, Royer helped recruit the others to the jihad effort while he was working for CAIR. The group trained at firing ranges in Virginia and Pennsylvania; in addition, it practiced "small-unit military tactics" at a paintball war-games facility in Virginia, earning it the moniker, the "paintball jihadis."[\[23\]](#) Eventually members of the group traveled to Pakistan.

Five of the men indicted, including CAIR's Royer, were found to have had in their possession, according to the indictment, "AK-47-style rifles, telescopic lenses, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and tracer rounds, documents on undertaking jihad and martyrdom, [and] a copy of the terrorist handbook containing instructions on how to manufacture and use explosives and chemicals as weapons."[\[24\]](#)

After four of the eleven defendants pleaded guilty, the remaining seven, including Royer, were [accused in a new, 32-count indictment](#) of yet more serious charges: conspiring to help Al-Qaeda and the Taliban battle American troops in Afghanistan.[\[25\]](#) Royer admitted in his grand jury testimony that he had already waged jihad in Bosnia under a commander acting on orders from Osama bin Laden. Prosecutors also presented evidence that his father, [Ramon Royer, had rented a room](#) in his St. Louis-area home in 2000 to Ziyad Khaleel, the student who purchased the satellite phone used by Al-Qaeda in planning the two U.S. embassy bombings in East Africa in August 1998.[\[26\]](#) Royer eventually [pleaded guilty](#) to lesser firearms-related charges, and the former CAIR staffer was sentenced to twenty years in prison.[\[27\]](#)

A coda to the "Virginia jihad network" came in 2005 when a Federal court [convicted](#) another Virginia man, Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, of plotting to kill President Bush. Prosecutors alleged that Abu Ali participated in the Virginia jihad network's paintball games and perhaps supplied one of his fellow jihadists with an assault rifle.[\[28\]](#) Royer's [possible role](#) in Abu Ali's plans are unclear.

*Ghassan Elashi*, the founder of CAIR's Texas chapter, has a long history of funding terrorism. First, he was [convicted](#) in July 2004, with his four brothers, of having illegally shipped computers from their Dallas-area business, InfoCom Corporation, to two designated state-sponsors of terrorism, Libya and Syria.[\[29\]](#) Second, he and two brothers were [convicted](#) in April 2005 of knowingly doing business with Mousa Abu Marzook, a senior Hamas leader, whom the U.S. State Department had in 1995 declared a "specially designated terrorist." Elashi was convicted of all twenty-one counts with which he was charged, including conspiracy, money laundering, and dealing in the property of a designated terrorist.[\[30\]](#) Third, he was [charged](#) in July 2004 with providing more than \$12.4 million to Hamas while he was running the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, America's largest Islamic charity.[\[31\]](#) When the U.S. government shuttered Holy Land Foundation in late 2001, CAIR [characterized](#) this move as "unjust" and "disturbing."[\[32\]](#)

*Bassem Khafagi*, an Egyptian native and CAIR's onetime community relations director, pleaded guilty in September 2003 to lying on his visa application and passing bad checks for substantial amounts in early 2001,[\[33\]](#) for which he was [deported](#). CAIR [claimed](#) Khafagi was hired only after he had committed his crimes and that the organization was unaware of his wrongdoing.[\[34\]](#) But that is unconvincing, for a cursory background check reveals that Khafagi was a [founding member](#) and president of the Islamic Assembly of North America (IANA),[\[35\]](#) an organization under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice for terrorism-related activities. CAIR surely knew that IANA under Khafagi was in the business of, as [prosecutors stated](#) in Idaho court papers, disseminating "radical Islamic ideology, the purpose of which was indoctrination, recruitment of members, and the instigation of acts of violence and terrorism."[\[36\]](#)

For example, IANA [websites](#) promoted the views of two Saudi preachers, Salman al-Awdah and Safar al-Hawali, well-known in Islamist circles for having been spiritual advisors to Osama bin Laden.[\[37\]](#) Under Khafagi's leadership, Matthew Epstein has

[testified](#), IANA hosted a conference at which a senior Al-Qaeda recruiter, Abdelrahman al-Dosari, was a speaker.[\[38\]](#) IANA disseminated [publications advocating suicide attacks](#) against the United States, according to federal investigators.[\[39\]](#)

Also, Khafagi was co-owner of a Sir Speedy printing franchise until 1998 with Rafil Dhafir, who was a former vice president of IANA and a Syracuse-area oncologist [convicted](#) in February 2005 of illegally sending money to Iraq during the Saddam Hussein regime as well as defrauding donors by using contributions to his "Help the Needy" charitable fund to avoid taxes and to purchase personal assets for himself. Dhafir was [sentenced](#) to twenty-two years in prison.[\[40\]](#)

[Rabih Haddad](#), a CAIR fundraiser, was arrested in December 2001 on terrorism-related charges and deported from the United States due to his subsequent work as executive director of the Global Relief Foundation, a charity he cofounded[\[41\]](#) which was [designated](#) by the U.S. Treasury Department in October 2002 for financing Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.[\[42\]](#)

[Siraj Wahhaj](#), a CAIR advisory board member, was named in 1995 by U.S. attorney Mary Jo White as a possible unindicted coconspirator in the plot to blow up New York City landmarks led by the blind sheikh, Omar Abdul Rahman. In defense of having Wahhaj on its advisory board, CAIR [described](#) him as "one of the most respected Muslim leaders in America."[\[43\]](#) In October 2004, he [spoke at a CAIR dinner](#).

This roster of employees and board members connected to terrorism makes one wonder how CAIR remains an acceptable guest at U.S. government events—and even more so, how U.S. law enforcement agencies continue to associate with it.

### **Links to Hamas**

CAIR has a number of links to the terror organization Hamas, starting with the founder of its Texas chapter, Ghassan Elashi, as noted above.

Secondly, Elashi and another CAIR founder, Omar Ahmad, attended a key meeting in Philadelphia in 1993. An FBI memo characterizes this meeting as a planning session for Hamas, Holy Land Foundation, and Islamic Association of Palestine to find ways to disrupt Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy and raise money for Hamas in the United States.[\[44\]](#) The Philadelphia meeting was deemed such strong proof of Islamic Association of Palestine's relation to Hamas that a federal judge in Chicago in December 2004 ruled the Islamic Association of Palestine [partially liable for US\\$156 million in damages](#) (along with the Holy Land Foundation and Mohammad Salah, a Hamas operative)[\[45\]](#) for having aided and abetted the Hamas murder of David Boim, an American citizen.[\[46\]](#)

Third, CAIR's founding personnel were closely linked to the Islamic Association of Palestine, which was founded by Ibrahim Abu Marzook, a senior Hamas operative and husband of Elashi's cousin; according to [Epstein](#), the Islamic Association of Palestine functions as Hamas's public relations and recruitment arm in the United States.[\[47\]](#) The

two individuals who established CAIR, [Ahmad](#) and [Nihad Awad](#), had been, respectively, the president and public relations director of the Islamic Association of Palestine. Hooper, CAIR's director of communications, [had been an employee of the Islamic Association of Palestine.](#)<sup>[48]</sup> Rafeeq Jabar, president of the Islamic Association of Palestine, was a founding director of CAIR.

Fourth, the Holy Land Foundation, which the U.S. government has charged with funneling funds to Hamas, provided CAIR with some of its start-up funding in 1994. (See \$5,000 money transfer, figure 1.) In the other direction, [according to Joe Kaufman](#), CAIR sent potential donors to the Holy Land Foundation's website when they clicked on their post-September 11 weblink, "Donate to the NY/DC Disaster Relief Fund."<sup>[49]</sup>

Fifth, Awad publicly declared his enthusiasm for Hamas at Barry University in Florida in 1994: "I'm in support of Hamas movement more than the PLO." As an attorney pointed out in the course of deposing Awad for the Boim case, Awad both supported Hamas and acknowledged an awareness of its involvement in violence.<sup>[50]</sup>

### **Impeding Counterterrorism**

A class-action [lawsuit](#) brought by the estate of John P. O'Neill, Sr. charges CAIR and its Canadian branch of being, since their inception, "part of the criminal conspiracy of radical Islamic terrorism" with a unique role in the terrorist network:

both organizations have actively sought to hamper governmental anti-terrorism efforts by direct propaganda activities aimed at police, first-responders, and intelligence agencies through so-called sensitivity training. Their goal is to create as much self-doubt, hesitation, fear of name-calling, and litigation within police departments and intelligence agencies as possible so as to render such authorities ineffective in pursuing international and domestic terrorist entities.<sup>[51]</sup>

It would be hard to improve on this characterization; under the guise of participating in counterterrorism, CAIR does its best to impede these efforts. This approach can be seen from its statements.

