SEAN HANNITY, CO-HOST: The middle name that was all but banned on the campaign trail will make a return appearance on inauguration day. On January 20 the president-elect has decided to be sworn in as Barack Hussein Obama.

Mr. Obama said of his decision, quote, “I think the tradition is that they use all three names, and I will follow the tradition, not trying to make a statement one way or the other.”

http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,467607,00.html
Over 100 Killed in Coordinated Terror Attacks
Some 200 Wounded, Westerners Taken Hostage as Gunmen Attack Mumbai, India
By RUSSELL GOLDMAN

Gunmen have killed at least 101 people, wounded 287 and are holding several Westerners hostage after a series of coordinated terrorist attacks Wednesday night against luxury hotels, tourist destinations and a train station in the Indian financial capital of Mumbai, Indian officials said.

Police battled the gunmen for hours after the first attacks began, A.N. Roy, a senior police officer, said.

“The terrorists have used automatic weapons and, in some places, grenades have been lobbed. The encounters are still going on and we are trying to overpower them,” Roy told the Associated Press.

Hours after the attacks began large flames and plumes of smoke were seen billowing from the Taj Mahal Hotel, one of the primary targets of their attacks and a local landmark built in 1903. There was no official word about how many people remained in the hotel. At the outset of the attacks, visitors were told to remain in their rooms and lock their doors.

As fighting continued into the early hours Thursday morning, officials said police had killed four suspects and arrested nine more.

Pradeep Indulkar, a senior official at the Maharashtra state Home Ministry said 101 people were killed and 287 injured. The
toll of dead and wounded had risen steadily since the attacks began. A little known group Deccan Mujahadeen sent messages to media outlets, Wednesday, claiming responsibility for the attacks. Mumbai has been the scene of previous terror attacks, often blamed on Muslim militants, including a series of blasts in July 2007 that killed 187 people.

Armed with AK-47 rifles and grenades, terrorists attacked Taj Mahal Palace and Oberoi hotels as well as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus station in southern Mumbai and Leopold’s restaurant, a Mumbai landmark.

“Me and my friend escaped down the fire exit, but I think they took some more people upstairs. They were trying to get to the roof. About 15 people, I think about half were foreigners. Two gunmen, young boys, maybe 20 to 25 years old. There was a lot of smoke, they came from the restaurant and they took us up the stairs,” witness Rakesh Patel told NDTV.

“They had bombs, there was something, there was a lot of smoke, I guess there were bombs of some sort, yeah. They wanted anyone with British or American passports. Say anyone who had an American or British passports, they wanted to know, so I guess they were after foreigners, yeah, I guess,” he said.

It was not clear at which hotel Patel was located, but local officials have confirmed foreign hostages were taken at both the Taj Mahal Palace and Oberoi hotels.

Officials also confirmed that India’s anti-terror chief Hemant Karkare was killed in a shooting with gunmen.

November 20, 2008
Al Qaeda’s Message: We Will Not Stop Waging Global War With Obama in the White House

By Walid Phares

While observers waited for the release of the “official” Al Qaeda position on the election of Barack Obama as the next President of the United States, seasoned experts on the Jihadist movement had little doubt about the substance of the main message. As I have outlined in my appearances on Arabic television channels since November 4, Usama bin Laden or his second in command, was expected to declare that their “Jihad” will continue despite the election of an African-American president and despite Obama’s intention to withdraw from Iraq. Ayman al-Zawahiri lived up to expectations on Wednesday in his latest message to his supporters and his enemies. His message? Even if the war ends in Iraq, the global war will continue everywhere.

Ayman al-Zawahiri/AP

The tape was expected to appear a couple weeks after the election because that’s how the terror group does things. First, Al Qaeda monitors the reaction from of the international community, both from the Arab and Muslim world and also from other Islamist authorities. The Bin Laden-Zawahiri style is to give the “last word,” like a Caliph would. The points raised in the tape were almost all predicted by experts familiar with the Jihadi-combat mind set: Although a new president was elected — one who would reverse some of Bush’s policies, the new president will also devise new
strategies to defeat Al Qaeda.

Zawahiri isn’t buying the version proposed by other anti-American critics of Washington’s War on Terror. Most of Europe’s left, the Arab authoritarian regimes, and the Islamist fundamentalist establishment have all welcomed the news of an Obama victory and are tailoring new proposals for the region’s future (of course to their advantage). But not Al Qaeda. That’s why this Zawahiri message is important. It is telling the world and allies that there will be no respite in the conflict.

Al Qaeda’s number two had to address the election of a black president of the United States because of the two massive changes this choice has brought to the Jihadist agenda: On the one hand, public opinion of Obama is very high internationally; on the other hand the president-elect is planning to withdraw from Iraq and forge ahead in Afghanistan. All this changes Al Qaeda’s game. Zawahiri’s tape had to address these “challenges” as pressure was mounting among Jihadists to deal with this election. Hence, the main points presented by the audio message are as follows:

1. The election of Obama is a Defeat to the United States in Iraq and a Victory to the Jihadists

In his tape Zawahiri congratulates the Muslim world:

On the American people’s admission of defeat in Iraq. Although the evidence of America’s defeat in Iraq appeared years ago, Bush and his administration continued to be stubborn and deny the brilliant midday sun. If Bush has achieved anything, it is in his transfer of America’s disaster and predicament to his successor. But the American people, by electing Obama, declared its anxiety and apprehension about the future towards which the policy of the likes of Bush is leading it, and so it decided to support someone calling for withdrawal from Iraq.

In Al Qaeda’s lexicon it is crucial to demonstrate to their
supporters that it is “their” actions (terror in Iraq) which convinced, if not intimidated, American voters into voting for Obama and against McCain. Zawahiri wants Al Qaeda to get credit for the behavior of America’s voting majority in the same way it took credit for the Madrid elections after the March 11, 2004 attacks.

2. A Warning to Obama: Don’t Send Additional Troops to Afghanistan

Zawahiri then sends a warning to President-elect Obama:

The second of these messages is to the new president of the United States. I tell him: you have reached the position of president, and a heavy legacy of failure and crimes awaits you. A failure in Iraq to which you have admitted, and a failure in Afghanistan to which the commanders of your army have admitted. The other thing to which I want to bring your attention is that what you’ve announced about how you’re going to reach an understanding with Iran and pull your troops out of Iraq to send them to Afghanistan is a policy which was destined for failure before it was born. It appears that you don’t know anything about the Muslim Ummah and its history, and the fate of the traitors who cooperated with the invaders against it, and don’t know anything about the history of Afghanistan and its free and defiant Muslim people. And if you still want to be stubborn about America’s failure in Afghanistan, then remember the fate of Bush and Pervez Musharraf, and the fate of the Soviets and British before them. And be aware that the dogs of Afghanistan have found the flesh of your soldiers to be delicious, so send thousands after thousands to them.

If victory has been achieved by the jihadists against the United States in Iraq by forcing the new administration to pull out of that country, in Zawahiri’s mind, another defeat awaits America in Afghanistan according to Al Qaeda’s latest message. The logic of endless Jihad seems to be that wherever
American forces would be sent, the jihadists will meet them for a fight until the US redeploy its contingents from around the world, back to “its borders” as previous Al Qaeda messages have underlined.

3. The Same U.S. Aggression Remains

Concerned about the sympathy emerging from around the world and within the Muslim community regarding the new president, Zawahiri reminds his Islamist followers that “crimes have been committed and the mentality that produced them is still around.” He doesn’t want to see a shift in public opinion towards a “nicer” America. He says:

As for the crimes of America which await you, it appears that you continue to be captive to the same criminal American mentality towards the world and towards the Muslims. The Muslim Ummah received with extreme bitterness your hypocritical statements to and stances towards Israel, which confirmed to the Ummah that you have chosen a stance of hostility to Islam and Muslims.

Clearly, Zawahiri is trying to draw red lines for the acceptance of Obama by the Arab and Muslim world. This audiotape is probably the prelude to a campaign by the jihadists to minimize Obama’s emergence and classify him as just “another US President, with a different face.”

4. You’re Not Real

Then Zawahiri begins the Jihadi deconstruction of Obama’s image. He declares:

You represent the direct opposite of honorable black Americans like Malik al-Shabazz, or Malcolm X (may Allah have mercy on him). You were born to a Muslim father, but you chose to stand in the ranks of the enemies of the Muslims, and pray the prayer of the Jews, although you claim to be Christian, in order to climb the rungs of leadership in America. And so you
promised to back Israel, and you threatened to strike the tribal regions in Pakistan, and to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan, in order for the crimes of the American Crusade in it to continue. And last Monday, your aircraft killed 40 Afghan Muslims at a wedding party in Kandahar. As for Malik al-Shabazz (may Allah have mercy on him), he was born to a black pastor killed by white bigots, but Allah favored him with guidance to Islam, and so he prided himself on his fraternity with the Muslims, and he condemned the crimes of the Crusader West against the weak and oppressed, and he declared his support for peoples resisting American occupation, and he spoke about the worldwide revolution against the Western power structure. That’s why it wasn’t strange that Malik al-Shabazz (may Allah have mercy on him) was killed, while you have climbed the rungs of the presidency to take over the leadership of the greatest criminal force in the history of mankind and the leadership of the most violent Crusade ever against the Muslims. And in you and in Colin Powell, Rice and your likes, the words of Malcolm X (may Allah have mercy on him) concerning “House Negroes” are confirmed.

Zawahiri’s words are strong and are aimed at putting pressure on all those in the region who rushed to announce that Obama will radically change the “regime” in the United States. Al Qaeda number two paints the president-elect as an opportunistic politician who used all three faiths to access power. By doing this Zawahiri is trying to achieve two goals: maintaining his own flock fully indoctrinated against Washington regardless of the change in the White House; and pressuring the radical clerics in the Wahabi and Muslim Brotherhood circles -- who are welcoming Obama’s victory -- to retreat from such “apostasy.”

5. The War Must Continue...

Zawahiri’s main message is to call on the jihadists everywhere to resume the war relentlessly and to “strike.” Yes, he argues, there was a victory when America changed direction in
Iraq, but the road to full jihadi victory is still long. Read it as follows: The fight over Iraq will continue until the establishment of an Al Qaeda-like Emirate in the Sunni Triangle, which would be then the real victory. The fight will go on in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia and beyond. In short, Al Qaeda’s war against the world won’t stop because of an election in America. Zawahiri said:

You also must appreciate, as you take over the presidency of America during its Crusade against Islam and Muslims, that you are neither facing individuals nor organizations, but are facing a Jihadi awakening and renaissance which is shaking the pillars of the entire Islamic world; and this is the fact which you and your government and country refuse to recognize and pretend not to see. I tell the Muslim Ummah: America, the criminal, trespassing Crusader, continues to be the same as ever, so we must continue to harm it, in order for it to come to its senses, because its criminal, expansionist Crusader project in your lands has only been neutralized by the sacrifices of your sons, the Mujahideen. This, then, is the path, so stick to it. To the Mujahideen. I tell them: may Allah reward you in the best way for your historic heroics, which have ruined America’s plans and rendered its projects ineffective. So be firm and resolute. Your enemy’s stagger has begun, so don’t stop hitting him. I say to my brothers the Mujahideen in Iraq in general and the Islamic State of Iraq in particular, and to its Amir, the towering mountain Abu ‘Umar al-Baghdadi: your enemy has admitted defeat, and the forthcoming stage is expected to be dominated by conspiracies and betrayals in order to cover the American withdrawal, so you must persevere, for victory is in an hour of perseverance. And I tell my brothers in Somalia: rejoice in victory and conquest. America is gathering its wounds in Iraq, and Ethiopia is looking for a way out, and for this reason, the stage of conspiracies and machinations has begun. So hold tightly to the truth for which you have given your lives, and don’t put down your weapons before the Mujahid state of Islam
and Tawheed has been set up in Somalia. And I tell all Mujahideen everywhere: Allah has granted you success and honored you by making you the most important cause of that, so be resolute on the path of Jihad until you meet your Lord while He is pleased with you.

As many experts in Jihadism have underlined — and as I projected in my last three books on “future Jihad” — even if we decide to change course in Iraq or even in Afghanistan, the strategic intentions of the Jihadi Salafists is to engage in confrontation worldwide, including within democracies.

6. Until You Surrender...

Echoing this assessment of the global jihadi drive, Zawahiri asks the followers of this ideology – not just his membership – to relentlessly fight against what he perceives as the “Grand Crusade.” A stark reminder that the forces, which waged their campaign against the United States beginning in the early 1990s and peaking on 9/11, then spread their warfare to dozens of countries, aren’t going back to the pre 9/11 model. Once again, Al Qaeda’s number two offers a deal to the “infidel powers”: quit and withdraw from this entire region or face a greater war. It is a chilling statement of the so-called “Jihadi offensive.” It is not just about Iraq: It is about the planet as a whole. He goes on:

And my fifth message is to all the world’s weak and oppressed. I tell them: America has put on a new face, but its heart full of hate, mind drowning in greed, and spirit which spreads evil, murder, repression and despotism continue to be the same as always. And the Mujahideen of Islam, by the grace of Allah, continue to be the spearhead of the resistance against it to restrain it from injustice, aggression and arrogance. As for my final message, it is to the American people. I tell it: you incurred defeat and losses from the foolish actions of Bush and his gang, and at the same time, Shaykh Usama bin Ladin (may Allah preserve him) sent you a message to withdraw from
the lands of the Muslims and refrain from stealing their treasures and interfering in their affairs. So choose for yourself whatever you like, and bear the consequences of your choice, and as you judge, you will be judged.

Against all other reactions, both positive and neutral, vis-à-vis Obama’s election, Al Qaeda stands firm in rejecting the new leadership even before the president-elect takes office in January. From a political/psychological perspective the master of Jihadism Usama Bin laden cannot be overshadowed by another international leader, particularly if that emerging figure is president of the “Great Satan.” Zawahiri’s response to the election seems to re-frame the results of the election, an election seen around the world as one of change. To Al Qaeda there is no altering of direction in their struggle and agenda. In their own logic, either Obama will end America’s presence altogether in the greater Middle East, or nothing will really change on the global battlefield.

Conclusion

Once Obama’s victory was solidified, many wondered what Al Qaeda’s response would be. Many of observers thought that the election of Mr. Obama would wash away the grievances of Al Qaeda and isolate the pockets of violence to a few valleys in Afghanistan. Zawahiri’s answer is a blunt “No.” Obviously, by Al Qaeda’s standards, this is a step forward but it is not enough. Pulling out of Iraq is a victory, something the Jihadists of all persuasions agree on, but more victories are needed to end the war from their perspective. This indicates that the post 9/11 era may well be reversed in the mind of liberal democracies via electoral victories at home. This was the case in Spain, and could also be true in the United States, but in the mind of the Jihadists – it is irreversible. Of all the points raised by Zawahiri on the audiotape, I believe that the central message is this: Redeploy as you wish and change all the leaders you want, but know that we will continue our global fight against you. This means that the
next administration will confront a tremendous challenge and it will have to do so by learning from the past and enhancing its strategies for the future. The landscape of the war with the Jihadists may have changed in the last eight years, it will also be different from what it was during the 1990s. Now, a whole new configuration is ahead of us.

Dr Walid Phares is the Director of the Future Terrorism Project at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and the author of “The Confrontation: Winning the War against Future Jihad.”

November 18, 2008

Tampa Mayor Proclaims November 15th, 2008: “CAIR Day”

“By virtue of the authority vested in me as mayor of the city of Tampa, I do hereby proclaim November 15, 2008, as ‘Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Day’ in the city of Tampa, Florida."

CAIR urges Muslims to define themselves

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) held its 6th
annual banquet Saturday at the Tampa Convention Center. Speakers included Georgetown University professor John Esposito and U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison, the first Muslim in Congress.

Following prayers, about 600 people gathered to hear about the theme American Muslims: Defining Ourselves. Ellison said that during the recent presidential campaign, others groups attempted to define Islam and what it means to be Muslim. Many even tried to define Barack Obama as a Muslim, but the strategy didn’t work, Ellison said.

Ellison detailed some of the challenges that Muslims faced during the campaign, including two Muslim women wearing hijabs being forbidden by the Obama campaign from standing behind the candidate at a Detroit rally.

One way that non-Muslims tried to define Muslims during the campaign was through mass distribution of the DVD Obsession, which characterizes some members of the faith as violent extremists. But a University of South Florida religious studies graduate student, Catherine Lafuente, said propaganda like that won’t influence her. She is not a Muslim and her father died in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

John Esposito is a professor of religion, international affairs and Islamic studies at Georgetown University. His most recent book is, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. Esposito said that a CAIR poll from two years ago pointed out the recent “political mainstreaming” of American Muslims.

Muslim-Americans worry about many of the same things that other Americans do, Esposito said.

Several Tampa Bay elected officials attended Saturday’s banquet, including Hillsborough County Commissioner Kevin White and his newly elected colleague Kevin Beckner, Hillsborough School Board member Susan Valdes, and Temple
Terrace Mayor Joe Affronti, who received a bridge builder award.

A civil rights award was presented to the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, and WMNF received a community service award. Maritza Betancourt is the city of Tampa’s Human Rights Investigator in the Division of Community Affairs. She read a proclamation from Mayor Pam Iorio.

“By virtue of the authority vested in me as mayor of the city of Tampa, I do hereby proclaim November 15, 2008, as ‘Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Day’ in the city of Tampa, Florida.”

Photo by Seán Kinane/WMNF

CAIR Florida
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center

top

November 4, 2008

Stoning victim ‘begged for mercy’

A young woman recently stoned to death in Somalia first pleaded for her life, a witness has told the BBC.

“Don’t kill me, don’t kill me,” she said, according to the man who wanted to remain anonymous. A few minutes later, more than 50 men threw stones.

Human rights group Amnesty International says the victim was a 13-year-old girl who had been raped.
Initial reports had said she was a 23-year-old woman who had confessed to adultery before a Sharia court.

The witness says she was forced into a hole, buried up to her neck then pelted with stones until she died in front of more than 1,000 people.

Cameras were banned from the public stoning, but print and radio journalists who were allowed to attend estimated that the woman, Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow, was 23 years old.

However, Amnesty said it had learned she was 13, and that her father had said she was raped by three men.

People were saying this was not good for Sharia law, this was not good for human rights, this was not good for anything.

Witness

When the family tried to report the rape, the girl was accused of adultery and detained, Amnesty said.

Convicting a girl of 13 for adultery would be illegal under Islamic law.

A human rights activist in the town told the BBC on condition of anonymity that he had received death threats from the Islamic militia, who accuse him of spreading false information about the incident.

He denies having anything to with Amnesty’s report.

‘Checked by nurses’

Court authorities have said the woman came to them admitting her guilt.

She was asked several times to review her confession but she stressed that she wanted Sharia law and the deserved punishment to apply, they said.

But a witness who spoke to the BBC’s Today programme said she
had been crying and had to be forced into a hole before the stoning, reported to have taken place in a football stadium.

“More than 1,000 people arrived there,” he said.

FROM THE TODAY PROGRAMME

Please turn on JavaScript. Media requires JavaScript to play.

“After two hours, the Islamic administration in Kismayo brought the lady to the place and when she came out she said: ‘What do you want from me?’”

“They said: ‘We will do what Allah has instructed us’. She said: ‘I’m not going, I’m not going. Don’t kill me, don’t kill me.’

“A few minutes later more than 50 men tried to stone her.”

The witness said people crowding round to see the execution said it was “awful”.

“People were saying this was not good for Sharia law, this was not good for human rights, this was not good for anything.”

But no-one tried to stop the Islamist officials, who were armed, the witness said. He said one boy was shot in the confusion.

According to Amnesty International, nurses were sent to check during the stoning whether the victim was still alive. They removed her from the ground and declared that she was, before she was replaced so the stoning could continue.

The port of Kismayo was seized in August by a coalition of forces loyal to rebel leader Hassan Turki, and al-Shabab, the country’s main radical Islamist insurgent organisation.

Mr Turki is on the US list of “financers of terrorism”.

It was the first reported execution by stoning in the southern
September 22, 2008

Terrorist attack in Pakistan leaves at least 40 dead

By ASIF SHAHZAD
The Associated Press

SLAMABAD, Pakistan | A massive suicide truck bomb created chaos Saturday at the heavily guarded Marriott hotel in

The explosion Saturday at the Marriott hotel in Islamabad appeared to be one of the largest terrorist attacks ever in Pakistan, leaving a vast crater 30 feet deep in front of the main building.

FAROOQ NAEEM
The explosion Saturday at the Marriott hotel in Islamabad appeared to be one of the largest terrorist attacks ever in Pakistan, leaving a vast crater 30 feet deep in front of the main building.
Pakistan’s capital.

At least 42 people were killed in the attack and hundreds were wounded, and officials feared dozens more dead were inside the burning building.

Witnesses and officials said a large truck rammed the high metal gate of the hotel at about 8 p.m., when the hotel’s restaurants would have been packed with diners, including Muslims breaking the Ramadan fast.

The blast appeared to be one of the largest terrorist attacks ever in Pakistan, leaving a vast crater 30 feet deep in front of the main building, where rescuers ferried a stream of bloodied bodies.

The five-story Marriott had been a favorite place for foreigners as well as Pakistani politicians and business people to stay and socialize in Islamabad.

The bombing came just hours after President Asif Ali Zardari made his first address to Parliament and days ahead of the new leader’s meeting with President Bush on Tuesday in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Though no immediate claim of responsibility was made, Pakistani officials have warned that militancy could heat up following a wave of cross-border strikes on militant bases by U.S. forces in Afghanistan, which had angered public opinion.

IntelCenter, a group that monitors al-Qaida communications, said senior al-Qaida leader Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, who claimed the June Danish Embassy bombing in Islamabad, threatened additional attacks against Western interests in Pakistan in a video timed to the recent anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

“This is terrorism, and we have to fight it together as a nation,” Pakistan Interior Ministry spokesman Rehman Malik told reporters at a hospital overflowing with the wounded.
The United States strongly condemned the attack.

“This is a reminder of the threat we all face,” said Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House. “The United States will stand with Pakistan’s democratically elected government as they confront this challenge.”

September 15, 2008

The Iranian Parliament voted in favor of a bill Tuesday that would punish apostasy with the death penalty, a human rights group reported.


Lawmakers approved the bill with 196 votes in favor, seven against, and two abstentions, according to U.K.-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide. The draft bill seeks to add several crimes to the list of acts that would result in execution, including “establishing weblogs and sites promoting corruption, prostitution, and apostasy.”

CSW advocacy director Alexa Papadouris commented, “It is deeply worrying to hear that just days after Matin-Azad and Basirat have been charged with apostasy at a court in Shiraz, the Iranian Parliament is debating a bill that could codify the death penalty for someone choosing their own religion.”
Mahmoud Mohammad Matin-Azad, 53, and Arash Ahmad-Ali Basirat, 40, are Christian-converts from Islam who were charged with apostasy last week at the Public and Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, Iran. They are currently awaiting the court’s verdict and have been detained since May 15.

In August, there were five known arrests of Iranian Christians in three cities by authorities, according to the persecution watchdog agency Compass Direct News. Among those arrested was Ramtin Soodmand, who is the son of the last Christian convert to be executed for leaving Islam, on Aug. 21.

Soodmand’s father, Hossein Soodmand, was an Assemblies of God pastor who was executed by the state in 1990 under the false charge of working as an American spy. Since Soodmand’s death, six other Protestant pastors have been assassinated by unknown assailants. The younger Soodmand has been held in Tehran since he voluntarily turned himself in after repeated calls from the Ministry of Information. According to Compass sources, he was only allowed one phone call to his blind mother on Aug. 23, and allowed a “visit” by his wife and two young children where authorities only permitted them to have a two-minute conversation by phone. They never saw each other and his condition remains unknown.

Iran is ranked third in Open Doors’ World Watch List for countries with the worst persecution of Christians. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom also lists Iran as a “Country of Particular Concern,” a label given to countries with the worst religious freedom abuses.

Reportedly, Iran had removed news of the bill’s approval from its Parliament website within hours of publishing it on Tuesday, according to CSW. But reports of the bill’s process in parliament were published by other official Iranian news agencies, including IRINN (Islamic Republic of Iran News Network) and morning papers inside Iran, such as Resalat.
“We call upon the British Government and the European Union to officially respond to this new development and urge the Iranian Government to reject the bill and guarantee the immediate release of all who are detained on the basis of their religious beliefs alone,” Papadouris of Christian Solidarity pleads.

The approved bill will be sent back to the Legislative Commission to debate proposed amendments before it is brought back to the Parliament for another vote.

September 11, 2008

Colorado meatpacking plant lays off 100 Muslim workers

JBS Swift & Co. fires about one-fourth of 400 workers who had walked off the job, demanding break time to pray during the holy month of Ramadan. The union local says it will fight the action.

By Nicholas Riccardi, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

GREELEY, COLO. – A meatpacking company Wednesday laid off about 100 Muslim immigrant workers who walked off the job last week in protest of the firm’s refusal to give them time to pray during the holy month of Ramadan.

When Ramadan began Sept. 1, workers said supervisors informally gave them time to break their daylong fast at sundown.

But non-Muslim employees protested, and on Friday, JBS Swift & Co. officials refused to give workers break time to pray and
About 400 workers left the company’s meatpacking plant, which dominates this city of 90,000. By Tuesday, 250 had not returned, and Swift warned that those who didn’t come back faced immediate termination.

“This action is a direct violation of our collective bargaining agreement,” Swift said in a statement released Wednesday afternoon.

Greeley police were called as angry workers who had arrived for the 3:15 p.m. shift were given their layoff notices.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 7, which represents workers at the meatpacking plant, said it would fight the firings.

“The workers weren’t given enough notice to get back to their jobs,” said union spokesman Manny Gonzales. “We don’t feel this was a terminable offense to begin with.”

The Muslim workers, mainly Somali immigrants, have recently flocked to the plant, replacing many of the 262 workers, mostly Latinos, who were detained as illegal immigrants following a federal raid in late 2006. Many of the Muslim employees who walked off their jobs last week had been in Greeley only a few months.

One of them, 35-year-old Iman Ibrahim, left Boston for Greeley this summer because a friend told him about jobs at the meatpacking plant.

Ibrahim said Swift supervisors had shut off water fountains Friday evening to prevent Muslim workers from having their traditional drink to break the fast, and in one case a supervisor grabbed an employee by the neck, yanking him from his prayers.

“If I’d known there was a problem with prayer, I would have
never come here,” Ibrahim said.

Nonetheless, he had returned to work by Wednesday and said supervisors were informally giving time for the requisite sundown prayer. “I like working,” he said. “We like to live in this country. We didn’t come to cause trouble.”

Some other Swift workers, however, were angered by the Muslims’ requests for extra prayer time. “Somalis are running our plant,” worker Brianna Castillo told the Greeley Tribune. “They are telling us what to do.”

Non-Muslim workers complained they had to do additional work when Muslims went to pray, which devout followers do five times a day.

Aziz Dhies, a local nurse who represented Somali workers in negotiations with Swift, said he believed workers of all creeds should share in the breaks.

He added that Muslims had no choice in the matter. “This is not something we’re making up ourselves,” Dhies said. “This is something written in [holy] books that we have to do.”

In its statement, Swift officials said the company was “grateful to employ a multicultural workforce and works closely with all employees and their union representation to accommodate religious practices in a reasonable, safe and fair manner to all involved.”

Union officials argue that the contract allows for the extra break time.

“Many companies pay time and a half for working Christian holidays,” Gonzales said.

“It’s a different time now, and we should respect different people’s values.”

nicholas.riccardi@latimes.com
September 7, 2008

Obama’s verbal slip fuels his critics

1. LOUIS, Mo. – Sen. Barack Obama’s foes seized Sunday upon a brief slip of the tongue, when the Democratic presidential nominee was outlining his Christianity but accidentally said, “my Muslim faith.”

The three words — immediately corrected — were during an exchange with ABC’s George Stephanopoulos on “This Week,” when he was trying to criticize the quiet smear campaign suggesting he is a Muslim.

But illustrating the difficulty of preventing false rumors about his faith from spreading, anti-Obama groups within one hour of the interview had sliced it out of context and were sending it around via email. They also were blogging about it.

Mr. Obama, who is a Christian and often proudly speaks about how his faith has influenced his public service, said he finds it “deeply offensive” that there are efforts “coming out of the Republican camp to suggest that perhaps I’m not who I say I am when it comes to my faith.”

