

Thirteen Days in Ramadan 2012

A preliminary examination of anti-Muslim incidents following the Oak Creek massacre

September 2012

"No one should have to live in fear of being harassed, shot, bombed, injured, or killed simply because of their faith, race or ethnicity. Not here, not now, not after all this country has been through in the civil rights movement. Those who stoke the fires of hate must be held to public account and those who commit violent acts against minority communities must be given the maximum punishment under the law." -CAIR-Chicago Executive Director Ahmed Rehab

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This report is dedicated to the memory of the six people who were murdered during the massacre in Oak Creek, Wis.: Bhai Seeta Singh, Bhai Parkash Singh, Bhai Ranjit Singh, Satwant Singh Kaleka, Subegh Singh, and Parmjit Kaur Toor.

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

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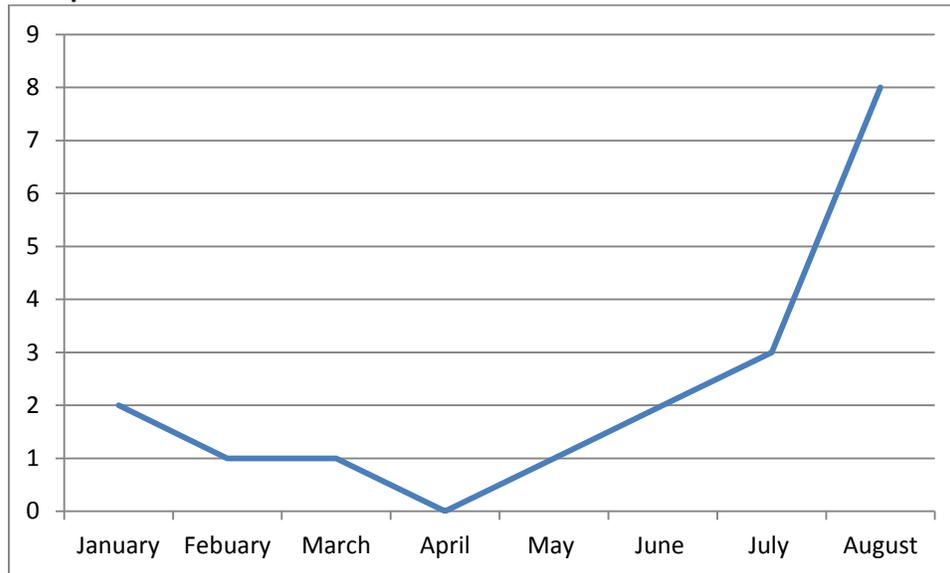
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Thirteen Days in Ramadan

Ramadan 2012—which started on Friday, July 20 and ended at sun down on Saturday, August 18—saw one of the worst spikes of anti-Muslim incidents in over a decade. In the first seven months of 2012, there were 10 incidents in which Muslim places of worship were targeted. In thirteen days in August, Muslim places of worship were targeted eight times.¹

Mosque Incidents 2012



Additionally, an incendiary device was thrown at a Muslim family’s home and an Islamic gravestone was defaced during this short period in Ramadan.

Unfortunately, the targeting of Islamic places of worship is becoming expected. Earlier this year, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported, “The number of anti-Muslim groups tripled in 2011, jumping from 10 groups in 2010 to 30 last year.”ⁱ According to the FBI there were 107 anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2009 to 160 in 2010, the last year for which numbers are available.ⁱⁱ

Incidents in Illinois included shots fired at a mosque in Morton Grove and an acid bomb thrown at an Islamic school in Lombard. In other states, a mosque was burned to the ground in Joplin, Mo., vandals sprayed an Oklahoma mosque with paintballs, pigs legs were thrown at a mosque-site in California, and a firebomb was thrown at a Muslim family’s home in Panama City, Fla.