CAIR encourages law enforcement in its work—so long as it does not involve counterterrorism. Wissam Nasr, the head of CAIR's New York office, [explains](#): "The Muslim community in New York wants to play a positive role in protecting our nation's security, but that role is made more difficult if the FBI is perceived as pursuing suspects much more actively than it is searching for community partners." <sup>[52]</sup> Nasr would have the FBI get out of the unpleasant business of "pursuing suspects" and instead devote itself to building social good will—through CAIR, naturally.

Likewise, on the eve of the U.S. war with Iraq in March 2003, CAIR distributed a "[Muslim community safety kit](#)" that advised Muslims to "Know your rights if contacted by the FBI." It tells them specifically, "You have no obligation to talk to the FBI, even if you are not a citizen. ... You do not have to permit them to enter your home. ...

ALWAYS have an attorney present when answering questions." On the other hand, when it comes to protecting Muslims, CAIR wants an active FBI. The same "Muslim community safety kit" advised: "If you believe you have been the victim of an anti-Muslim hate crime or discrimination, you should: 1. Report the incident to your local police station and FBI office IMMEDIATELY."[\[53\]](#) In January 2006, CAIR joined a lawsuit against the National Security Agency demanding that the U.S. intelligence agency cease monitoring communications with suspected Islamist terrorists. Part of its complaints concerned a belief that the U.S. government monitored its communications with Rabih Haddad, the suspected Al-Qaeda financier who has since moved to Lebanon.[\[54\]](#) Upon learning that CAIR was a fellow plaintiff in the suit, political writer Christopher Hitchens said, "I was revolted to see who I was in company with. CAIR is a lot to swallow."[\[55\]](#)

Finally, CAIR [discourages](#) Americans from improving their counterterrorism skills. [Deedra Abboud, CAIR's Arizona director, approves](#) of police learning the Arabic language if that lowers the chances of cultural and linguistic misunderstandings. "However, if they're learning it in order to better fight terrorism, that concerns me. Only because that assumes that the only fighting we have to do is among Arabic speakers. That's not a long-term strategy."[\[56\]](#)

### **Apologizing for Islamist Terrorism**

CAIR has consistently shown itself to be on the wrong side of the war on terrorism, protecting, defending, and supporting both accused and even convicted radical Islamic terrorists.

In October 1998—months after Osama bin Laden had issued his [first declaration of war](#) against the United States and had been named as the chief suspect in the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa—CAIR [demanded](#) the removal of a Los Angeles billboard describing Osama bin Laden as "the sworn enemy," finding this depiction offensive to Muslims. CAIR also leapt to bin Laden's defense, denying his responsibility for the twin East African embassy bombings. CAIR's Hooper saw these explosions resulting from "misunderstandings of both sides."[\[57\]](#) Even after the September 11 atrocity, CAIR continued to protect bin Laden, stating only that "if [note the "if"] Osama bin Laden was behind it, we condemn him by name."[\[58\]](#) Not until December 2001, when bin Laden on videotape boasted of his involvement in the attack, did CAIR finally acknowledge his role.

CAIR has also consistently defended other radical Islamic terrorists. Rather than praise the conviction of the perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, it deemed this "a travesty of justice."[\[59\]](#) It labeled the extradition order for suspected Hamas terrorist Mousa Abu Marzook "anti-Islamic" and "anti-American."[\[60\]](#) CAIR has [co-sponsored](#) Yvonne Ridley, the British convert to Islam who became a Taliban enthusiast and a denier that Al-Qaeda was involved in 9-11.[\[61\]](#) When four U.S. civilian contractors in Falluja were (in CAIR's words) "ambushed in their SUV's, burned, mutilated, dragged through the streets, and then hung from a bridge spanning the Euphrates River," CAIR

issued a press release that condemned the mutilation of the corpses but stayed conspicuously silent on the actual killings.[62]

During the 2005 [trial of Sami Al-Arian](#), accused of heading Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the United States, Ahmed Bedier of CAIR's Florida branch emerged as Al-Arian's effective spokesman, providing sound bytes to the media, trying to get his trial moved out of Tampa, commenting on the jury selection, and so on.[63]

More broadly, [TheReligionofPeace.com](#) website pointed out that "of the more than 3100 fatal Islamic terror attacks committed in the last four years, we have only seen CAIR specifically condemn 18." [64]

### **Ties to Extremists, Left and Right**

The Council on American-Islamic Relations has affinities to extremists of both the left and right, sharing features with both. Its extensive ties to far-left groups include funding from the [Tides Foundation](#) for its "Interfaith Coalition against Hate Crimes"; [65] endorsing a [statement](#) issued by [Refuse & Resist](#) [66] and a "[National Day of Protest ... to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation.](#)" [67] CAIR [supported](#) the "[Civil Liberties Restoration Act](#)," legislation drafted by [Open Society Policy Center](#), an organization founded by George Soros that would obstruct U.S. law enforcement from prosecuting the "War on Extremism." Far-left members of Congress such as Dennis Kucinich (Democrat, Ohio) and Jim McDermott (Democrat, Washington) have turned up as [featured speakers](#) at CAIR fundraising events.