The exchange came after Mr. Obama said that Republicans are attempting to scare voters by suggesting he is not Christian, which McCain campaign manager Rick Davis said was “cynical.”

Asked about it on ABC, Mr. Obama said, “These guys love to throw a rock and hide their hand.”

“The McCain campaign has never suggested you have Muslim connections,” said Mr. Stephanopoulos, who repeatedly
interrupted Mr. Obama during the interview.

“I don’t think that when you look at what is being promulgated on Fox News, let’s say, and Republican commentators who are closely allied to these folks,” Mr Obama responded, and Mr. Stephanopoulos interrupted: “But John McCain said that’s wrong.”

Mr. Obama noted that when Republican vice presidential nominee Gov. Sarah Palin “was forced” to talk about her pregnant 17-year-old daughter, he issued a forceful statement to reporters that the line of inquiry was “off limits.” But he said the McCain campaign tried to tie him to “liberal blogs that support Obama” and are “attacking Governor Palin.”

“Let’s not play games,” he said. “What I was suggesting – you’re absolutely right that John McCain has not talked about my Muslim faith. And you’re absolutely right that that has not come.”

Mr. Stephanopoulos interrupted with, “Christian faith.”

“My Christian faith,” Mr. Obama said quickly. “Well, what I’m saying is that he hasn’t suggested that I’m a Muslim. And I think that his campaign’s upper echelons have not, either. What I think is fair to say is that, coming out of the Republican camp, there have been efforts to suggest that perhaps I’m not who I say I am when it comes to my faith – something which I find deeply offensive, and that has been going on for a pretty long time.”

Asked to comment on the accidental misstatement illustrating the difficulty of the issue, Obama spokesman Bill Burton offered this comment: “I’m not surprised that the only outlet doing this story is The Washington Times.”
September 5, 2008

Purported bomber warns Denmark of more attacks

By KATARINA KRATOVAC, Associated Press Writer 48 minutes ago

A new al-Qaida video identifies the Saudi purportedly behind a suicide bombing at the Danish Embassy in Pakistan, and he is shown warning in a taped last testament that more attacks will punish Denmark over newspaper caricatures of Islam’s founder.

In the 55-minute video posted on the Internet late Thursday, the alleged bomber is referred to both by a nom de guerre, Abu Ghareeb al-Makki, and by his real name, Kamal Saleem Atiyyah al-Fudli al-Hathli. He appears in an explosives vest as he recounts his plan for the attack.

“As for my final message to the worshippers of the cross in Denmark, I tell them, Allah permitting, this isn’t the first nor the last retaliation,” al-Makki says. “We will wipe you from the face of the Earth.”

The June 2 blast killed six people, including a Danish citizen. Al-Qaida claimed responsibility, saying it was carrying out Osama bin Laden’s promise to exact revenge for the 2006 publication by Danish newspapers of a dozen cartoons showing the Prophet Muhammad.

Islam forbids any depiction of Muhammad, even favorable, for fear it could lead to idolatry, and the cartoons sparked riots across the Muslim world. Denmark’s PET intelligence service warned last month that the country faced its worst terror threat in many years.

The video also shows al-Qaida’s top commander in Afghanistan,
Mustafa Abu al-Yazeed, praising al-Makki bomber and warning of more attacks.

In August, Pakistani officials said they were trying to confirm whether a suspected militant killed in fighting in the tribal Bajur area was Abu al-Yazeed, but there has been no comment since. Thursday’s video did not indicate when the footage of Abu al-Yazeed was taped.

The video’s authenticity could not be independently verified. It was posted on an Islamic militant Web forum commonly used by al-Qaida to issue videos.

Jakob Scharf, chief of the PET intelligence service, said the agency believes the bomber featured in Thursday’s video “very likely” executed the attack in Pakistan.

July 25, 2008

Pope Benedict urges help for Iraqi Christians

Pope Benedict XVI urged the world to help Iraqis who have fled their country and called for better protection for Christians inside Iraq during talks Friday with Iraq’s prime minister, the Vatican said.

The struggle against terrorism and the need for religious freedom also were central issues in the talks with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, said the Rev. Federico Lombardi, a Vatican spokesman.

Al-Maliki, who is on a European tour, met with Benedict at his vacation palace in Castel Gandolfo south of Rome.
A Vatican communique said a key theme was the need to assist Iraqi refugees, who both men hope will return to their country.

Benedict has frequently expressed concern about the plight of Christians caught in sectarian violence in Iraq.

The Vatican statement said the Christian community in Iraq “strongly feels the need for more security.”

July 14, 2008

Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir faces war crimes charges

By David Blair, Diplomatic Editor
Last Updated: 11:04PM BST 14/07/2008

Sudan’s military dictator was accused of “genocide” and “crimes against humanity” when the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court held him responsible for Darfur’s bloodshed.

REUTERS

Mr Bashir said he did not recognise the International Criminal Court and denied committing war crimes

President Omar al-Bashir, who seized power in a military coup 19 years ago, is the first serving head of state ever to face proceedings at the ICC in The Hague.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Court’s chief prosecutor, accused Mr
Bashir of three counts of “genocide”, five of “crimes against humanity” and two of “war crimes”.

Mr Bashir responded by saying he did not recognise the court and denied committing war crimes. “From the beginning we said we are not a member of the court... the court has no jurisdiction over Sudan,” he said, in his first public reaction to the indictment. “Whoever has visited Darfur, met officials and discovered their ethnicities and tribes... will know that all of these things (including ethnic cleansing) are lies.”

All of the alleged offences were committed during the war in Sudan’s western region of Darfur, which has claimed at least 300,000 lives. Black African rebels began the fighting in 2003 when they rose against Mr Bashir’s Arab-dominated regime.

In response, Mr Bashir’s forces raised Arab militias, widely known as the “Janjaweed”, or “demons on horseback”, and turned them on innocent civilians from the tribes who had provided rebel fighters.

The Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit tribes were the main victims. Hundreds of their villages were razed and more than two million people forced into squalid refugee camps.

During the hearing in The Hague, Mr Moreno-Ocampo said this amounted to “genocide”.

“He [Mr Bashir] wants to end the history of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa people. I don’t have the luxury to look away. I have evidence,” said Mr Moreno-Ocampo. “His motives were largely political. His alibi was counter-insurgency. His intent was genocide.”

The Prosecutor’s office added: “Bashir masterminded and implemented a plan to destroy in substantial part the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit groups on account of their ethnicity.”
Mr Moreno-Ocampo argued that this met the legal definition of “genocide”. However, this is a controversial view of Darfur’s conflict.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both reported that Darfur’s killings do not amount to “genocide” because the crucial element of an intention to eradicate a given ethnic group has not been proven.

But Mr Moreno-Ocampo said that forcing civilians to flee into refugee camps scattered across Darfur’s arid landscape was proof of Mr Bashir’s “intent to commit genocide”.

The Prosecutor said: “He did not need bullets. He used other weapons: rape, hunger and fear. As efficient, but silent.”

Sudanese forces and their “Janjaweed” allies have been accused of mass rape. Mr Moreno-Ocampo quoted one victim as saying: “When we see them, we run. Some of us succeed in getting away and some are caught and taken to be raped – gang-raped. Maybe around 20 men rape one woman. These things are normal for us here in Darfur. These things happen all the time.”

In yesterday’s hearing before three judges from the ICC’s “pre-trial chamber”, Mr Moreno-Ocampo applied for Mr Bashir to be formally charged and an arrest warrant issued in the president’s name. The judges will probably take two or three months to decide on this request.

If they agree, Mr Bashir with be indicted on all or some of the ten counts. The judges could, however, rule that the evidence is insufficient and dismiss the case.

Whatever happens, Sudan does not recognise the ICC and has vowed never to surrender any suspects for trial. Carefully organised demonstrations in support of Mr Bashir have taken place in Khartoum, with protesters waving placards denouncing Mr Moreno-Ocampo, a senior Argentine lawyer, as a “criminal”.

Mr Bashir may respond by increasing the pressure on the international aid effort, which presently supports at least 2.5 million people in Darfur. By refusing visas for foreign aid workers and closing roads to supply convoys, he could steadily shut down relief work.

With tension growing, the United Nations mission in the country has told Sudanese officials it will start pulling all its non-essential staff out of Darfur.

Its decision came after the deputy speaker of parliament Mohammed al-Hassan al-Ameen said on state television that the safety of UN workers could not be guaranteed.

A new peacekeeping force jointly deployed by the United Nations and the African Union is desperately under strength, with only 9,000 of its 26,000 troops and civilians in Darfur. Mr Bashir could obstruct the arrival of more forces.

This will create more suffering among Darfur’s people. Mr Bashir will blame this on the West.

July 10, 2008

Rally in support of Coptic Christians in Egypt

American Egyptian Coptic Christians to organize a peaceful demonstration, on July 16, 2008, in front of the White House, to protest violent attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt.

Coptic Organizations in America along with activists from Egypt, the Middle East, Europe and the United states, will conduct a peaceful demonstration in front of the White House
on Wednesday July 16, 2008, from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. The purpose is to convey, to world’s opinion and international human rights organizations, recent incidents of persecution, discrimination and marginalization inflicted on Coptic Christians of Egypt by the Egyptian government and Muslim extremists.

The Copts of Egypt are the largest Christian minority in the Middle East. They number about 15% of Egypt’s population of 80 millions. Not a month passes by without their churches, homes and businesses being attacked. According to a study made by Ibn Khaldoun Research Center in Cairo, over 240 major attacks against the Copts took place during the period from 1972-2003. Magdy Khalil, a writer and researcher, estimates that as a result of these attacks more than 4000 Copts got killed or injured. This, in addition to damages directed against Coptic properties that could exceed hundreds of millions of dollars, during the last three decades alone. Hundreds of Coptic girls are abducted and forced to embrace Islam while security forces act as accomplices and helpers of the criminals.

