



## ***Abubakar As-Sadique Islamic Center***

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March 12, 2009

Honorable Joseph Lieberman  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lieberman:

Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center (AAIC) appreciates the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's highlighting of the serious nature of the issue of the missing Somali men. We respectfully request that the following facts be submitted into the record of the Senate Committee Hearing.

AAIC has consistently and repetitively condemned all acts of terrorism, emphasizing not only the illegality of traveling to Somalia to join terrorists groups or becoming suicide bombers, but that these acts are against the teachings of the religion of Islam.

It is our strong belief that our Islamic Center's good reputation and message of active citizenship was stained during testimony at the "*Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*" hearing on March 11, 2009.

Since no representative of our Center was present to balance the testimony, AAIC asks for the opportunity to share with you four main areas of inaccuracy in what was presented to the committee:

1. Community Engagement Activities of AAIC;
2. Financial Transparency;
3. Engagement of Federal Officials; and
4. Known Adults Traveling to Fight in Somalia.

## 1. Community Engagement Activities of AAIC

Since our incorporation in 1998, the leadership and members of the Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center have engaged and served our neighbors in the Twin Cities. We are the largest and just one out of 10 Somali Islamic Centers in the area.

- In 2001, we started the Annual AAIC Convention, held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, which every year attracts over 5,000 people. The Mayor of Minneapolis, local city council members, Minnesota state and federal legislators, and the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) are invited annually and some have participated regularly.
- We have an ongoing relationship with the Minneapolis Police Department. They have presented to the AAIC community on how to report crimes. We have worked extensively together on combating Somali youth gang violence which continues to riddle our community. An active member of our AAIC community was awarded the Theresa S. Ruhland Youth Award from the MPD because of her extensive work with youth.
- We are an active participant of neighborhood associations, and we partake in the annual Greenway Coalition to beautify our neighborhood. We operate a community-wide food shelf through our Center in partnership with local organizations.
- The Mall of America partners with AAIC, where we provide volunteers to serve as security guards during Muslim holiday events.

Our youth are our biggest investment and most of our resources go to educating and engaging them to be active American Muslim citizens.

- We organize seasonal youth activities so that they have a safe space to interact and as an alternative to associating with gangs who are rampant in our area.
- We have created mentorship programs which encourage high school youth to pursue and attend colleges and universities. We take pride in the success of this program--the majority of our youth are college graduates.

In addition to providing youth activities, we serve the Muslim community through dispute resolution services for families, visiting the sick, and hosting weddings at our Center almost every weekend.

Many of our press releases, press conferences, annual conference lectures, Friday sermons and workshop lectures can be found online at the following websites: [www.abuubakar.org](http://www.abuubakar.org), [www.somalitalk.com](http://www.somalitalk.com), and [www.halgan.net](http://www.halgan.net). Our speeches are given in Somali because that is the common native language of our community. We are, of course, willing to assist in translation if needed.

## **2. Financial Transparency**

AAIC maintains accounting system in accordance with General Accepted Accounting Principles, and AAIC conducts annual audits from external auditors. The findings of these are available for review by request. We raise money from our community members throughout the United States and Canada only. We have not raised any money outside of North America. Raising funds through individual donors is how our Center is sustained.

## **3. Engagement of Federal Officials**

Before the recent events regarding the missing Somali men, the FBI had visited the Somali community in the Twin Cities sporadically, but never individually with AAIC executive board members. AAIC recently hosted a Community Dinner and Open House where over 200 guests from the surrounding neighborhoods attended not only to see what a mosque looks like, but to meet the people who attend on a daily basis. The FBI and DHS were invited but both declined to attend. We understand that DHS, FBI, ICE, the Joint Terrorism Task Force (including law enforcement from throughout the country), and Senator Lieberman's representatives have come to the Twin Cities to gather information. Sen. Lieberman's representatives have been the only officials to meet with AAIC leadership to this day. We reached out to the FBI to meet on February 19, 2009 but no meeting has yet been scheduled.

## **4. Adults Traveling to Somalia to Fight**

Senator Roland Burris asked if any adults have been traveling to Somalia to fight, and our answer is yes. Shirwa Ahmed, the man who FBI Director Robert Mueller said was a suicide bomber in Somalia (and the only example given of a person carrying out an attack) was nearing 30 years of age. Based on information from the community, we understand that Shirwa Ahmed grew up in the Twin Cities, but it should be noted that Mr. Ahmed left the area about 18 months ago. He had not been in Minneapolis or for that matter the United States, for well over a year.

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you what we believe has been wrongfully communicated to you.

Sincerely,

Omar Hurre  
Executive Director

Cc: Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee