

Center for Constitutional Rights

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/press-center/press-releases/statement-faisal-hashmi-behalf-family-syed-fahad-hashmi>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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May 3, 2010 - Earlier this week our beloved son and brother Fahad pleaded guilty to a single charge of material support for terrorism. He took the plea after spending four years in prison, three of them in complete isolation.

Fahads lawyer David Ruhnke said Fahad "made the best deal that was available under the circumstances the government wanted to lock him up for the rest of his life. They were not successful in that goal."

With credit for time served, Fahad could be free by the time he's 40.

We welcome the fact that Fahad will leave prison with much of his life in front of him, however we are extremely troubled by the process that has brought us to this point. We are troubled not only for our family but by the message a case like Fahads sends to our community.

It disturbs us greatly that a young man known as a pillar of his Queens community, who worked and studied hard and who, in the tumult of growing up Muslim in America, choose a path of religious and political activism, came to be demonized as an extreme danger to the country he called home. Even though he was not accused of violence or of belonging to a terrorist group he was denied the fundamental elements of due process, tortured through solitary confinement and faced the prospect of going before an anonymous jury based in part on the prosecutions ugly assertion that his friends and family were as dangerous as they alleged Fahad was.

Furthermore, the case against Fahad relied on secret evidence based in large part on the testimony of a government informant with a history of lying. The material support statute under which he was charged is notoriously flawed and the subject of outrage from civil libertarians. It enables the government to take a grain of truth and bury it in an ocean of innuendo and outright lies.

Except for our presence at the recent plea hearing Fahad has not been permitted to see us for almost six months. We continue to be concerned about the conditions of his confinement and will fight for the lifting of the draconian Special Administrative Measures that remain in place.

My father brought our family to this country 27 years ago not only because of the economic opportunities presented but also because he believed in the values of justice and fair-play that are supposed to underpin democracy.

Fahads treatment makes a mockery of those values. The message this case sends to the Muslim community is that we are being watched and that we are less valued in American society and less entitled to the protections under the Constitution.

We do not see this as the end to our struggle for justice. In seeking justice for Fahad we hope that we have shed light on the need to start a dialogue on the treatment of Muslims in America today. We believe the principles on which this country was founded compel us to speak out against the treatment of our community. We are an integral part of this society and we should not be treated as less valuable citizens.

The Center for Constitutional Rights works with communities under threat to fight for justice and liberation through litigation, advocacy, and strategic communications. Since 1966, the Center for Constitutional Rights has taken on oppressive systems of power, including structural racism, gender oppression, economic inequity, and governmental overreach. Learn more at ccrjustice.org.

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