During the last few weeks, the extremists attacked a jewelry store owned by Copts killing four Copts. The extremists also attacked Abu Fana Coptic monastery injuring many monks and kidnapping three. The abducted monks were tortured, while they were ordered to announce abandoning their Christian faith and embracing Islam. In Fayoum, Muslim extremists attacked homes and businesses owned by Coptic Christians. A Coptic Christian man was killed by Muslims in the town of Dafash, governorate of Minia, in the southern part of Egypt.

We call on the American and International Media, human rights organizations and all freedom loving people to join our demonstration in order that we send a message to the Egyptian government to stop persecuting the Copts and take responsibility in providing adequate protection for them.
For more information, contact:

Mounir Bishay, Los Angeles (310) 641-3387
Jacob Keryacos, New Jersey (732) 414-9451
Fayez Khella, New Jersey (201) 424-0278
Selim Naguib, Montreal (514) 485-4550
Atef Makar, Chicago (630) 878-1333

July 8, 2008

Islamic Conference (OIC) at the U.N. is pushing a dangerous resolution – making speaking out against Islam
Christians are under attack.
In Iran, a couple is tortured for reading the Bible. Two men are tried and convicted for possessing Christian books in Algeria.
This is serious. Right now, there is a radical proposal being pushed before the United Nations that will make expressing your faith an international crime.
Speak out for Christianity and you might face the death penalty.
Give generously right now to help the ACLJ’s legal defense teams in the U. S. and Europe fight this IMMEDIATELY at the United Nations level – to protect the rights of individuals around the globe who are targeted for their faith!

In countries around the world, Christians are under attack as never before.
I could go on. There are examples of a growing global crisis – Christians targeted, facing the harshest of penalties – often death. Why? For simply sharing their faith or even reading a Bible!
And it could very well get worse.
Now, one of the largest organizations inside the United Nations has made a bold move – targeting you.
The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) at the U.N. is pushing a dangerous resolution – making speaking out against Islam … including proclamation of Christianity … an international crime.
It's an anti-Christian measure and it clearly endorses what’s taking place in many Muslim countries – where those who even speak out about Islam are severely punished with imprisonment and even death.

This is a travesty! Give your immediate online donation to help the ACLJ – along with our European affiliate – answer the OIC aggressively: Anti-Christian bigotry will not be tolerated!
I firmly agree with Justice Scalia who said in his recent dissent on the Supreme Court ruling on Guantanamo Bay, “American is at war with radical Islamists.”

We are your voice in this matter at the United Nations. And we are the only ones using the legal process to combat its very perilous resolution. I have teams of ACLJ and ECLJ attorneys and staff working aggressively on the issue. We are calling on the U.N.’s High Commissioner of Human Rights to vehemently oppose this sinister resolution …
And focus instead on improving existing international law to protect the religious beliefs of all individuals.

We have mounting legal work ahead of us – researching, preparing reports and oral presentations – on your behalf, to protect your religious freedom.

Please stand with us today in generosity and prayer.

We need your help to launch an effective, and successful, nationwide campaign … and to quickly defeat this dangerous violation of your right to freedom of religion and expression.
Thank you. God bless you for your dedicated membership.
KASHGAR, China (Reuters) – In a backstreet of the old Silk Road city of Kashgar, the Chinese government has been spray-painting signs on dusty mud brick walls to warn against what it says is a new enemy – the Islamic Liberation Party.

Better known as Hizb ut-Tahrir, the group says its goal is to establish a pan-national Muslim state, or Caliphate.

China says Hizb ut-Tahrir are terrorists, and claim they operate in the far western region of Xinjiang, home to some 8 million Muslim, Turkic-speaking Uighurs, many of whom chafe under Chinese rule.

But the group, and some observers, say they do not espouse violence, and they accuse China of playing up the threat as an excuse to further crack down in restive Xinjiang, especially ahead of this summer’s Beijing Olympics.

“Strike hard against the Islamic Liberation Party” and “The Islamic Liberation Party is a violent terrorist organization” read the signs in Kashgar, written in red in both Chinese and Uighur’s Arabic-based script.

Residents passing by appear to give little heed to the notices, accustomed as they are to daily barrages of propaganda from the government denouncing “splittism,” “illegal religious activities” and calling for ethnic unity and harmony.
“I don’t know what that group is,” said one Uighur, who declined to give his name, shaking his head and scurrying away.

As in another strife-hit Chinese region, Tibet, many Uighurs resent the growing economic and cultural impact of Han Chinese who have in some cases been encouraged by the government to move to far-flung and under populated parts of the country.

Beijing accuses militant Uighurs of working with al Qaeda to use terror to bring about an independent state called East Turkestan. It claims to have foiled at least two Xinjiang-based plots this year to launch attacks during the Beijing Games.

But the emergence of Hizb ut-Tahrir is a recent phenomenon in Xinjiang.

“The organization is extremely resilient and its influence, although limited to southern Xinjiang, seems to be growing,” said Nicholas Bequelin of Human Rights Watch.

“The prison authorities are also worried about the influence of Hizbut followers on other inmates,” he added.

But it seems unlikely they represent the threat to Xinjiang that China likes to portray, said Dru Gladney, president of the Pacific Basin Institute at Pomona College, California, and a Uighur expert.

“For most Uighurs who are activists, though some of them are very religious in their Islam, their main goal is sovereignty for Xinjiang. Hizb ut-Tahrir doesn’t support that. They support a worldwide Caliphate, not any one independent region,” he said.

RUNNING ON XINJIANG TIME

Though a part of China, many areas in Xinjiang feel a world away from the booming and cosmopolitan cities on the Chinese
coast, far to the east.

In Kashgar, a city close to the Pakistan and Afghan borders, some women not only cover their heads, but also veil their faces. In some cases, dark brown cloths envelope the whole head.

Clocks in a lot of mosques, restaurants, cafes and shops are set to Xinjiang time, two hours behind Beijing time, the official standard for the entire country, even if that means the sun does not set until after 10 p.m. in Kashgar in the summer.

Exiled groups and human rights campaigners have long chastised China for its religious restrictions, even as the government hits back and says it guarantees freedom of religion in its constitution, as long as believers respect the law.

Many are not convinced that Hizb ut-Tahrir is the threat the Chinese government says it is in Xinjiang.

“This does not exist. They have come up with this group’s name themselves,” said Dilxat Raxit, spokesman for the exiled World Uyghur Congress. “They are trying to mislead the world and deflect from concern for the Uighur people.”

For its part, Hizb ut-Tahrir denies it advocates violence.

“Hizb ut-Tahrir and Muslim voices that do not toe the government line have been severely oppressed by the Chinese government,” Taji Mustafa, media representative for Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, told Reuters in an emailed statement.

“It is well known across the world that since its founding in 1953, Hizb ut-Tahrir has exclusively engaged in non-violent political and intellectual work,” Mustafa added. He did not comment on whether the group was active in Xinjiang.

SPLITTISM
Yet China maintains the threat is real. Hizb ut-Tahrir is likewise banned in countries such as Uzbekistan, where it has also been blamed for violence.

In November, China’s Xinhua news agency announced sentences ranging from death to life in jail for six Uighurs accused of “splittism and organizing and leading terrorist groups,” and implicated Hizb ut-Tahrir.

One of the men was found guilty of “proactively carrying out extremist religious activities and promoting ‘jihad’, establishing a terrorist training base and preparing to set up an ‘Islamic caliphate,’” Xinhua reported.

In April, the Xinjiang government blamed Hizb ut-Tahrir for inciting protests in Khotan, in which the World Uyghur Congress said about 1,000 people took to the streets.

“By linking the unrest to Hizb ut-Tahrir there’s legal cause for suggesting that these individuals were involved in a transnational conspiracy to set up an Islamic state and destabilize China,” Gladney said.

“It’s not clear that the civil unrest had any of those goals in mind,” he added. “They were pretty disorganized.”

Still, authorities launched a propaganda drive last year targeting what China says are the true intentions of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

“Be very clear about the ‘Islamic Liberation Party’s’ reactionary nature,” the Kashgar government said in a notice on its website. “Be very clear about their pervasive and actual threat to Xinjiang and Kashgar.”

Yet while some Uighurs say they have heard of Hizb ut-Tahrir, they dismiss it as being irrelevant to their situation.

“What we want is simple – freedom,” said a Uighur resident of Xinjiang’s regional capital, Urumqi, who asked not be
identified, fearing repercussions with the authorities. “But there are too many Han and too few of us.”

June 11, 2008

Yemen child bride Nujood Ali gets divorce

Delphine Minoui / For The Times

Nujood Ali, 10, stands near her home on the outskirts of Sana, Yemen. Her father gave Nujood’s hand in marriage to a man three times her age.

The 10-year-old was married off to a man in his 30s who abused her. She made her way to a courthouse, found a lawyer and broke free.

By Borzou Daragahi, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
June 11, 2008

SANA, YEMEN – The little girl was waist-high, so small that the lawyers, clerks and judges hurrying through the courthouse almost missed her.

As lunchtime arrived and the crowds of noisy men and women cleared away, a curious judge asked her what she was doing sitting alone on a bench.

“I came to get a divorce,” 10-year-old Nujood Ali told the jurist.

Her impoverished parents had married her off to a man more
than three times her age, who beat her and forced her to have sex, she explained. When she told her father and mother that she wanted out of the marriage, they refused to help. So an aunt provided her with bus money to travel to court and seek a divorce.