Its neo-Nazi side came out most clearly in CAIR's early years. In 1996, according to testimony by Steven Emerson, Yusuf Islam—the Muslim convert formerly known as the singer Cat Stevens—gave a keynote speech at a CAIR event. The contents of the speech itself are not known but Islam wrote a pamphlet published by the Islamic Association of Palestine, CAIR's stepparent, which included these sentences:

The Jews seem neither to respect God nor his Creation. Their own holy books contain the curse of God brought upon them by their prophets on account of their disobedience to Him and mischief in the earth. We have seen the disrespect for religion displayed by those who consider themselves to be "God's Chosen People." [68]

In 1998, CAIR co-hosted an event at which an Egyptian Islamist leader, Wagdi Ghunaym, declared Jews to be the "descendants of the apes." [69]

CAIR continues to expose its fascistic side by its repeated activities with William W. Baker, [exposed](#) as a neo-Nazi in March 2002. [70] Even after that date, CAIR invited Baker to speak at several events, for example in [Florida on August 12, 2003](#) [71] and [New Jersey on October 18, 2003.](#) [72] CAIR liked Baker's work so much, it used the title of his book, *More in Common Than You Think*, in one of its [ad campaigns](#) in March 2004 and as the title of an [Elderhostel lecture.](#) [73]

## Foreign Funding

According to filed copies of its annual Internal Revenue Service Form 990, CAIR's U.S. chapters have more than doubled their combined revenues from the \$2.5 million they recorded in 2000 to \$5.6 million in 2002, though the number dipped slightly to \$5.3 million in 2003, the most recent year for which figures are available. That CAIR has recorded at least \$3.1 million on its year-end combined balance sheets since 2001, combined with its minimal grant-making (\$27,525 was the total that all CAIR chapters granted in 2003), suggests that CAIR is building an endowment and planning for the long term.

The Internal Revenue Service filings claim that the bulk of its funds come from "direct public support"<sup>[74]</sup> and its website [explicitly denies](#) that CAIR receives support from foreign sources: "We do not support directly or indirectly, or receive support from, any overseas group or government."<sup>[75]</sup> However, this denial is flatly untrue, for CAIR has accepted foreign funding, and from many sources.<sup>[76]</sup>

A [press release](#) from the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington indicates that in August 1999, the Islamic Development Bank—a bank headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia—gave CAIR \$250,000 to purchase land for its Washington, D.C. headquarters.<sup>[77]</sup> CAIR's decision to accept Islamic Development Bank funding is unfortunate, given the bank's role as [fund manager](#) of the Al-Quds and the Al-Aqsa Funds, established by twelve Arab countries in order to fund the Palestinian *intifada* and provide financial support to the families of Palestinian "martyrs."<sup>[78]</sup>

According to records [made public](#) by Paul Sperry, CAIR purchased its national headquarters in 1999 through an unusual lease-purchase transaction with the United Bank of Kuwait.<sup>[79]</sup> The bank was the deed holder and leased the building to CAIR; yet despite not owning the building, CAIR [recorded](#) the property on its balance sheet as a property asset valued at \$2.6 million.<sup>[80]</sup> This arrangement changed in September 2002 when CAIR bought out the Kuwaiti bank with funds provided, at least in part, by Al-Maktoum Foundation, based in Dubai and headed by Dubai's crown prince and defense minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum. The [markings on the deed](#) indicate that the foundation provided "purchase money to the extent of \$978,031.34" to CAIR, or roughly one-third the value of the property.<sup>[81]</sup> One only wonders what a more complete investigation of its real estate transactions would turn up.

