National Coalition
To Protect Civil Freedoms
(NCPCF)

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
*Martin Luther King, Jr.*
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Member Organizations

American Muslim Alliance (AMA)
Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC)
Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR)
Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility (CLEAR)
Defending Dissent Foundation (DDF)
Desis, Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)
Friends of Human Rights (FHR)
International Action Center (IAC)
Islamic Circle of North America- Council for Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ)
Muslim American Society-Freedom (MAS-F)
Muslim Justice Initiative (MJI)
Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)
National Lawyers Guild (NLG)
National Liberty Fund (NLF)
Peace Thru Justice Foundation (PTJF)
Project SALAM - Support and Legal Advocacy for Muslims (Project SALAM)
Universal Justice Foundation (UJF)
“Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like spirits at the dawn of day.”  

*Thomas Jefferson*

Civil freedoms signify those fundamental principles of civil liberties, and political and religious freedoms, as guaranteed and protected by the Constitution, as well as human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In fact, such essential freedoms are the hallmarks of democratic and free societies. The vital issue that concerned the American founding fathers in the early days of the Republic was not economic prosperity, distribution of resources, or the establishment of political parties. The central question that commanded their attention was what list of constraints and prohibitions would be placed on government so as to protect the people from its coercive powers or improper actions. In the words of the great American patriot, Patrick Henry, “The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the
people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government."

The civil freedoms of the people of the United States are written in the Bill of Rights, and they include: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, thought, expression, and action, freedom of the press, freedom of lawful assembly, freedom of association and of movement, and the protection of these rights from government restrictions or interference.

Other civil rights and freedoms, seen as manifestations of respect for the rule of law by the state, include: the right to life, liberty, and security, freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or torture and habeas corpus, the right to privacy, the freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, the right not to incriminate oneself, and the guarantee of due process and a fair and public trial.

Americans learn from grade school to take pride in their country, but not because of our vast resources, prosperous economy, dominant culture, or powerful military. We are taught from a very young age that what distinguishes our country is the constitutional system that constrains the powers of government—even when the majority of the people are willing to cede our rights or freedoms.
These constitutional rights and freedoms are absolute and guaranteed to all persons, citizens and non-citizens alike. The Bill of Rights enumerates these rights and freedoms forcefully: “Congress shall make no law . . .; the right of the people to be secure . . . shall not be violated . . .; No person shall be held . . . nor shall any person be subject . . .; the accused shall enjoy . . .; the right of trial by jury shall be preserved . . .; the enumeration of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others . . .”

But ever since the tragic events of 9/11, America’s civil freedoms have been threatened. Everyone is affected when the government abuses its power or targets a segment of its citizens. When such government abuses take place, they do not end with “the other” or with the weakest link in society. Let’s never forget the saying of pastor Martin Niemöller over sixty-five years ago:

*When the Nazis came for the communists, I remained silent; I was not a communist.*

*When they locked up the socialists, I remained silent; I was not a socialist.*

*When they came for the trade unionists, I did not speak out; I was not a trade unionist.*

*When they came for the Jews, I remained silent; I wasn’t a Jew.*

*When they came for me, there was no one left to speak out.*
How does the Government now abuse its power?

"Any people that would give up liberty for a little temporary safety deserves neither liberty nor safety."

*Benjamin Franklin*

**Thought Crime Prosecutions**

Since 9/11 the government has targeted certain individuals and groups - *because of their beliefs, thoughts, or associations* - to be jailed in the name of security, while facing the government’s immense power and massive prosecutorial resources. Such “thought crime prosecutions” are in direct violation of our constitution because they embody the *criminalization of first amendment type activities*.

For instance, during the six-month trial in Florida in 2005, much of the government’s evidence against Dr. Sami Al-Arian consisted of speeches the university professor delivered, lectures he presented, articles he
wrote, magazines he edited, books he owned, conferences he convened, rallies he attended, interviews he gave, news he heard, and websites he never even accessed. Even an imaginary conversation with him that took place in the dream of one of his co-defendants was presented to the jury as evidence. Therefore, it was no surprise that with almost 100 counts between all four defendants in that trial, not a single guilty verdict on any count was returned by the jury.