The violence against religion during this period was not limited to Muslim targets. In what was by far the worst incident, six Sikhs were gunned down by a white supremacist in Wisconsin. A security guard at the Family Research Council, a right-wing Christian organization, was shot in the arm as he heroically barred a gunman from the group’s office. The windows of an Arab Christian church in Detroit were broken by vandals.

¹ Earlier numbers included an 8/5 incident in which the sign of a Rhode Island mosque was vandalized. Police later arrested and charged Robert Scalzo with a misdemeanor in relation to the incident. According to reports, Police determined that the incident was not bias related.

Previously, Muslims witnessed a significant spike in incidents, particularly those targeting Islamic houses of worship, in the summer and fall of 2010 during the controversy over plans to construct an Islamic community center in lower Manhattan, the Park 51 project.

During the 2012 Ramadan spike, CAIR called for stepped-up police protection at Muslim institutions and other houses of worship nationwide and offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of whoever caused the Missouri fire. CAIR also re-issued its Mosque Safety Kit and a shorter information sheet providing tips on simple, immediate actions mosque leadership could take to improve site security.

In many cases, law enforcement officials are conducting investigations and have not yet final determinations if the below incidents were bias-motivated.

U.S. Mosques

"The American Mosque 2011: Basic Characteristics of the American Mosque, Attitudes of Mosque Leaders," a comprehensive study of mosques and the attitudes of mosque leaders in the United States released in February, indicates that the number of American mosques increased 74 percent since 2000 and that Islamic houses of worship are ethnically-diverse institutions led by officials who advocate positive civic engagement.

The report's major findings include:

- The number of mosques and mosque participants continues to show significant growth, from 1,209 mosques in 2000 to 2,106 in 2011. New York and California have the largest number of mosques. Seventy-six percent of mosques were established since 1980.
- Mosque leaders overwhelmingly endorse Muslim involvement in American society. More than 98 percent of mosque leaders agree that Muslims should be involved in American institutions and 91 percent agree that Muslims should be involved in politics.
- The vast majority of mosque leaders do not feel that American society is hostile to Islam.
- Mosques remain an extremely diverse religious institution. Only a tiny minority of mosques (3 percent) have just one ethnic group that attends that mosque. South Asians, Arab-Americans and African-Americans remain the dominant ethnic groups, but significant numbers of Somalis, West Africans and Iraqis now worship at mosques nationwide.
- The number of mosques in urban areas is decreasing, while the number of mosques in suburban areas is increasing. In 2011, 28 percent of mosques were located in suburbs, up from 16 percent in 2000.

Mosque Incidents

In the 13 day period between August 6 and August 18, CAIR tracked eight incidents involving Muslim places of worship. This is only two incidents less than the entire preceding seven months.

Mosque Incidents 2009-2012

Year	Violence	Vandalism	Islamophobic Rhetoric	Threat of Violence	Other	Total
2009	2	8	6	0	0	16
2010*	8	13	17	4	4	46
2011 (preliminary)	3	12	9	4	2	30
2012 Pre-Ramadan (preliminary)	1**	5	0	0	4	10
2012 Ramadan (preliminary)	2	3	1	0	2	8

Numbers are considered preliminary as authorities have not made determinations in many of the cases.

* Park 51, Islamic cultural center in lower Manhattan episode in part accounts for spike. That episode, which involved weeks of news, numerous protests, hundreds of articles and several altercations is counted as one incident.

**July arson in Joplin, Mo.

Incident Details

Missouri (violence)

August 6: The Islamic Society of Joplin's building, valued at an estimated \$600,000, was destroyed by a suspicious fire. A small fire at the same building in July was determined to be arson. A CAIR staffer who visited the site after the fire reported "people driving by in their trucks cursing the mosque."ⁱⁱⁱ

California (other)

August 7: Three pig legs were left at the planned mosque site of Al-Nur Islamic Center in Ontario. Worshippers told CAIR-LA that the pig legs were thrown on the site's driveways just before 10 p.m. by two women who then drove off in a white pick-up truck. A security guard witnessed the incident. The congregation has faced vocal opposition in the past.^{iv}