In December 1999, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), an organization benefiting from Saudi patronage,<sup>[82]</sup> announced at a press conference in Saudi Arabia that it "was extending both moral and financial support to CAIR"<sup>[83]</sup> to help it construct its \$3.5 million headquarters in Washington, D.C. WAMY also agreed to "introduce CAIR to Saudi philanthropists and recommend their financial support for the headquarters project."<sup>[84]</sup> In 2002, CAIR and WAMY announced, again from Saudi Arabia, their cooperation on a \$1 million public relations campaign. The [Saudi Gazette](#), which reported the story, said that CAIR's leader, Nihad Awad, "had already met leading Saudi businessmen" in order to "brief them about the projects and raise funds."<sup>[85]</sup>

Later that week on the same fundraising trip through the Middle East, CAIR [reportedly](#) received \$500,000 from Saudi prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, reputed to be one of the world's richest men.[\[86\]](#) Waleed also, in May 2005, [stated](#) that he is "more than prepared" to work with organizations such as CAIR, "and to provide needed support" to them.[\[87\]](#)

CAIR has received at least \$12,000 from the International Relief Organization (also called the International Islamic Relief Organization, or IIRO), which itself was the recipient of some \$10 million from its parent organization in Saudi Arabia. (See a 1994 check from the IIRO for \$5,000, figure 2.) The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) gave CAIR's Washington office \$14,000 in 2003. According to a court-filed [affidavit](#), David Kane of the U.S. Customs Service determined that the IIIT receives donations from overseas via its related entities.[\[88\]](#) Law enforcement is looking at the IIIT connection with [Operation Green Quest](#), the major investigation into the activities of individuals and organizations believed to be "ardent supporters" of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and Al-Qaeda.[\[89\]](#) CAIR, not surprisingly, criticized the probe of its donor, telling the *Financial Times* of London that the investigation is an attack on "respected Islamic institutions."[\[90\]](#)

Despite these many foreign sources, CAIR still claims to receive no funds from outside the United States.

### **An Integral Part of the Wahhabi Lobby**

CAIR has a key role in the "[Wahhabi lobby](#)"—the network of organizations, usually supported by donations from Saudi Arabia, whose aim is to propagate the especially extreme version of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia. For one, it sends money to other parts of the lobby. According to CAIR's [Form 990 filings for 2003](#), its California offices invested \$325,000 with the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).[\[91\]](#) The NAIT was [established in 1971](#) by the Muslim Student Association of the U.S. and Canada, which [bills itself](#) as the precursor to the Islamic Society of North America,[\[92\]](#) now the largest member of the Wahhabi lobby. According to *Newsweek*, authorities say that over the years "NAIT money has helped the Saudi Arabian sect of Wahhabism—or Salafism, as the broader, pan-Islamic movement is called—to seize control of hundreds of mosques in U.S. Muslim communities."[\[93\]](#) J. Michael Waller, a terrorism expert, [testified](#) before the Senate Judiciary Committee that NAIT is believed to own 50 to 79 percent of the mosques in North America. According to Waller, NAIT was raided as part of Operation Green Quest in 2002, on suspicions of involvement in terrorist financing.[\[94\]](#)

CAIR affiliates regularly speak at events sponsored by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), an umbrella organization of the Wahhabi lobby. Nabil Sadoun, a [director of CAIR-DC](#), spoke at the ISNA's [regional conference](#) in 2003. Hussam Ayloush, executive director of CAIR's Southern California chapter, and Fouad Khatib, the [CAIR-California chairman](#), spoke at an [ISNA-sponsored event](#).[\[95\]](#) Safaa Zarzour, president of CAIR-Chicago, was also an [ISNA speaker](#), as was Azhar Azeez, a board member of CAIR-Dallas, who has spoken at several ISNA conferences.[\[96\]](#)

In January 2003, the Saudi newspaper [Ar-Riyadh reported](#) that Nihad Awad appeared on a panel along with 'Aqil ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Aqil, secretary-general of the Saudi charity Al-Haramain Foundation[97]—despite that organization's well-known ties to terrorism and the fact that already in March 2002, long before Awad's visit with Al-Haramain, the U.S. and Saudi governments had jointly [designated](#) eleven of its branches "financial supporter[s] of terrorism." [98] The U.S.-based branch of the organization was also subsequently [designated](#) in September 2004. [99]

To fully appreciate what it means that more than half of U.S. mosques are promoting Saudi Islam, we refer to the Freedom House report, "[Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques](#)." It explains that Saudi documents disseminated at U.S. mosques are telling America's Muslims that it is a religious obligation for them to hate Christians and Jews and warning that Muslims should not have Christians and Jews as friends, nor should they help them. [100]