In the Holy Land Foundation’s case in 2008 in Texas, the government admitted that the donations collected by HLF were spent on food, shelter, education, health care and other humanitarian aid. The government’s theory was not that HLF supported violence but that it helped some charity committees in the Palestinian occupied territories, allegedly associated with Hamas, “win the hearts and minds of the Palestinian people.” Two defendants in that trial were sentenced to 65 years behind bars for essentially feeding the wrong people.

Even singers and artists were not spared the 
*FBI’s witch-hunt*. Mufeed Abdulqader, one of the defendants in the Holy Land case, and Abu Rateb, another singer arrested in Michigan in 2010, were charged with providing material support to Hamas because they were singing in concerts sponsored by
charities the government claims were fundraising events on behalf of the Palestinian banned group. These entertainers never raised a penny. Their crime was that they had exceptional voices.

In 2004, computer science graduate student Sami Al-Hussayen was acquitted in Idaho after being charged with terrorism for establishing and maintaining a website on Palestine. But in northern Virginia, Islamic scholar Dr. Ali Al-Tamimi was convicted and sent to life in prison in 2005 for issuing a fatwa (Islamic legal opinion) against the American invasion of Afghanistan and the Indian occupation of Kashmir. These thought crime prosecutions used by the government are reminiscent of a tyrannical police state as James Madison correctly prophesized: “The means of defense against foreign danger historically have become the instruments of tyranny at home.”

Manufactured Charges Prosecutions

Another dangerous tactic used by the government is to select its targets not only before a crime is committed, but also by manufacturing the crimes. Though called “preemptive prosecutions,” by the government, this tactic is obviously a betrayal of the constitution. Yet in these cases, the government plans, finances, and executes the alleged violations using agent
provocateurs. The government has jailed dozens of innocent Muslims and others on manufactured charges as a preventive measure because of their “ideology.”

Yasin Aref, an imam of his mosque in Albany, New York, was prosecuted and sentenced to 15 years in 2007 because he had witnessed a conversation between a government agent and another victim, although the imam neither participated in the conversation, nor did he understand the agent who spoke with a heavy accent and used codes. In the Newburgh 4 trial in New York, the same agent- who is incidentally a common criminal- was used to entrap poor African-American Muslim converts by promising them hundreds of thousands of dollars in a plot planned and financed by the authorities.

In another case in New Jersey in 2008, dubbed the Fort Dix 5, the government concocted another conspiracy against an American military base using another agent provocateur- to convict five men in their twenties, including 3 brothers, and sentence them to life in prison. The government admitted that the whole plot from start to finish was manufactured by the government because once government agents saw these individuals shouting “God is Great” on a videotape, they concluded that they were dangerous.
Civil Freedoms vs. Profiling
According to Race, Religion and Politics

Efforts to anticipate and prevent potential future crimes have led to abuses, including the expansion of ethnic profiling to add “flying while Muslim” to the long established vulnerability of “driving while black,” and “walking in border states while Latino.” Because of counter-terrorism concerns and the xenophobia they unleashed, society has been conditioned to accept profiling as an appropriate tool for law enforcement at airports, on the highways, and in the streets of border states.

Put simply, different federal agencies pursuing distinct agendas marginalize different ethnic groups: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) prey on Latinos in the war on immigrants; CBP and the FBI target Muslims, Arabs and South Asians; and the FBI and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) marginalize African-Americans. On the other hand, at the local level, the various forms of profiling are all linked to the activities of local police departments.

Whether concerned by government spying, or the profiling of Latino, African, Muslim,
Arab and South Asian-Americans for so-called "signature crimes," limits on local law enforcement authorities offer the potential to galvanize solidarity among communities concerned with just and color-blind society.

Measures restricting domestic intelligence operations can also attract the support of libertarians across the political spectrum—from the radical liberal on the left to the extreme conservative on the right—disaffected by the Washington consensus derogating individual privacy and expanding executive power.

**Inhumane Treatment of Prisoners**

The U.S. Constitution and the International Declaration of Human Rights categorically prohibit the government from using torture, whether physical or psychological, or inflicting any cruel or unusual punishment on anyone including guilty persons. The International Declaration of Human Rights states that prisoners shall not be punished unless they have been informed of the offense alleged against him. It further prohibits punishment by close confinement and any other cruel, inhumane or degrading punishments.

