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.

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.

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.”

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.

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, unusual or degrading punishment on anyone including guilty persons. Since 9/11 Muslim and other political prisoners, including defendants of “environmental crimes,” have been subjected to extreme measures even before they are tried. 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).

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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