Within days of that April 2 encounter, Nujood’s tale and the plight of child brides in Yemen made international headlines. And thanks to the efforts of human rights lawyer Shada Nasser, who took up her cause, the girl at the center of the story has begun to overcome her trauma and dream of a better life.

Yemeni law sets the age of consent at 15. But tribal customs and interpretations of Islam often trump the law in this country of 23 million. A 2006 study conducted by Sana University reported that 52% of girls were married by 18.

Publicity surrounding Nujood’s case prompted calls to raise the legal age for marriage to 18 for both men and women. Yemen’s conservative lawmakers refused to take up the issue. But the case sparked public discussion and newspaper headlines. Several more child brides came forward, including a girl who sought a divorce last week in the southern city of Ibb.

“This case opened the door,” Nasser says.

Nujood says that at first, she felt ashamed about what had happened to her. “But I passed through that,” she says, eyes narrowing beneath her black head scarf.

“All I want now is to finish my education,” she adds, her mouth curling into a smile. “I want to be a lawyer.”

The girl is being identified in this story because her name already has been widely publicized in Yemen, and neither her parents nor her lawyer objected.

Nujood’s unemployed father, Ali Mohammed Ahdal, has two wives
and 16 children. He is among the many tribal Yemenis who have migrated to the capital looking for work. Instead, he found misery.

He arranged to have Nujood married in February to Faez Ali Thamer, a thirtysomething motorcycle deliveryman from his native province, Hajja.

Nujood’s parents say they were trying to do what was best for their daughter and didn’t even receive a dowry, a claim many Yemenis don’t believe. The parents say the groom had promised he wouldn’t have sex with her until she reached puberty.

“We asked him to raise her,” said Shuaieh, the girl’s mother.

The groom has disputed that claim.

Ahdal, in his mid-40s, says he wanted Nujood to avoid the fate of two of his older sisters. One was kidnapped by a rival clan and another wound up in jail for trying to defend her, an example of the murky intertribal disputes that bedevil Yemen.

“I was trying to protect her,” Ahdal says during an interview in his family’s decrepit two-room flat on the capital’s outskirts.

Nujood looked forward to getting married, not understanding what it really meant. Aside from being a pre-adolescent bride, she is a fairly typical little girl. She likes playing hide-and-seek and tug-of-war with her friends and siblings. Her favorite colors are red and yellow, she says, and her favorite flavors are chocolate and coconut. She loves dogs and cats and dreams of being a turtle so she could swim in the sea.

“I’ve never seen the sea,” she says.

About 40 people attended the wedding in the village of Wadi Laa, where the groom lived. As a wedding gift, she received three new dresses and a $20 wedding ring. She was to live with him and his family.
The trouble started on the first night, when he demanded that they share a mattress. She resisted, walking out of the room, only to have him follow. Sometimes he beat her into submission. For weeks, she cried all day and dreaded the nights, when he would enter the room, blow out the oil lamp and demand sex.

“I asked him not to sleep next to me,” she recalls. “He told me, ‘No, we sleep together in the same room. Your father agreed to accept me as a husband.’”

On a visit weeks later to her parents’ house in the capital, she wept, saying that her husband was doing unmentionable things to her.

Her father said there was nothing he could do.

“My cousins would have killed me if I dishonored the family by asking for a divorce,” he said.

But her mother’s sister discreetly advised her to go to court.

The bewildered judge who found Nujood on the bench decided to bring her to his house for the weekend. His daughters had a swing and toys she’d never seen. They had satellite television, and for three days she feasted on cartoons.

Once the workweek began, the judge dispatched soldiers to arrest Nujood’s father and husband. He placed Nujood in the care of an uncle, her mother’s brother.

Still, the lawyers and judges had no idea how to handle her case. Nujood and her uncle languished in the courthouse for days until a middle-aged woman, the only one in the courthouse without an Islamic headdress covering her face, approached them.

“Are you Nujood?” asked Nasser, the lawyer, among Yemen’s leading women’s rights activists. “Are you the one asking for divorce?”
She was, Nujood replied.

“I couldn’t believe my eyes,” Nasser says. The girl reminded her of her own daughter, Lamia, 8.

Nasser went to the cell where Thamer, the husband, was being held, and was shocked by the age difference between the two. “Why did you sleep with her?” she demanded. “She’s a little girl.”

He didn’t deny it, Nasser recalls. Instead he complained that Nujood’s father had said she was much taller and better looking than she really was.

Nasser vowed to Nujood that she would take her case without pay and that she would take care of her. She took her to her upscale home and offered to let her stay there.

Outraged, Nasser also called her contacts at the Yemen Times, the country’s English-language newspaper. The story of the brave little girl who went to court on her own to stand up for her rights captivated the country. News agencies picked up the story and sent it around the world.

When a sympathetic judge agreed to hear her case several weeks later, reporters packed the courtroom.

Verbally, Judge Mohammed Ghadi was merciless to the husband.

“You could not find another woman to marry in all of Yemen?” he demanded.

But legally, there was little he could do. No provision in Yemeni law provides for prosecution on sexual abuse charges within a marriage. Not only did the husband and father go free, but Thamer demanded $250, the equivalent of four months’ salary for a poor Yemeni, to agree to a divorce.

A sympathetic lawyer donated the cash.
Nujood was elated. “She was smiling,” Nasser recalls. “She said, ‘I want chocolate. I want pears, cake and toys.’”

Nasser bought her some new clothes. Donations began pouring in, with several wealthy Europeans offering to pay for her education. One newspaper held a big party for her. A Yemeni journalist gave her a cellphone.

When the controversy died down, Nujood insisted on going back to live with her parents, most likely because she is very close to her sister Haifa, 8. Her father promised that he would not marry off Nujood or any of her sisters.

The girl has refused to see a psychologist or a gynecologist. She says she doesn’t like doctors. And besides, she says, the experience has made her stronger and wiser.

She says she’s had enough of marriage and domestic life, and looks forward to beginning third grade and pursuing dreams she never knew she had.

“I want to defend oppressed people,” she says. “I want to be like Shada. I want to be an example for all the other girls.”

May 29, 2008

Copts shot dead in Cairo attack

Four Coptic Christians have been shot dead in broad daylight at a jewellery shop in a busy district of the Egyptian capital, Cairo.

Details remain sketchy, but witness accounts speak of two men, wearing wigs and sunglasses, entering the shop and opening
fire with automatic weapons.

The motive for Wednesday’s murders is still unknown because the killers did not appear to have stolen anything.

There are fears the attack may have been sectarian or even political.

The manner and the timing of the crime has shocked residents of Cairo, says the BBC’s Arab Affairs Analyst, Magdi Abdelhadi.

**Motorbike escape**

The shop’s owner and three of his assistants were killed in the attack. All four were Christian Copts.

The killers then sped away on a motorbike.

Egyptian jewellery shops owned by Christians have, in the past, been looted by Islamist militants to finance their insurgency, reports our correspondent from the Egyptian capital.

But that has not happened since the government quashed militant groups during the 1990s.

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7425541.stm

Published: 2008/05/29 14:04:58 GMT

top

**May 26, 2008**
Anti-Islam group to hold rallies in downtown Chicago

We are a pro American/Israeli group who hold a rally every Sunday from 12:00pm to 1:00pm in downtown Chicago. We counter a pro islamic/terror group call Nopt In My Name. We can use the help. Any of your Chicago area member willing to join us. Alan 773-507-8130

top

April 15, 2008

Brigitte Bardot on trial for Muslim slur

Former French film star faces charge of ‘inciting racial hatred’ for fifth time for saying Muslim community ‘destroying our country and imposing its acts’

Reuters
Published:
04.15.08, 23:20 / Israel News

French former film star Brigitte Bardot went on trial on Tuesday for insulting Muslims, the fifth time she has faced the charge of “inciting racial hatred” over her controversial remarks about Islam and its followers.

Prosecutors asked that the Paris court hand the 73-year-old former sex symbol a two-month suspended prison sentence and fine her 15,000 euros ($23,760) for saying the Muslim community was “destroying our country and imposing its acts.”

Since retiring from the film industry in the 1970s, Bardot has
become a prominent animal rights activist but she has also coursed controversy by denouncing Muslim traditions and immigration from predominantly Muslim countries.

She has been fined four times for inciting racial hatred since 1997, at first 1,500 euros and most recently 5,000.

Prosecutor Anne de Fontette told the court she was seeking a tougher sentence than usual, adding, “I am a little tired of prosecuting Mrs. Bardot.”

Bardot did not attend the trial because she said she was physically unable to. The verdict is expected in several weeks.

‘France invaded by sheep-slaughtering Muslims’

French anti-racist groups complained last year about comments Bardot made about the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha in a letter to President Nicolas Sarkozy that was later published by her foundation.

Muslims traditionally mark Eid al-Adha by slaughtering a sheep or another animal to commemorate the Prophet Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son on God’s orders.

France is home to 5 million Muslims, Europe’s largest Muslim community, making up 8 percent of France’s population.

“I am fed up with being under the thumb of this population which is destroying us, destroying our country and imposing its acts,” the star of “And God created woman” and “Contempt” said.

Bardot has previously said France is being invaded by sheep-slaughtering Muslims and published a book attacking gays, immigrants and the unemployed, in which she also lamented the
WASHINGTON — Saudi Arabia remains the world’s leading source of money for Al Qaeda and other extremist networks and has failed to take key steps requested by U.S. officials to stem the flow, the Bush administration’s top financial counter-terrorism official said Tuesday.

Stuart A. Levey, a Treasury undersecretary, told a Senate committee that the Saudi government had not taken important steps to go after those who finance terrorist organizations or to prevent wealthy donors from bankrolling extremism through charitable contributions, sometimes unwittingly.