California (vandalism)

August 3: Oranges and lemons were thrown at the American Muslim Association in Hayward while worshippers were inside. At least one person was hit. Four teenagers were arrested "on suspicion of vandalism that interferes with civil rights." According to the mosque president the teens had targeted the facility on a least three other occasions during Ramadan. While the mosque sits in an area with a number of religious facilities, the Islamic one was the only building targeted.^v

Illinois (violence)

August 10: Two air rifle shots were fired at the outer wall of the Muslim Education Center (MEC) mosque in Morton Grove. The shots were heard by worshippers who were outside the mosque

and were powerful enough to damage the building's brick wall. David Conrad was later arrested and faces four felony charges for allegedly firing the shots.^{vi}

Oklahoma (vandalism)

August 12: Vandals fired numerous paintballs at the doors of the Grand Mosque of Oklahoma City and then fled the scene. A video camera on the property recorded the incident.^{vii}

Illinois (vandalism)

August 12: Someone threw a bottle filled with acid and other unspecified materials at the College Preparatory School of America in Lombard as worshippers were inside conducting nighttime Ramadan prayers. Worshipers said they heard a loud bang and discovered that the acid bomb had been thrown at the window of the school. No one was injured.^{viii}

Florida (vandalism, not classified as a mosque incident)

August 15: Someone threw a mason jar filled with gasoline at the home of a Muslim family in Panama City. The incendiary device bounced on the house and set fire to the family's lawn. "This could have burned down our house. This could have killed everyone," the son of the home's owner told a local news station.^{ix}

Illinois (vandalism, not classified as a mosque incident)

August 17: Muslim graves at the Evergreen Cemetery in Evergreen Park were spray-painted with anti-Islam hate graffiti. A local Muslim man found the graffiti when he went to the cemetery to pay respects at the grave of his father. The hate graffiti included the words "**RAGHAED KILLER**" (sic) and insults to Islam's Prophet Muhammad. According to reports, this was the sixth time the grave marker was vandalized in a seventeen month period.^x The marker was vandalized again in September.^{xi}

California (Islamophobic rhetoric)

August 18: After the Santa Clara county planning commission approved a mosque's site-use permit, local residents organized an anti-Muslim lecture. Peter Friedman of Islamicthreat.com told a local paper that Islam is a violent religion and that, "For some reason we believe that Muslims in America are different than Muslims in the Middle East and Africa who are killing people. But it all comes from the same book." Hearings about the mosque were characterized by large crowds and attendees who expressed fear of Muslims coming into their neighborhood.^{xii} According to CAIR staff Islamophobic rhetoric was expressed in hearings in planning commission community advisory meetings on 7/31 and 8/1 as well as the planning commission meeting on 8/2. Residents told CAIR that 7/31 was the worst with some Muslims reporting that they felt unsafe returning to their vehicles after the meeting.

New York (Other)

August 19: Someone scattered bacon on the site where Staten Island Muslims had gathered to hold prayers honoring the end of Ramadan. The incident was being investigated as a hate crime.^{xiii} Hours before event, someone posted a threat to bring a pig to the prayer. After the event, an anonymous caller to a local paper asserted that the bacon was left for seagulls and raccoons to eat.^{xiv}

Recommendations

Anti-Muslim Rhetoric Must Carry the Same Stigma as Bias Directed at Many Other Minorities

In *Same Hate, New Target*, a report on Islamophobia in the United States released in 2011 by CAIR and the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Race and Gender, interviewees "often cited their observation that there is a general societal acceptance of derogatory commentary about Islam." This remains true.

While even biased speech must always remain legally protected, such speech should have no place in mainstream discourse. No serious public official or candidate for public office would meet with an anti-Semite or white supremacist. Similarly they would not make statements encouraging such ideologies.

