



**Council on American-Islamic Relations**

**CAIR Office in Maryland**

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October 3, 2022

Aquil Hamm  
Chief, Baltimore School Police  
Baltimore City Public Schools  
200 E. North Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21202

**RE: Brutal Assault of Muslim Student**

Dear Chief Hamm,

On behalf of the Maryland Office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, I am writing to call your urgent attention to an alarming series of suspected bias motivated incidents that reportedly took place at the Academy for College and Career Exploration in Baltimore City last month. We urge you to promptly and thoroughly investigate these incidents, take full, appropriate action against those responsible including disciplinary consequences for staff and restorative action against students involved, and take steps to ensure such incidents do not happen again against any student.

According to a complaint submitted to our office, at least two female Muslim students at the school were targeted by their peers on or around September 16, 2022 in separate incidents in which their hijabs were forcibly removed from their heads.

In the first incident, on September 16 around 10 a.m. EST, a [REDACTED] Muslim teen at the school, [REDACTED] was reportedly adjusting her hijab in the girls' bathroom when she was attacked by a group of girls, several of whom looked on as at least three others allegedly punched her in the head several times, pulled off her hijab and proceeded to attempt to choke her with it. [REDACTED] attempted to escape the bathroom, but the door had been locked from the outside. School officials reportedly confirmed to the family that according to surveillance footage, a staff member locked the bathroom door.

The attack left visible bruises and swelling as later witnessed by a staff member at the school and [REDACTED] parents. CAIR learned that the pin in the scarf beneath her chin penetrated the skin of her neck, leaving injuries. After the attack, [REDACTED] opened the door, [REDACTED] left and returned to class deeply distraught and crying. At the end of the school day, as she left to go home, the same group of girls who attacked her allegedly stared at her and made intimidating hand gestures towards her.

According to [REDACTED] family, who speak very little English, the school did not report the incident to them. They learned about it from their daughter when she arrived home. [REDACTED] father, [REDACTED] emailed [REDACTED] teacher to ask why he hadn't been told about what happened. The teacher he emailed did not know what had happened, but told him that she would try to find out and get back to him.

According to the family, the school principal and a teacher visited the family at their home on Sunday, September 18. Despite assurances that [REDACTED] would be protected, [REDACTED] chose not to send her to school that Monday but allowed his other children to go. That day, one of [REDACTED]'s other daughters was approached by three

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of the same girls, who pulled her shoulder. After learning of this, ██████████ decided not to send any of his kids back to school for over a week out of fear for their safety.

This ordeal has left ██████████ with substantial physical and psychological trauma. Until Wednesday, September 28, ██████████ has been afraid to send his children back to school absent assurances that the school can demonstrate its ability to keep them safe. Imaging obtained during a ██████████ Emergency Room visit on September 27, over one week after the incident, revealed that ██████████ still suffered from a serious concussion. The swelling and bruising on her neck made it painful for her to swallow for several days.

██████████ family has authorized CAIR to represent them and speak on their behalf. Officer ██████████ cc'ed on this letter, advised me during a phone call earlier today that the initial police report submitted by school police to the State's Attorney's office omitted crucial details about the nature of the attack, follow-up hospital visit, concussion diagnosis and the extent of trauma endured by ██████████. **To this end, we request you to update and submit this police report with comprehensive, meticulous details about the incident so that it can be investigated and handled appropriately, and corrective action taken.** ██████████

Like all articles of faith, the hijab is a constitutionally protected garment that represents a core part of the identity of girls and women who wear it. ██████████

██████████. We are calling the following:

- A hate bias probe into the attack on ██████████ with restorative action against students involved in the assault.
- A full, transparent investigation and corrective action taken against school staff involved in the locking of the bathroom door, and who failed to inform the parents of the assault on their daughter.
- An explanation of measures taken by the school/system to ensure ██████████ safety and well-being.
- Compassionate, culturally appropriate counseling and support services to be made available to ██████████ her siblings and other impacted students for as long as they require to recover from this incident.
- System-wide anti-bullying training and cultural competency training for students and educators.
- System-wide policy changes that ensure that whenever an incident occurs compromising the safety and well-being of any child within your school system, that parents/guardians be notified by the school immediately.
- Clarification into school policies regarding the locking of any bathroom doors at any time during the school day.

Another incident reportedly occurred on or around September 19, 2022 and involved ██████████ neighbor, who is also a female Muslim student who wears hijab at this school. The circumstances are less clear about this incident, but also allegedly involved her headscarf being forcibly removed by other students.

Sadly, these reported attacks are not unique. CAIR National's 2022 Civil Rights Report, *Still Suspect*, documented various school-related complaints ranging from bullying, Islamophobic school curriculum, and holiday denials in 2021. A recent poll by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding reports, "In 2022, we find that nearly half (48%) of Muslim families with school-age children reported having a child who faced religious-based bullying in the past year."

**SEE: 2022 Civil Rights Report: Still Suspect**

<https://www.cair.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Still-Suspect-Report-2022.pdf>

**Bias and Bullying in Public Schools: Mitigating the Impact on Muslim and Perceived-as-Muslim Students**

[http://www.islamophobia.org/images/2019/Bullying/Bias\\_and\\_Bullying\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.islamophobia.org/images/2019/Bullying/Bias_and_Bullying_White_Paper.pdf)

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CAIR is available to assist and provide trainings and resources on issues concerning the rights and well-being of students within your school system. We thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns, and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Zainab Chaudry, Pharm.D.  
Director, CAIR Office in Maryland  
Council on American-Islamic Relations

P.S. October has officially been designated as 'Statewide Bullying Prevention Month' by Governor Hogan. We encourage you to take advantage of this month to offer education and training on this potentially devastating issue to help create a safer learning environment for all of our children within your school system. Please consider CAIR a resource and ally in this important cause, and reach out to me directly if we can help in any way.

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