



## Decidedly Uncivil, Part 2: Muslim Mother Target of Hate Crime

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Philadelphia FBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Brian Lynch is joined by Salam Al-Marayati, Executive Director MPAC, left, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeff Whitt during a May press conference in Philadelphia.

She is a mother of two, a Muslim Arab American, and a manager at a Sheraton Suites Hotel in Philadelphia. What could she possibly have to do with the 9/11 attacks more than five years ago?

**Nothing, of course.** But that didn't stop one of her employees from allegedly leaving her an ominous threatening note filled with venomous words and phrases such as "REMEMBER 9/11"... "You and your kids will pay"... and "death."

**After getting the threat letter, the woman did the right thing:** she contacted us for help. We were able to investigate the incident as a civil rights violation because the note involved a federally protected right of employment in a private business; the threat of force; and apparent bias involving race, religion, or ethnicity.

"Initially I was very hesitant about approaching the FBI," the victim said in an interview with the Muslim Public Affairs

Council, or MPAC, which joined our Philadelphia office and the local U.S. Attorney's Office at a press conference Wednesday in announcing the indictment of a 36-year-old Philadelphia woman in the case earlier this week. "But along the way I found good people investigating my case."

That included an FBI agent from our Philadelphia office, who did some basic detective work to find the alleged culprit. The cryptic note, left in the victim's office last October, contained a series of threatening phrases cut from publications and attached to a partial sheet of lined paper. The agent discovered that the clippings appeared to come from brochures at the hotel, which led him to the suspect.

Brian Lynch, assistant special agent in charge of our Philadelphia office, noted that hate crimes targeting Arab, Muslim, and Sikh communities spiked after the 9/11 attacks, leading to more than 500 investigations and more than 100 local and federal convictions. Our latest stats show that 11 percent of the 1,314 hate crimes motivated by religious bias—128 in all—targeted Muslims. More than 30 percent of all reported hate crime offenses in 2005 involved intimidation similar to this case.

"Incidents of hate are under-reported out of fear of the FBI and government in general," said Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of MPAC, which works to protect the civil rights of Muslims. "In this case, the victim acquired the confidence in government as she interacted with law enforcement... Our partnership with the FBI and with the Department of Justice, something we've worked on before 9/11, has helped support more government engagement from Muslim Americans."

With the success of this case and the positive interaction between this mother and FBI agents, we only hope that more Muslim and Arab Americans will have the confidence to step forward and report attacks against them based on hatred and discrimination. Our commitment to protecting their rights—and the rights of all Americans—remains strong.

### Resources:

- Response to Published Reports on FBI Civil Rights Cases
- Hate Crime Statistics 2005
- FBI Hate Crime website
- Decidedly Uncivil, Part 1: Cross Burnings in the 21st Century

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