Islamophobia seems to enjoy a more acceptable status. During Ramadan, this trend was comfortably on display.

In language mirroring that used to oppose Catholic and Jewish minorities in the past, opponents of a mosque in Murfreesboro, Tenn., which has been targeted for years by a campaign of Islamophobia including a lawsuit which asserted that Islam is not a religion and therefore not protected under the First Amendment, "say they are fighting for the soul of America."^{xv}

When an town hall meeting attendee told Rep. Joe Walsh (R-IL) that he was "looking for some godly men and women in the Senate, in the Congress, who will stand in the face of the danger of Islam," Walsh left the door open for suspicion of every Muslim living in certain parts of Illinois when he responded saying radical Islam is more of a threat "now that it was right after 9/11" and "It's here. It's in Elk Grove. It's in Addison. It's in Elgin. It's here."^{xvi}

Politico reported that Tennessee multimillionaire Andy Miller sought to help unseat Rep. Diane Black (R-TN). *Politico* noted, "Black's sin, according to Miller, is not taking the danger of Islam seriously enough."^{xvii} During her run for that congressional seat in Tennessee, Republican Lou Ann Zelenik advanced the theory that Islam is not a religion saying, "I consider 15 percent of Islam a religion, 85 percent political."^{xviii}

In early August presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney met privately with a key figure in the Islamophobia movement, retired Lieutenant General William G. "Jerry" Boykin. Boykin asserts that "[Islam] should not be protected under the First Amendment," that there should be "no mosques in America." In 2003, President Bush rebuked Boykin for his anti-Muslim stance.

Mosques or Other Religious Institution's Leadership Should Take Steps to Secure Their Facilities

Certain realities in today's America make future repeats of anti-Islam violence, vandalism or rhetoric probable. Earlier this year, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported, "The number of anti-Muslim groups tripled in 2011, jumping from 10 groups in 2010 to 30 last year."^{xix} According to the FBI there were 107 anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2009 to 160 in 2010, the last year for which numbers are available.^{xx}

CAIR produced the following material to assist in such efforts.

CAIR Community Security and Safety Tips: Immediate Steps to Protect Your Mosque or Religious Institution

<http://www.cair.com/Portals/0/pdf/CAIR-Community-Security-Safety-Tips.pdf>

CAIR Muslim Community Safety Kit

<http://www.cair.com/ActionCenter/CommunityToolkit.aspx>

Bias-Motivated Attacks on Americans of Any Faith or Their Places of Worship Must Not be Tolerated

In 2010, the most recent year for which the FBI has released statistics, 20 percent of hate crimes committed in the United States were motivated by religious bias.^{xxi} Attacks on churches, mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras or any other places of spiritual reflection are anathema to a nation built on a foundation of free religious expression.

Appendix

Notes on CAIR’s Mosque Incident Database

A case is deemed a “mosque incident” if the location in question was being used for Islamic prayer services.

Definitions Used in CAIR’s Mosque Incident Database

Violence: Causing personal injury or significant destruction of property, such as arson. Damage in excess of \$1,000. Use of a weapon, such as a gun, in a manner that could have injured or killed a person.

Vandalism: Defacement of property or insignificant destruction of property (less than \$1,000)

Islamophobic Rhetoric: Hate speech that is directed at Islam or Muslims in general.

Threat of Violence: A threat to cause personal injury or destruction of property.

Other: Incidents that do not fit into the above categories

Examples:

- Firing an air gun at an occupied mosque = violence
- Firing an air gun at an unoccupied mosque = vandalism
- Wiping bacon on a mosque’s door handle = other
- Speakers at a public hearing saying a mosque will bring terrorists into the community = Islamophobic rhetoric.

ⁱ Mark Potok. “The ‘Patriot’ Movement Explodes,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Spring 2012, Issue Number: 145.

ⁱⁱ Mark Potok. “FBI: Dramatic Spike in Hate Crimes Targeting Muslims,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Spring 2012, Issue Number: 145 .