“Saudi Arabia today remains the location where more money is going to terrorism, to Sunni terror groups and to the Taliban than any other place in the world,” Levey said under questioning.

U.S. officials have previously identified Saudi Arabia as a major source of funding for extremism. But Levey’s comments were notable because, although reluctant to directly criticize a close U.S. ally, he acknowledged frustration with
administration efforts to persuade the Saudis and others to act.

“We continue to face significant challenges as we move forward with these efforts, including fostering and maintaining the political will among other governments to take effective and consistent action,” Levey said, later adding: “Our work is not nearly complete.”

Levey was the sole witness before the Senate Finance Committee, which Tuesday ordered an independent review of the efforts to choke off financing used by Al Qaeda and other extremist groups.

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), the committee chairman, announced the review at the end of the hearing held to assess the money-tracking campaign by Treasury’s Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, headed by Levey.

The Bush administration created the office in 2004 to spearhead efforts to disrupt the flow of money to extremist causes, primarily from wealthy donors in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf.

However, U.S. officials and counter-terrorism experts have said that international support for the effort has waned while terrorist groups have found ways around the financial restrictions. At the same time, there have been turf battles among the 19 federal agencies that work on the problem.

Senators praised work done by Levey but expressed concerns about the overall U.S. effort. The committee’s Democratic and Republican leaders cited a Los Angeles Times report last week detailing problems undermining the effort.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, the ranking Republican, said extremist groups had adapted to changing U.S. investigative methods: “We are simply not prepared right now to keep up with them and put them out of business once and for all.”
Levey said the campaign has succeeded in disrupting terrorist financing by freezing suspicious assets and in gathering intelligence that could be used to identify extremists and disrupt their activities.

But under questioning by senators, Levey also spoke of difficulty in getting Saudi Arabia to take the steps U.S. officials consider necessary.

Levey said the Saudis had been aggressive in going after terrorist cells. But he said they had not lived up to promises to establish the kind of financial intelligence unit needed to trace the money trails of terrorists. Another problem is that the Saudi government has not set up a charity oversight commission to track whether donations end up in the hands of extremists.

Levey said the Saudi government has not moved to publicly hold accountable those within the kingdom who have been the subject of enforcement actions by the U.S. and other authorities.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said the Saudi failures mean that Americans who pay more than $100 a barrel for oil are in effect bankrolling extremism because wealthy Saudis “back-door” their profits into charities that fund extremist causes.

Nail Jubeir, press attache for the Saudi embassy in Washington, dismissed those concerns, saying the Bush administration has repeatedly praised Saudi Arabia for its efforts to combat terrorism.

“We have been very vigilant in our campaign against terrorism financing,” Jubeir said. “We have come a long way since 9/11 on this issue.”

Jubeir confirmed that Saudi Arabia has not set up the financial intelligence unit or charity commission, but said it was cracking down on the financiers of terrorism in other ways, such as making it illegal for anyone to send money
outside the kingdom “without going through official government channels.”

Alleged financiers of terrorism identified by the United States are being investigated, and their assets have been frozen, Jubeir said. “But unless we have evidence to try them . . . we don’t parade them in public,” he said. “What if it turns out they are innocent?”

At the hearing, senators also expressed concern about disputes among U.S. agencies and other administrative and investigative functions of Levey’s office. Baucus and Grassley asked that the Government Accountability Office review its internal efficiency and effectiveness as well as its cooperation with foreign governments.

Levey said he had not seen the request from Baucus and Grassley, but added: “We welcome any source of advice as to how we can improve.”

March 22, 2008

Pope to Baptize Prominent Muslim

By NICOLE WINFIELD,

VATICAN CITY (AP) – Italy’s most prominent Muslim commentator is converting to Catholicism by being baptized by the pope at an Easter vigil, the Vatican announced Saturday.

Magdi Allam is the deputy editor of the Corriere della Sera
newspaper and writes often on Muslim and Arab affairs. Born in Egypt, he has described himself as a non-practicing Muslim. He has long spoken out against extremism and in favor of tolerance.

Pope Benedict XVI was baptizing seven adults during the service, which marks the period between Good Friday, which commemorates Jesus’ crucifixion, and Easter Sunday, which marks his resurrection.

The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said of Allam before the service that anyone who chooses to become a Catholic of his or her own free will has the right to receive the sacrament.

Lombardi said the pope administers the sacrament “without making any ‘difference of people,’ that is, considering all equally important before the love of God and welcoming all in the community of the Church.”

Benedict opened the lengthy nighttime service by blessing a white candle, which he then carried down the main aisle of the darkened St. Peter’s Basilica. Slowly, the pews began to light up as his flame was shared with candles carried by the faithful, until the whole basilica twinkled and the main lights came on.

The baptism rite during the vigil service is part of the joyful renewal Christians associate with Easter.

There is no overarching Muslim law on conversion. But under a widespread interpretation of Islamic legal doctrine, converting from Islam is apostasy and punishable by death – though killings are rare.

Egypt’s highest Islamic cleric, the Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, wrote last year against the killing of apostates, saying there is no worldly retribution for Muslims who abandon their religion and that punishment would come in the afterlife.
Osama bin Laden accused the pope in a new audio message posted Wednesday of playing a “large and lengthy role” in a “new Crusade” against Islam that included the publication of drawings of the Prophet Muhammad that many Muslims found insulting.

Lombardi said Thursday that bin Laden’s accusation was baseless. He said Benedict repeatedly criticized the Muhammad cartoons, first published in some European newspapers in 2006 and republished by Danish papers in February.

March 13, 2008

The archbishop of Mosul is dead

Bishop of Arbil: “A heavy Cross for our Church, ahead of Easter”. The cause of death is still unknown. The pope’s expression of sorrow.

Mosul (AsiaNews) – The Chaldean archbishop of Mosul is dead. Archbishop Faraj Rahho was kidnapped last February 29 after the Stations of the Cross. His kidnappers gave word of his death, indicating to the mediators where they could recover the body of the 67-year-old prelate. “It is a heavy Cross for our Church, ahead of Easter”, Bishop Rabban of Arbil tells AsiaNews in response to the news. Leaders of the Chaldean Church, including Bishop Shlemon Warduni, brought the body to the hospital in Mosul to ascertain the causes, still unknown, of the archbishop’s death. The funeral will be held tomorrow in the nearby city of Karamles. Archbishop Rahho will be buried near Fr Ragheed, his priest and secretary killed by a terrorist brigade on June 3, 2007, while leaving the church
after celebrating Mass.

The archbishop had been very sick. He had suffered a heart attack a few years ago, and since then he had needed to take medication every day. The difficult negotiations for his release carried forward over the past 14 days of his kidnapping had immediately raised concern because of the total absence of direct contact with the hostage. The conditions posed by the kidnappers – sources in Mosul tell AsiaNews – in addition to an outrageous ransom on the order of millions of dollars, had also included the provision of weapons and the liberation of Arab prisoners held in Kurdish prisons.

The news of Archbishop Rahho’s death “profoundly wounds and saddens” the pope, says the director of the Vatican press office, Fr Federico Lombardi. Benedict XVI hopes that “this tragic event may renew once again and with greater force the efforts of all, and in particular of the international community, for the pacification of this greatly tormented country”. Three times in recent days, the pope had launched an appeal for the liberation of the bishop. Numerous Muslim leaders had also spoken out for the prelate’s release, both Sunnis and Shiites, in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan, and also condemned the action as “contrary to Islam”.

March 3, 2008

Man Butchers 15-Month-Old Nephew in Jeddah Supermarket

Samir Al-Saadi, Arab News –

JEDDAH, 3 March 2008 – Early morning shoppers at a supermarket in Jeddah were left reeling yesterday, with some falling
In a brutal murder that has shocked the city, the 25-year-old man beheaded the boy, who was out shopping with his mother — in full glare of shoppers and staff at Al-Marhaba supermarket on Sari Street around 9.30 a.m. The man, who is the boy’s maternal uncle, apparently killed the boy following a dispute with his sister and brother-in-law.

Eyewitnesses said that the man picked up a knife from inside the store and severed the boy’s head. The mother and a shopper standing close by fainted, while several other stood in shock and disbelief over what had happened.

A police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Arab News, “The murderer was in a dispute with the boy’s mother and her husband. He chopped off the boy’s head in front of the mother to get back at her.” He added that the mother has been left traumatized and is in hospital. The boy’s father was at work at the time of the incident.

Following the murder, police sealed off the supermarket while forensic experts gathered evidence. Ambulances were also called to the scene. The supermarket reopened for business at around 1.15 p.m. “It happened so quickly. Before people could intervene, the man had cut more than half way through the child’s neck,” said Abu Muhammad, a grandfather in his mid-60s.

A Saudi till attendant at a nearby cafe said, “One of my colleagues went to see what was going on and returned shivering. He saw the kid’s body and so we gave him the day off. He was in a bad state.”

An eyewitness, who lives in the neighborhood, said that the victim’s family lived close by and frequented the supermarket. “I’ve seen the murderer carrying the same child and playing unconscious, after a well-built Syrian man clinched a knife and decapitated his 15-month-old nephew in front of his mother in the store’s fruit and vegetable section.
with him on a number of occasions,” he added.

“No one could bear the gruesome sight of the boy’s decapitated body lying on the floor,” said Muneer, a Turkish car mechanic, who works at a garage close by. “How could someone do such a thing? I just can’t understand it… I still can’t believe it,” he said, shaking his head.

When the store reopened, employees were still in a state of shock. A guard, standing at the entrance, stood frozen and oblivious to the rush of shoppers. Pain and anguish were writ large on his face.