The Freedom House report indicates that Saudi publications disseminated by U.S. mosques: say it is lawful for Muslims to physically harm and steal from adulterers and homosexuals; condemn interpretations of Islam other than the strict "Wahhabi" version preached in Saudi Arabia; advocate the killing of those who convert out of Islam; assert that it is a Muslim's duty to eliminate the State of Israel; and promote the idea that women should be segregated and veiled and, of course, barred from some employment and activities. [101] But not to worry; CAIR's spokesman, [Ibrahim Hooper, tells us](#), "The majority of the stuff they picked is in Arabic, a language that most people in mosques don't read." [102]

### **Muslim Supremacism**

CAIR's personnel are normally tight-lipped about the organization's agenda but sometimes let their ambitions slip out. CAIR's long-serving chairman, Omar Ahmad, [reportedly](#) told a crowd of California Muslims in July 1998, "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Koran ... should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on earth." [103] Five years later, Ahmad denied having said this and issued a [press release](#) saying he was seeking a retraction. [104] But the reporter stood behind her story, and the newspaper that reported Ahmad's remarks told [WorldNetDaily](#) it had "not been contacted by CAIR." [105]

In 1993, before CAIR existed, Ibrahim Hooper told a reporter: "I wouldn't want to create the impression that I wouldn't like the government of the United States to be Islamic sometime in the future." [106] On the Michael Medved radio show in 2003, Hooper made the same point more positively: if Muslims ever become a majority in the United States, it would be safe to assume that they would want to replace the U.S. Constitution with Islamic law, as most Muslims believe that God's law is superior to man-made law. [107]

Other CAIR personnel also express their contempt for the United States. Ihsan Bagby of [CAIR's Washington office](#) has said that Muslims "can never be full citizens of this country," referring to the United States, "because there is no way we can be fully

committed to the institutions and ideologies of this country." [108] Ayloush [said](#) that the war on terror has become a "war on Muslims" with the U.S. government the "new Saddam." He concluded: "So let's end this hypocrisy, this hypocrisy that we are better than the other dictator." [109]

In a bizarre coda, Parvez Ahmed, the current CAIR chairman, touted the virtues of Islamic democracy in 2004 by portraying the Afghan constitutional process as superior to the U.S. one:

The new Afghan constitution shows that the constitution of a Muslim nation can be democratic and yet not contradict the essence of Islam. During my meeting with a high-ranking Afghan delegation during their recent visit to the United States, I was told that the Afghan constitutional convention included Hindu delegates despite Hindus accounting for only 1 percent of the population. Contrast this with our own constitutional convention that excluded women and blacks. [110]

### **Intimidation**

CAIR attempts to close down public debate about itself and Islam in several ways, starting with a [string of lawsuits](#) against public and private individuals and several publications. [111] CAIR's [Rabiah Ahmed](#) has openly acknowledged that lawsuits are increasingly an "instrument" for it to use. [112]

In addition, CAIR has resorted to financial pressure in an effort to silence critics. One such case concerns ABC radio personality Paul Harvey, who on December 4, 2003, [described](#) the vicious nature of cock fighting in Iraq, then commented: "Add to the [Iraqi] thirst for blood, a religion which encourages killing, and it is entirely understandable if Americans came to this bloody party unprepared." [113] [CAIR responded a day later](#) with a demand for "an on-air apology." CAIR then issued a call to its supporters to contact Harvey's advertising sponsors to press them to pull their ads "until Harvey responds to Muslim concerns." [114] Although Harvey quickly and publicly retracted his remarks, CAIR [continued its campaign](#) against him.

Another case of financial intimidation took place in March 2005, when CAIR campaigned to have *National Review* remove two books—Serge Trifkovic's [The Sword of the Prophet](#) [115] and J.L. Menezes' [The Life and Religion of Mohammed](#) [116]—as well as the positive reviews of those books, from its on-line bookstore. CAIR claimed the books defame Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. When it did not get immediate satisfaction from *National Review*, it instructed its partisans to pressure the Boeing Corporation to withdraw its advertisements from the magazine. *National Review* briefly took down both books but then quickly reposted the one by Trifkovic. Trifkovic himself [argued](#) that CAIR's success here "will only whet Islamist appetites and encourage their hope that the end-result will be a crescent on the Capitol a generation or two from now." [117]

