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BREAKING NEWS: Community's Voices Heard, Travel Policy Rescinded

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) April 2, 2010—Muslim Advocates welcomes the Obama administration's announcement rescinding its policy of targeting travelers from 14 primarily Muslim countries for mandatory enhanced screening. Since this policy was implemented in January, Muslim Advocates had been urging Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano and other senior administration officials to rescind this misguided policy.

Under the 14-country policy, all nationals of and individuals, including U.S. citizens, traveling from or through Iran, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen, and Cuba were subject to enhanced security screenings.

"The policy was not crafted to achieve its purpose – air security. It would not have subjected Richard Reid, the shoe-bomber of British-Jamaican ancestry, to enhanced screening," said Farhana Khera, executive director of Muslim Advocates. "We are very pleased that the administration heard our message that effective policies should focus on suspicious behavior and legitimate leads, not national origin, ethnicity or religion."

In a letter to Secretary Napolitano in January, Muslim Advocates and a coalition of Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian community and civil rights groups requested that the policy be rescinded immediately. In a meeting with Secretary Napolitano and senior DHS officials a few weeks later, Muslim Advocates reiterated its concerns and request. Muslim Advocates Executive Director Farhana Khera also wrote a widely published op-ed criticizing the travel policy as wrong and ineffective.

Muslim Advocates will monitor the new policy to ensure that it is implemented without bias or disparate impact on American Muslim travelers.

For more information about DHS's security measures for international travelers, please contact John Showalter, Communications Director at Muslim Advocates, 415.692.1512.

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