Since 9/11 Muslim and other political prisoners, including defendants of “environmental crimes,” have been subjected
to extreme measures even before they are tried. For example, since his arrest in 2006, pre-trial detainee Syed Fahad Hashmi was placed for over 3 years in solitary confinement subject to unduly restrictive Special Administrative Measures (SAMs). These draconian measures mandate that he be kept under 23-hour lockdown, denied most privileges given to all common and violent criminals including phone calls, allowed only one non-contact visit from an immediate family member a week, and have no other contact with anyone besides his lawyer and prison officials.

Similarly, Dr. Al-Arian was held in solitary confinement, under Guantanamo-like conditions, for 41 straight months during and after his trial, despite the fact that he had never waived his right to a speedy trial, prompting Amnesty International to protest the conditions of his confinement, calling them "gratuitously punitive."

Even after conviction, including for non-violent and victimless offenses, many are placed under Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) or in the extremely restrictive Communication Management Units (CMUs).

In the CMUs they are denied even the most basic privileges afforded to people convicted of any other crime, such as contact visits with
their families. Not only were they denied the reasons of why they were placed in such units, but also how they could ever get out of them.

In summary,

- The government is enforcing harsh laws that criminalize ideology and free thought. People are receiving long jail sentences for supporting verbally or in other ways foreign organizations the government disapproves of, even when the support is for legal, or benevolent activities that reduce suffering and violence.

- The government uses criminals and con men to entrap hundreds of people targeted on the basis of their ideology. These agent provocateurs befriend targets, and sometimes follow them around for years, secretly recording conversations in order to manufacture charges. Your friend at your house of worship, your business associate, your online counterpart in a chat room may be an FBI agent trying to get you to commit a crime – trying for example to get you to say something that supports a foreign organization the government disapproves of – which is a crime you may not even be aware of.
The government is engaged in a massive secret surveillance program that intrudes into every aspect of our lives. The government cherry picks information to show that targets have the wrong ideology and may be guilty of crimes, yet the government has claimed it has no program to identify recorded information that shows a target is not guilty. The unfairness of this is obvious and the Inspector General of the Department of Justice admitted in a July 2009 report that such conduct is illegal. However, the government has ignored his recommendation and has not reviewed past cases to dismiss those cases, which unfairly failed to present material showing the defendants were not guilty.

In the era of heightened security and economic uncertainty, government agencies have embarked on massive profiling programs in society affecting almost all vulnerable communities while eroding our most basic civil liberties, political freedoms, and constitutional rights, and resulting in the expansion of the powers of the executive with little or no oversight.
- The government has discriminated against those Muslims it convicts by placing them, sometimes for life, under harsh conditions of confinement in the CMUs despite the fact that they have never engaged in violence. They are denied basic privileges afforded to the most violent criminals in the system including killers, rapists, and sexual predators. Total ban or severe restrictions placed on the prisoners’ privileges in the CMU include regular contact visits, telephone calls, mail, books, subscriptions, group prayers, and recreation.

**NCPCF Mission**

Established in October 2010, the NCPCF is a coalition of national and local organizations as well as prominent individuals, whose mission is: To educate the public about the erosion of civil and political freedoms in the society, and the abuses of prisoners within the U.S. criminal justice system especially after 9/11, and to advocate for the preservation of those freedoms and to defend those rights according to the U.S. Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related UN Conventions, and the Geneva Conventions.
National Campaigns
The Coalition shall launch three national campaigns as the focal point of its activities:
1) Seeking to prohibit preventive prosecutions based on Thought Crimes and Manufactured Charges.
2) Promoting Civil Freedoms at the local level.
3) Advocating Equal Treatment for political and common criminal prisoners.

Join to Make a Difference
The NCPCF currently has over twenty national and local organizations including some of the most prominent civil rights and Muslim organizations. The coalition promotes and organizes its activities across the U.S. through several committees such as Policy and Planning, Legal Affairs, Education and Community Outreach, Media and Public Relations, Prisoners and Families, and Development and Organizational Outreach.

To become a member of the coalition, join any committee, organize an event in your area, or receive more information contact:

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