



# The Indian American Forum For Political Education



Massachusetts-Chapter  
([www.iafpe-ne.org](http://www.iafpe-ne.org))

December 2004

## CIVIL RIGHTS INFRINGEMENTS AND HATE CRIMES POST 9/11

Since the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers, the South Asian community in the United States has suffered civil rights infringements by local and national authorities, and has also been the target of "hate crimes," which are crimes that are motivated by hatred of a particular race or group. In the two months immediately after the attacks, four members of the South Asian community (a Sikh, a Hindu, and two Muslims) were murdered in different parts of the United States; all of these murders were designated as hate crimes by law enforcement officials. At the same time, 1,200 men of Middleastern and South Asian descent were detained by the United States government for an indeterminate period. In a subsequent "special registration" program, the government detained over 83,000 non-citizen males of Middleastern and South Asian descent over the age of sixteen. None were charged with a crime; however, 13,000 were placed in deportation proceedings.

In Massachusetts, on December 3, 2002, three teenagers from Lowell, beat, kicked and verbally abused three UMass students from India. The attackers shouted the words 'Osama Bin Laden' and 'Arabs', which caused law enforcement authorities to designate the assault as a hate crime. Community activists lead by Ravi Sakhuja, president of the Massachusetts chapter of IAFPE, worked with U.S. Congressman Marty Meehan, State Senator Steven C.Panagiotakos, Lowell Mayor Rita M. Mercier and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to organize a rally and to protest this crime. The rally was attended by 300 people and led to Mayor Mercier's issuance of a proclamation that "Lowell will maintain a policy of zero tolerance for hate crimes and adopt ADL's **No Place for Hate program**", and her recognition that the IAFPE, along with other responsible organizations, will "help communities develop and take specific actions to combat bias, bigotry and to promote respect for people." The cases of three assailants are pending in the court.

On June 22, 2003 in New Bedford, Ma. a student from India, who was delivering a pizza, was accosted by four men in the home to which he was delivering a pizza. Law enforcement officials believe the crime was motivated by the assailants' belief that their victim was Muslim. The student was beaten, stabbed, burned by cigarette butts,

and kidnapped, sustaining injuries for which he was sent to the intensive care unit of Rhode Island Hospital. In protest of this crime, IAFPE worked with the New Bedford Mayor Fred Kalisz and the local clergy to organize another rally which was attended by 150 members of the Indian-American community and residents of New Bedford. Two of the four alleged assailants have been sentenced to jail for terms of 7 and 4 years respectively in state prison. More recently, on July 22, 2004, a Sikh student at Boston College was detained in campus and questioned by secret service for seven hours, presumably because he was wearing a turban.

While criminal elements of society have been victimizing 'brown-skinned' residents, the South Asian community has also suffered under government-sanctioned, unconstitutional, over-reaching efforts to fight the war on terror. **The Patriot Act** allows law enforcement officials to make secret arrests, detain immigrants and citizens suspected of terrorism for indefinite periods of time, and label individuals as terrorists if they belong to certain activist organizations. The law has led to a rise in police use of racial profiling in law enforcement efforts. In addition to the fact that racial profiling infringes on individual protections provided in the Constitution, the practice has been proven to be ineffective. It diverts police attention from truly suspicious behavior, and creates an antagonistic relationship between law enforcement officials and the minority community that is harmful to long-term effective police work.

Media and political rhetoric targeting the Muslim community has greatly influenced the simultaneous increase in civil rights infringements and hate crimes subsequent to the 9/11 attacks. The negative repercussions of this rhetoric can only be neutralized through an energetic public relations campaign by the affected minority communities. In response to these events, members of organizations such as the IAFPE have pledged to build community, improve communication between different ethnic groups, and lead protests against acts of racial hatred. The Massachusetts chapter of IAFPE has been particularly active in countering hate crime in the state.

## Under the PATRIOT Act, The government can now:

- Arrest you without notifying your family and keep your detention secret.
- Search your home, spy on you with a roving wiretap, monitor your emails and internet use, and investigate your phone records without your knowledge.
- Collect information about books you read, your medical history, your personal finances.
- Put immigrants and American citizens suspected of terrorism in jail indefinitely even if they have not been convicted of a crime.
- Keep you from flying if you are on a list of suspicious persons without telling anyone why you are on the list.
- Secretly infiltrate and spy on lawful religious and political organizations.
- Hold secret trials using secret evidence that even defendants and lawyers cannot see.
- Label you a “terrorist” if you are a member of an activist group that engages in certain types of protest or civil disobedience.

**These new powers do not make us more safe, just less free**

**IAFPE recommends the following actions** based on our collaborative work with the Anti-Defamation League, the American Civil Liberties Union:

- Contact your elected representatives to educate them about the concerns of the South Asian community and express your opposition to the **PATRIOT Act**. Encourage them to speak against terrorism but also against Vigilante action as a criminal behavior.
- Contact with your local law enforcement officials to express your concern about racial profiling.
- Support a resolution in your city or town affirming the Bill of Rights and rejecting the **PATRIOT Act**.

By working together, we can protect the interests of our community and promote the cause of civil rights across the United States.

If you don't know who your state representative or senator is: go to [www.wheredoivote.ma.com](http://www.wheredoivote.ma.com). To get his/her phone number, go to [www.mass.gov/legis](http://www.mass.gov/legis). Or call **House information: 617 722 2000**  
**Senate information: 617 722 1276.**

**Ravi Sakhujia, President**

For further information, please contact:

Ravi Sakhujia: [iafpe1@aol.com](mailto:iafpe1@aol.com)

Anna Sankaran: [SankaranA@GTLaw.com](mailto:SankaranA@GTLaw.com)

Madhuri Ravi: [mravi\\_jd@yahoo.com](mailto:mravi_jd@yahoo.com)

Palak Shah: [palak\\_shah@yahoo.com](mailto:palak_shah@yahoo.com)



Congressman Marty Meehan, MA with members of “No Place for Hate” Committee of Lowell founded by Ravi Sakhujia, President IAFPE-MA



State Senator Steve Panagiotakos with IAFPE intern Vasudha Talla and its President Ravi Sakhujia at the unveiling of “No Place for Hate” mobile signs posted on Lowell Regional Transit Buses