



NEWS

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American Muslims speak out against the enforcement of shari‘ah law in America
Islamic Coalition announces support for Michigan legislation that will bar state courts from enforcing ‘foreign law’ above U.S. and state constitution

Washington, DC (September 7, 2011) – A coalition of diverse American Muslim leaders has announced support for a proposed bill in the Michigan State Assembly, HB 4679, that is intended to bar Michigan courts from enforcing any foreign law, if doing so violates any rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and/or the state of Michigan’s constitution.

Like many Americans, members of the [American Islamic Leadership Coalition \(AILC\)](#) have been observing the efforts of a growing number of state legislatures, which are seeking to address the incompatibility of various shari‘ah court systems around the world with the principles and foundations of our Constitutional republic and its laws. As American Muslims, we believe that the law should treat people of all faiths equally, while protecting Muslims and non-Muslims alike from extremist attempts to use the legal instrument of shari‘ah (also known as Islamic jurisprudence, or *fiqh*) to incubate, within the West, a highly politicized and dangerous understanding of Islam that is generally known as “Islamism,” or “radical Islam.”

We see no evidence that statutes like HB 4769 will adversely impact the free exercise of our personal pietistic observance of Islam, which is not in conflict with the U.S. or Michigan constitutions. We recognize that not only Muslims, but also Jews, Christians and all people of faith need the government to protect their right to peaceful assembly, mediation and arbitration free of coercion, but also within the bounds of American constitutional principles. Therefore, we stand together as a diverse coalition in support of any legislation that serves to protect and integrate our communities into the fabric of this great nation, by strengthening our accountability to the laws of the land, and the constitutions of the various states in which we live.

As American Muslims we are conscious of the fact that Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups and other Islamists and their surrogates in the U.S. are trying their best to portray any opposition to manifestations of shari‘ah law as “racism” and “discrimination against Muslims.” However, as a coalition of traditional, liberal and secular Muslim Americans, we denounce this fear-mongering and playing of the race card, which only serves to mask the Islamists’ highly politicized agenda. According to AILC member C. Holland Taylor, “the Islamist agenda threatens not only the well-being of the United States and its inhabitants, but also undermines and distorts the highest principles of Islam itself.”

“Michigan House Bill 4769 seeks to ensure that American Muslims can live in freedom and safety, in accordance with our constitutional principles, and not be enveloped by the tentacles of medieval, man-made laws that have been falsely accorded divine status,” said the AILC.

“To equate Bill 4769 to racism is not only dishonest, but is a poor and clumsy attempt at making ordinary Muslim Americans feel alien in their own homeland, while creating a rift between Muslims and the rest of our country,” said AILC member Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser.

Michigan House Bill 4769 states:

“[To] ...limit the application and enforcement by a court, arbitrator, or administrative body of foreign laws that would impair constitutional rights; to provide for modification or voiding of certain contractual provisions or agreements that would result in a violation of constitutional rights; and to require a court, arbitrator, or administrative body to take certain actions to prevent violation of constitutional rights.”

The AILC statement reinforces the American Muslim community's commitment to the First Amendment's Establishment Clause and the separation between religion and state. Unfortunately, Islamist groups would like to compromise this separation and provide cover to medieval, misogynistic and homophobic laws that no Muslim is obligated to demand as public law.

“Shari‘ah law, wherever it has been applied in the public domain, be it in Iran, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, has resulted in untold misery and oppression of Muslims, in particular Muslim women, by Islamists and dictators who invoke shari‘ah law to justify their rule,” said AILC member Manda Ervin. “Many of us fled the Muslim world to escape shari‘ah law and to practice Islam in our personal lives, by moving to the USA and other western countries. We do not wish these laws to follow us here,” she concluded.

The Michigan state senators are not alone in expressing concern about foreign laws creeping into North America under the guise of religious freedom. Many Muslim academics, religious scholars and human rights activists have voiced their concern.

The contrast between what has occurred in Britain and in Canada provides a roadmap for how the U.S. may address these legal issues. In Britain, shari‘ah arbitration courts have been allowed to assume virtually unchecked control of legal arrangements in many Muslim communities. This is creating a ghettoized, medieval and separatist state within Britain. In Canada, however, local Muslims led strong opposition to the Islamists' shari‘ah agenda and were successful in preventing its implementation, thereby sparing our Northern neighbor the fate of so many Muslims in the United Kingdom, where women are commonly subjected to forced marriage and the denial of basic human rights.

“We Muslims in Canada defeated an attempt by Islamists to sneak shari‘ah law into Ontario,” said AILC member Tarek Fatah, who has been on the front lines of this struggle for many years. “We recognized the damage shari‘ah had inflicted on Muslims in the UK, and its oppressive nature in Muslim-majority countries, and decided to oppose it. We urge American Muslims not to succumb to the Islamists' propaganda, and to back the Michigan Bill, which will protect Muslims and non-Muslims alike from the impact of foreign laws that violate the U.S. or Michigan constitutions.”

About the American Islamic Leadership Coalition (AILC)

The American Islamic Leadership Coalition (AILC) is a diverse coalition of liberty-minded, North American Muslim leaders and organizations. AILC's mission advocates for defending the US Constitution, upholding religious pluralism, protecting American security and cherishing genuine diversity in the faith and practice of Islam. AILC provides a stark alternative to the Islamist organizations that claim to speak for what are diverse American Muslim communities. For more information on AILC, please visit our website at <http://www.americanislamicleadership.org/>.

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