

Community Advisory: **New Airport Security Measures Target Muslim Travelers**



(SAN FRANCISCO) **January 8, 2010**—President Obama stated yesterday that "we will strengthen our defenses, but we will not succumb to a siege mentality that sacrifices the open society and liberties and values that we cherish as Americans." Yet, the new airport security directive issued this week by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) contradicts this commitment. That directive subjects all individuals traveling to the United States from 14, primarily Muslim, countries to enhanced security measures. **Muslim Advocates urges the administration to rescind this ineffective and discriminatory directive and to replace it with security measures that are based on credible intelligence and suspicious behavior.**

Muslim Advocates issues this advisory to educate American Muslims about the scope of this new directive.

Who is Affected?

- **All individuals – including U.S. citizens – traveling from or through: Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen.**

This includes business travelers, students, and those returning from Ummrah and Hajj.

- **All foreign nationals from the 14 designated countries traveling to the U.S.**, regardless of where their flight originates. For example, a passenger holding a Pakistani passport living in the U.K. and traveling to the U.S. will be subjected to enhanced security screening.

- **Enhanced security screening** means a full body pat down or body scan, plus a physical search of all carry-on luggage.

- The new directive **does not mandate new screening for religious headwear, including hijab**. Individuals wearing religious attire are already subject to search pursuant to policies adopted in 2007. Under this policy, a woman wearing hijab can remove it or be subject to additional screening – a pat down by a TSA official, a self-pat down or trace detection. Private screening should be offered to the traveler.



The Directive is Misguided:

The new directive fails to focus on suspicious behavior and credible intelligence and instead targets travelers on the basis of their race, ethnicity and religion. Most security experts agree that racial and religious profiling is an ineffective means of identifying those who seek to cause harm.

This week Muslim Advocates' Executive Director Farhana Khera wrote an opinion piece for McClatchy Newspapers, "TSA Directive," criticizing the new security directive as shortsighted and ineffective. Muslim Advocates calls for smarter security techniques focusing on criminal behavior, not ethnicity or religion. [Read](#) the full op-ed.

In addition, a coalition of civil liberties groups, including Muslim Advocates, wrote to DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano, objecting to the security directive as ineffective and blatant profiling and requesting that it be withdrawn. [Read](#) the letter to Secretary Napolitano.

Take Action:



Tell us about your experience traveling under the new TSA directive: Muslim Advocates wants to hear from community members about their experiences. Email Nura Maznavi, Counsel, Program to End Racial & Religious Profiling at nura@muslimadvocates.org with details such as:

- **Dates of travel; origination and destination; airline & flight no.**
- **Whether you were subject to a full body pat down or body scan and search of all physical belongings.**
- **All other questioning or searches that took place upon your international departure or arrival in the U.S.**

For more information about the new airport security measures, contact **Nura Maznavi** at nura@muslimadvocates.org