

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2009

The Honorable Keith Ellison
U.S. House of Representatives
1122 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Ellison,

We understand that you plan to visit Arizona on September 18, 2009 to speak at the Arizona chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations' (CAIR) annual fundraising banquet titled "A New Era of Hope: Fueling America's Promise." As Members of the Arizona delegation, we write to respectfully urge you to reconsider your decision to accept CAIR's invitation to speak at this event. We are deeply concerned that any official support for this organization would undermine the legitimate concerns of federal investigators about CAIR's relationship to foreign terrorist organizations.

It has been widely reported that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) cut all contacts with CAIR last year amid mounting concerns about the group's relationship with a Hamas-support network. As you know, Hamas was designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1995, making it illegal to provide support to it within the United States. Nevertheless, CAIR's questionable relationship with this network was exposed during the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) trial last year, when FBI Special Agent Lara Burns labeled CAIR as a front group for Hamas. In an April letter to Members of Congress, FBI Assistant Director Richard C. Powers explained that:

CAIR was named as an unindicted co-conspirator of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) in *United States v. Holy Land Foundation et al.* (Cr. No. 3:04-240-P(N.D.TX)). During that trial, evidence was introduced that demonstrated a relationship among CAIR, individual CAIR founders (including its current President Emeritus and its Executive Director) and the Palestine Committee. Evidence was also introduced that demonstrated a relationship between the Palestine Committee and HAMAS, which was designated as a terrorist organization in 1995. In light of that evidence, the FBI suspended all formal contacts between CAIR and the FBI¹.

¹ Letter from Richard C. Powers, FBI Assistant Director for Congressional Affairs, to U.S. Senator Jon Kyl. April 28, 2009.

Indeed, a government memorandum² confirmed Assistant Director Powers' assessment. It described in greater detail CAIR's relationship to Hamas and Hamas-affiliates, stating:

[T]he Court has entered into evidence a wide array of testimonial and documentary evidence expressly linking CAIR and its founders to the HLF and its principals; the Islamic Association for Palestine and its principals; the Palestine Committee in the United States, headed by Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzook; and the greater HAMAS-affiliated conspiracy described in the Government's case-in-chief.


According to James E. Finch, Special Agent in Charge of the Oklahoma City field office for the FBI, that office cancelled a meeting CAIR was participating in and cited CAIR's national leadership as the primary stumbling block to engaging with the local group. According to the letter, Finch said certain issues must be addressed by the national offices if CAIR wishes to pursue an outreach relationship with the FBI. In Powers' letter mentioned above, this position was reiterated. Powers wrote, "[U]ntil we can resolve whether there continues to be a connection between CAIR or its executives and HAMAS, the FBI does not view CAIR as an appropriate liaison partner."

As Members of the Arizona delegation, we strongly support engagement with the Muslim community and have appreciated the work of Dr. Zuhdi Jasser and the American Islamic Forum for Democracy in this regard. We recognize that there are many divergent views within the Muslim community and we urge you to take the time to meet with AIFD to learn more about what they are doing to support freedom and democracy. Unfortunately, CAIR Arizona has not been supportive of AIFD's interfaith efforts and even opposed a rally against terrorism entitled "Standing with Muslims Against Terrorism" on April 24, 2004 that AIFD sponsored in Arizona. With the anniversary of 9/11 less than a week behind us, we hope that you will stand with us in support of organizations that clearly renounce terrorism and are working for freedom and democracy.

As Members of Congress we are genuinely concerned about further support for CAIR and hope that you will reconsider speaking at its annual fundraising dinner in Arizona. We thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns and look forward to working with you to engage with Muslim organizations that clearly support democracy and freedom.

Sincerely,


TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress


JOHN SHADEGG
Member of Congress


JON KYL
United States Senator

² *USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al.*, 3:04-CR-240-G, Government's Memorandum In Opposition To Council On American -Islamic Relations' Motion For Leave To File A Brief *Amicus Curiae Instante* and *Amicus* Brief In Support Of The Unindicted Co-Conspirators' First and Fifth Amendment Rights.