CAIR resorted to another form of intimidation versus Florida radio show host and Baptist pastor Mike Frazier. Frazier had criticized local and state officials in September 2004 for attending a CAIR awards dinner because, as he put it, "If these people would have bothered to check CAIR out beforehand they would have seen that it is a radical group." He termed what followed "absolutely unbelievable." Within a month, he says he received six death threats and forty-seven threatening phone calls, was accosted by strangers, was labeled an "extremist" and a "fundamentalist zealot," and accused of "propagating fear, terror and disunity" by the *St. Petersburg Times*. Several members of his church fled his congregation because, [according to Frazier](#), "they were afraid."[\[118\]](#)

Other CAIR targets of intimidation have included the [Simon Wiesenthal Center](#) for juxtaposing a picture of the Ayatollah Khomeini next to Adolf Hitler,[\[119\]](#) and the [Reader's Digest](#) for an article, "The Global War on Christians,"[\[120\]](#) which CAIR found "smears Islam" by citing well-documented cases of Christian persecution. CAIR's Nihad Awad faulted the *Reader's Digest* for leaving the impression that "Islam somehow encourages or permits rape, kidnapping, torture, and forced conversion."[\[121\]](#)

In December 2003, CAIR [ruined the career](#) of an army officer and nurse, Captain Edwina McCall, who had treated American soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan but ended up resigning under a cloud of suspicion. Her crime? Using her military e-mail address on an Internet discussion board concerning the Islamist agenda. CAIR sent the comments to the secretary of defense, calling attention to her allegedly "bigoted anti-Muslim comments" and demanding that her "extremist and Islamophobic views" be investigated and then followed by "appropriate action." The Army immediately cast the officer under suspicion, leading her to resign from a career she had loved.[\[122\]](#)

At times, CAIR inspires its attack dogs to make threats and sits back when they follow through. After Daniel Pipes [published an article in July 1999](#) explaining the difference between moderate and radical Islam,[\[123\]](#) CAIR launched fifteen separate attacks on him in the space of two months, attacks widely reprinted in Muslim publications. [Dozens of letters followed](#) to the newspapers that carried Pipes' articles, some calling him harsh names ("bigot and racist"), others comparing him to the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, or characterizing his writings as an "atrocious" filled with "pure poison" and "outright lies." More alarmingly, the letter-writers accused the author of perpetrating a hate crime against Muslims or of promoting and abetting such crimes. One threatened: "Is Pipes ready to answer the Creator for his hatred or is he a secular humanist ...? He will soon find out."[\[124\]](#)

CAIR metes out even worse treatment to Muslim opponents, as the case of [Khalid Durán](#) shows. Durán taught at leading universities and wrote about Islam for think tanks; he was commissioned by the American Jewish Committee to write *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Islam for Jews*. Fourteen scholars of Islam endorsed the manuscript prior to publication; it won glowing reviews from such authoritative figures as Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, the eminent church historian Martin Marty, and Prince Hassan of Jordan. Then, before the book was even released, CAIR issued two press releases insulting Durán personally and demanding that the *Children of Abraham* be

withheld until a group of CAIR-approved academics could review the book to correct what it assumed (without having read the manuscript) would be its "stereotypical or inaccurate content." Islamist publications quickly picked up CAIR's message, with Cairo's *Al-Wafd* newspaper announcing that Durán's book "spreads anti-Muslim propaganda" through its "distortions of Islamic concepts." A weekly in Jordan reported that 'Abd al-Mun'im Abu Zant—one of that country's most powerful Islamist leaders—had declared that Durán "should be regarded as an apostate," and on this basis called for an Islamic ruling to condone Durán's death. Days later, Durán's car was broken into, and a dead squirrel and excrement were thrown inside. CAIR, far from apologizing for the evil results of its handiwork, accused the American Jewish Committee of fabricating the death edict as a "cheap publicity stunt to boost book sales."[\[125\]](#)

## Deceit

CAIR has a long record of unreliability and deceit even in relatively minor matters. To begin with, it has the audacity to claim to be "[America's largest civil rights group](#),"[\[126\]](#) ignoring much larger groups by far, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Anti-Defamation League.