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ksdk.com/news/article/333204/3/Islamic-Foundation-director-offers-harrowing-account-of-visit-to-temple-after-fire>

^{iv} Alex Fees. “Faizan Syed Offers Harrowing Account of Visit to Joplin Temple After Fire,” KSDK, August 15, 2012.

Available at: http://www.pe.com/local-news/politics/ben-goat-headlines/20120810-ontario-pigs-dumped-outside-mosque-site_ece

^v Natalie Neysa Alund. "Teens Arrested for lobbing lemons at Hayward Mosque During Prayer Time," San Jose Mercury News, August 9, 2012.

Available at: http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_21266516

^{vi} Christine Roberts. "Man arrested for shooting at Chicago-area mosque," New York Daily News, August 12, 2012.

Available at: http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-08-12/news/33171054_1_chicago-area-mosque-chief-mark-erickson-ramadan

^{vii} Matt Dinger. "Vandals Shoot Paintballs at OKC mosque," Newsok.com, August 12, 2012. Available at: <http://newsok.com/vandals-shoot-paintballs-at-okc-mosque/article/3700402>

^{viii} "Islamic School Hit with Acid-Filled Bottle in Lombard," CBS Chicago, August 13, 2012.

Available at: <http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2012/08/13/islamic-school-hit-with-acid-filled-bottle-in-lombard/>

^{ix} "Firebomb Thrown at Florida Muslim Family's Home," WJHQ, August 17, 2012.

Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zPcqoYBIGA>

^x Ryan Haggerty. "Evergreen Park grave site vandalized for sixth time, police say," Chicago Tribune, August 17, 2012.

^{xi} Manya Brachear. "Muslim grave site in Evergreen Park vandalized again," Chicago Tribune, September 3, 2012.

^{xii} Carly Gelsing. "Mosque Opponents Target the Evils of Islam," Gilroy Dispatch, August 13, 2012.

Available at: http://www.gilroydispatch.com/news/san_martin_county/mosque-opponents-target-the-evils-of-islam/article_8423c1d8-e5b3-11e1-a906-0019bb30f31a.html

^{xiii} http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/08/staten_island_muslims_mark_ram.html

^{xiv} John Annese and Deborah Young. "Anonymous Caller takes responsibility for Ramadan bacon incident on Staten Island," Staten Island Advance, August 22, 2012.

Available at: http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/08/anonymous_caller_takes_respons.html

^{xv} Bob Smietana. "Fight against Islam stretches beyond Murfreesboro mosque," The Tennessean, August 5, 2012.

Available at: http://www.tennessean.com/article/20120805/NEWS06/308050052/Fight-against-Islam-stretches-beyond-Murfreesboro-mosque?nclick_check=1

^{xvi} Eric Lutz. "Walsh: Muslims 'trying to kill Americans,'" Salon.com, August 9, 2012.

Available at: http://www.salon.com/2012/08/09/walsh_muslims_are_trying_to_kill_americans/

^{xvii} Alex Isendstadt. "Sharia law, super PACs roil GOP primary," Politico, July 29, 2012.

Available at: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0712/79102.html#ixzz24OsQRugG>

^{xviii} "Zelenik: '15% Of Islam Is A Religion, 85% Political,'" Newschannel5.com, July 27, 2012.

Available at: <http://www.newschannel5.com/story/19134302/zelenick-15-of-islam-is-a-religion-85-political>

^{xix} Mark Potok. "The 'Patriot' Movement Explodes," Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Spring 2012, Issue Number: 145.

^{xx} Mark Potok. "FBI: Dramatic Spike in Hate Crimes Targeting Muslims," Southern Poverty Law Center, Intelligence Report, Spring 2012, Issue Number: 145 .

^{xxi} "FBI Releases 2010 Hate Crimes Statistics." FBI Press Release, November 14, 2011.

Available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2010-hate-crime-statistics>