P.S. There have already been 4 beheadings in Britain!

top

February 5, 2008

For the Record: Government Reminds Court of CAIR/MAS Ties to Terrorists

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is demanding that the Air Force Academy alter a panel of speakers slated for a terrorist symposium this week, saying it’s an unbalanced presentation dominated by anti-Muslim speakers. But recently, and for at least the third time, federal prosecutors have called out CAIR as part of a covert Muslim Brotherhood effort in the United States. First, CAIR was named an unindicted co-conspirator in the Hamas-support trial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF). CAIR was listed among “entities who are and/or were members of the US Muslim Brotherhood’s Palestine Committee.” Then, when the group petitioned to remove its name from that list, prosecutors said
such relief “will not prevent its conspiratorial involvement with HLF, and others affiliated with Hamas, from becoming a matter of public record.”

Now, in a federal court filing from December, federal prosecutors have described CAIR as “having conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists.” The government also stated that “proof that the conspirators used deception to conceal from the American public their connections to terrorists was introduced” in the Dallas Holy Land Foundation trial last year and the Chicago trial of the Hamas men in 2006.

The government also stated that another organization, the Muslim American Society (MAS) was “founded as the overt arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States.” This appears to be the first time the US government has officially described the true origins and ulterior agenda of the Muslim American Society. (For a backgrounder on the Muslim American Society by the Investigative Project, go to our dossier.)

CAIR and MAS Freedom Foundation had offered amicus, or friend of the court, briefs for the pending appeal of Sabri Benkahla, convicted in 2007 of perjury and obstruction of justice.

Benkahla was part of a group of Northern Virginia men who trained to fight with the Taliban against the United States. He was acquitted of supplying services to the Taliban but later convicted on the perjury and obstruction charges and sentenced to 10 years in prison. That sentence included a “terrorism enhancement” after the trial court found his false statements impeded a terrorism investigation. In seeking court approval to file their supportive briefs, CAIR and MAS said they were specifically concerned about the sentencing enhancement. It is “being applied to punish Muslim scholars and activists as if they had committed terrorism crimes,” CAIR’s motion states, and that could chill political speech and activities.
Federal prosecutors used their response to the brief to remind the court of the both organizations’ questionable stand on the issue of terrorism itself. In a footnote, the government brief points out:

In describing themselves, *Amici* Brief at 1, CAIR and MAS omit reference to a shared background that limits their membership to those of a particular political bent, and undercuts their credibility. The Muslim Brotherhood is a generally covert international organization whose credo is “Allah is our goal; the Qur’an is our constitution; the Prophet is our leader; Struggle is our way; and death in the path of Allah is our highest aspiration. See, *e.g.*, Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, 208-09 (Yale University Press 2006).


Moreover, from its founding by Muslim Brotherhood leaders, CAIR conspired with other affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood to support terrorists. See Government’s Memorandum in Opposition to CAIR’s Motion for Leave to File a Brief, etc., in *United States v. Holy Land Foundation . . . et al*, Cr. No. 3-04-cr-240-G (N.D. Tx. September 4, 2007), available at http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/479.pdf. Proof that the conspirators agreed to use deception to conceal from the American public their connections to terrorists was introduced at both the Texas trial in 2007 and also at a Chicago trial the previous year. *United States v. Ashqar, et. al.*, No. 03-978 (N.D. Il. 2006).

A dozen other men have been convicted of crimes in what was known as the “Virginia Paintball” case. Among them is Randall Royer, a former CAIR employee sentenced to 20 years in prison
after **pleading guilty** to weapons and explosives charges. The case centered around a group of men urged by their spiritual leader Ali Timimi to fight against American troops in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

January 30, 2008

**Court in Cairo refused to rule in a case filed by Mohammed Ahmed Hegazy**

URL: [www.unitedcopts.org](http://www.unitedcopts.org)

The Administrative Court in Cairo refused to rule in a case filed by Mohammed Ahmed Hegazy, a convert to Christianity who is seeking official recognition of his conversion from Islam to Christianity, court officials said yesterday 29th January 2007.

Mohamed Hegazy 24 converted to Christianity when he was 16; he is married to a convert from Islam to Christianity, Katrina (Former Muslim name Zainab) who is now almost 9 months pregnant. They both want their newly born child to be registered as Christian.

Hegazy who was born into a Muslim family, is banned from changing his name and his religion on his national ID card as there is no recognized official procedure Hegazy could follow to change his religion on his official papers, the government refuses to allow citizens to legally change their religious affiliation in their ID cards from Islam to any other religion but welcomes and encourages the change to Islam from other religions, the Egyptian ID document carry the person’s
Hegazy and his pregnant wife have been in hiding since early August 2007 shortly after his conversion became public as he received numerous death threats, several Muslims scholars: Sheikh Yossef El-Badri a famous Muslim scholar, Dr Suad Saleh Al-Azhar university, Dr Abdel-Sabour Shaheen, Al-Azhar University, Sheikh Mohammed Hassan and Sheikh Ibrahim Gad Almoula both mosque Imams all called for killing Hegazy through the application of the Islamic Sharia punishment for apostates which means death on the 20th August 2007. On 20th October Hegazy flat contents were thrown onto the street and set a light.

In Egypt, it is known that the police take part in harassing and persecuting converts from Islam.

The United Copts of Great Britain condemns the biased court ruling and ask the Egyptian government and its agencies including the Egyptian judiciary to show justice and respect for Human Rights of the Christian population of Egypt and to do it’s best to fight infiltration of the government agencies by Radical Islamists and to bear in mind its duty and responsibility to treat all its citizens equally.

Contact: info@unitedcopts.org This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it

Telephone +447976710729

January 16, 2008
Ex-lawmaker charged as terrorist conspirator

WASHINGTON — A former U.S. congressman and delegate to the United Nations was indicted Wednesday, accused of being part of a terrorist fundraising ring that allegedly sent more than $130,000 to an al-Qaida and Taliban supporter who has threatened U.S. and international troops in Afghanistan.

The former Republican congressman from Michigan, Mark Deli Siljander, was charged with money laundering, conspiracy and obstructing justice for allegedly lying about lobbying senators on behalf of an Islamic charity that authorities said was secretly sending funds to terrorists.

A 42-count indictment accuses the Islamic American Relief Agency of paying Siljander $50,000 for the lobbying — money that turned out to be stolen from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Siljander, who served four years in the U.S. House of Representatives, was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to serve as a U.S. delegate to the United Nations for one year in 1987.

He could not immediately be reached for comment Wednesday, and his attorney in Kansas City, JR Hobbs, had no immediate comment.

Case against Islamic charity
The charges are part of a long-running case against the charity, which was designated by the Treasury Department in 2004 as a suspected fundraiser for terrorists.

In the indictment, the government alleges that the charity employed a man who had served as a fundraising aide to Osama bin Laden.
The indictment charges the charity with sending approximately $130,000 to help Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whom the United States has designated as a global terrorist. The money, sent to bank accounts in Peshawar, Pakistan in 2003 and 2004, was masked as donations to an orphanage located in buildings that Hekmatyar owned.

Authorities described Hekmatyar as an Afghan mujahedeen leader who has participated in and supported terrorist acts by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The Justice Department said Hekmatyar “has vowed to engage in a holy war against the United States and international troops in Afghanistan.”

The charges “paints a troubling picture of an American charity organization that engaged in transactions for the benefit of terrorists and conspired with a former United States congressman to convert stolen federal funds into payments for his advocacy,” said Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Wainstein.

Siljander founded Washington-area consulting group Global Strategies, Inc. after leaving the government.

Press Release

January 7, 2008

Mounir Bishay, President
Christian Copts of California
310-641-3387
CalCopts@sbcglobal.net

A message to President Bush:
Please Ask President Mubarak These Questions

Dear President Bush:

During January 8-17, 2008, you will be touring the Middle East visiting several countries including Egypt. The purpose of your tour is to help the Palestinians and the Israelis reach a permanent reconciliation to their conflict and bring peace to that troubled region. This is a noble cause which we applaud you for taking and we pray that you succeed in your mission.

There is however another cause that we hope you will include in your agenda which we believe to be as important and urgent. It has to do with the grave state of the Christian Coptic minority of Egypt.

As you meet President Mubarak we hope that you raise this issue with him. There are many questions we would like you to ask him, here are just a few.

President Mubarak:

- Are you aware that under your rule Coptic Christian citizens of Egypt are systematically being discriminated against while you haven’t done much to correct the matter? Is this because you don’t know or you don’t care?
- Why are attacks against the Coptic Christians of Egypt by their Muslim neighbors escalating alarmingly during your rule? What plans do you have to curb them?
- Why are the Coptic people, who number over ten percent of Egypt’s population, represented by just about one half of one percent in Egypt’s parliament? What mechanism do you have to correct this shameful under representation?
- Why are certain high-ranking positions in Egypt out of...
reach for Coptic people? And why are Copts systematically and drastically limited from occupying certain high-ranking positions?

- Why must permits to build or repair churches be approved by the President or regional governors, unlike permits to build mosques? Why not enact a unified law for building all places of worship?
- Why does Egypt not recognize the right of Muslims to convert to other religions of their choice? Why have many of those Muslims who convert to Christianity been detained and tortured in Egypt’s prisons while Christians who want to convert to Islam are usually welcomed, encouraged and rewarded?
- Are you aware that under your rule underage Coptic Christian girls are being kidnapped by Muslim men, illegally forced to convert to Islam, and forced to marry outside of their faith?

President Bush, there is no greater legacy to achieve for your presidency than to be remembered as a fighter of terrorism, a champion of peace and a defender of the oppressed.

We pray that you succeed in all.

This Message is Sponsored by Coptic Organizations Worldwide