In May 2005, CAIR published its [annual report](#) on the violations of Muslim civil rights in America which purported to document a significant rise in the number of hate crimes directed at Muslims. According to the report, "anti-Muslim hate crimes in the United States" have gone up dramatically: from 42 cases in 2002, to 93 cases in 2003, to 141 in 2004.[\[127\]](#) The mainstream media dutifully recycled CAIR's [press release](#), effectively endorsing this study by reporting it as a serious piece of research.[\[128\]](#) But closer inspection [shows](#) that of twenty "anti-Muslim hate crimes" for which CAIR gives information, at least six are invalid.[\[129\]](#)

David Skinner [points out](#) a further problem with the 2004 report: its credulity in reporting any incident, no matter how trivial, subjective or unsubstantiated. One anecdote concerns a Muslim college student who encountered "flyers and posters with false and degrading statements about the Qur'an and the prophet Muhammad"; another concerns a student at Roger Williams in Rhode Island who wrote that "a true Muslim is taught to slay infidels." Also, any reluctance to accommodate Muslim women wearing a headscarf or veil was tallied as a bias incident, even in the case of genuine quandaries (such as veiled athletes or drivers applying for their licenses).[\[130\]](#)

Nor is this the first unreliable CAIR study. Referring to the 1996 version, Steven Emerson noted in congressional testimony that "a large proportion of the complaints have been found to be fabricated, manufactured, distorted, or outside standard definitions of hate crimes."[\[131\]](#) Jorge Martinez of the U.S. Department of Justice [dismissed](#) CAIR's 2003 report, *Guilt by Association*, as "unfair criticism based on a lot of misinformation and propaganda."[\[132\]](#)

CAIR's manipulative habits assert themselves even in petty ways. For example, CAIR is not above [conducting straw polls](#) in an [effort](#) to forward its political agenda and may even

be willing to [exaggerate](#) its own outreach efforts. This [seems to be the case](#) in CAIR's library project, where it claims to have sent thousands of packages of books and tapes to American libraries. An inquiry turned up the curious fact that while CAIR claimed the District of Columbia had received thirty-seven such packages, records showed only one such copy being recorded.[\[133\]](#) Maybe the mailmen lost the remaining thirty-six?

In September 2005, CAIR indulged in some Stalinist revisionism: as Robert Spencer [revealed](#), CAIR doctored a photo on its website to make it more Islamically correct by manually adding a *hijab* onto a Muslim woman.[\[134\]](#) Despite all this, CAIR's statements continue to gain the respectful attention of uncritical media outlets.

### **The Establishment's Failure**

The few hard-hitting media analyses of CAIR generally [turn up in the conservative press](#).[\[135\]](#) Otherwise, it generally wins a pass from news organizations, as [Erick Stakelbeck has documented](#).[\[136\]](#) The mainstream media treat CAIR respectfully, as a legitimate organization, avoiding the less salutary topics explored here, even the multiple connections to terrorism.

One telling example of the media's negligence in investigating CAIR occurred when Ghassan Elashi—a founding board member of CAIR's Texas chapter—was indicted and convicted of supporting terrorism by sending money to Hamas and Mousa Abu Marzook. Reporting on this, not one single mainstream media source mentioned Elashi's CAIR connection. Worse, the media went to CAIR and quoted it on Elashi's arrest, without noting their close connection.[\[137\]](#)

*The Washington Post* seems particularly loath to expose CAIR's unsavory aspects. For example, on January 20, 2005, it ran a story about [the opening of CAIR's new Virginia office on Grove Street in Herndon](#). The article not only passed up the opportunity to consider CAIR's presence in a town notorious for Islamist organizational connections to [Al-Qaeda](#) and to the Wahhabi network,[\[138\]](#) but it was also remarkably similar in tone and style to [CAIR's own press release](#) on the same subject.[\[139\]](#) (A later [Washington Post article](#) did mention that the new CAIR offices are located on the very street where federal agents had conducted a major raid in March 2002.[\[140\]](#))

There is much else for the press to look into. One example: CAIR-DC lists the Zahara Investment Corporation as a "related organization" on its IRS Form 990. Curiously, Zahara Investment Corporation was listed as a tax-exempt entity in 2002; in 2003, it became a non-tax-exempt entity.[\[141\]](#) This prompts several questions: how is a tax-exempt like CAIR related to an investment company, much less a corporation? How does an investment corporation become a tax-exempt? And how does it change itself into a non-exempt? And why did CAIR-DC invest \$40,000 of the public's money in 1998 in securities that it would have to write off less than three years later? Whose securities were these? The usual databases have nothing on Zahara Investment Corporation; all this took place under the radar screen.

That the U.S. government, the mainstream media, educational institutions, and others have given CAIR a free pass amounts to a dereliction of duty. Yet, there appear to be no signs of change. How long will it be until the establishment finally recognizes CAIR for what it is and denies it mainstream legitimacy?

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