

**Muslim illegal immigrants say grace is tougher;**

**Some say Bush's 3-year offer is for Latinos.**

**A White House spokesman says it is for all nationalities.**

The Philadelphia Inquirer

FEBRUARY 9, 2004 Monday JERSEY EDITION

Copyright 2004 Philadelphia Newspapers, LLC All Rights Reserved

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

Found on Philly.com

**Section:** SOUTH JERSEY; Pg. B02

**Length:** 693 words

**Byline:** Wayne Parry ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Dateline:** LODI, N.J.

## **Body**

---

When Ibrahim Baker heard that President **Bush** wanted to let **illegal immigrants** work legally for three years, he was excited at first.

But Baker, a Clifton auto mechanic, soon thought the President's plan to "extend a welcoming hand to those whose presence will benefit our nation and our economy" would not help him.

A law requiring men from certain nations suspected of harboring terrorism to register with the government tripped up Baker, 48, who is being deported to his native Jordan because he overstayed a tourist visa. There is no such requirement for **illegal immigrants** from Mexico or Latin American countries.

"I flipped out," he **said** at the auto body shop where he was fixing the suspension on a Volkswagen, his New York Yankees cap so stained black from grease and oil that the "NY" on the front had vanished. "It doesn't include people like me."

A **White House spokesman said Bush's** proposal did not differentiate among **illegal** workers by **nationality** and would apply equally to anyone in this country illegally who holds a job that no U.S. citizen has been willing to take.

But **Muslim** groups **say** the plan is aimed more at Mexican and Latino **immigrants** who illegally crossed the border - and settled in politically crucial states.

"I understand that what Mr. **Bush** did was catering to the Latino and Mexican populations in areas where he needs votes," **said** Osama Siblani, publisher of the Arab American News in Dearborn, Mich. "Definitely it was not something that takes Arab Americans or **Muslims** into account. My problem is that Mr. **Bush** is catering to a certain segment of the **illegal** population while ignoring another segment."

Critics of the proposal also contend that **Muslims** who came to this country legally but wound up overstaying visas face deportation risks that Mexicans and others do not, such as the special terrorism registration program.

Muslim illegal immigrants say grace is tougher; Some say Bush's 3-year offer is for Latinos. A White House spokesman says it is for all nationalities.

Baker came to the United States from Jordan in 1999 and was supposed to return several months later. Like thousands of Arabs and **Muslims** in similar situations, he stayed, thereby breaking U.**S.** immigration law.

Against the advice of friends, Baker complied with the special registration program in April. Immigration officials quickly saw that Baker had overstayed his visa, took him into custody and began the process of deporting him. He likely will be sent home to Jordan in April, **said** his lawyer, Sohail Mohammed, who called the **Bush** proposal discriminatory.

"Here are folks who complied with the [registration] law and will not benefit," he **said**. "But on the other hand, you have people who have been **illegal** since day one, and they will benefit."

Kimberly Zanotti of the U.**S.** Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services Newark office **said** that failing to register under the program led to a loss of legal status and exposed a person to possible deportation.

Neither she nor **White House spokesman** Ken Lisaius could **say** whether **Bush's** proposal would help **immigrants** whose deportation proceedings had already begun or those at risk of deportation. Lisaius **said** details were still being worked out with members of Congress.

"The President's proposal doesn't make priorities based on **nationality** or race," he **said**. "It is not geared toward a specific **nationality** or a specific race."

But Aref Assaf, a Palestinian activist and president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee of New Jersey, **said** the plan would do just that.

"Such proposals would be of no benefit to the vast majority of Arabs and **Muslims** who are here illegally or whose legal status has expired," he **said**.

"The 9/11 aftermath, the registrations requirements, and the continued targeting of **immigrants** from our part of the world will not be a motivation for many to come out and present themselves to the government," he **said**.

Baker, who rebuilds engines, fixes brakes and does other automotive work, is struggling to stay in the United States. He sends some of his earnings back home to support his parents, wife and five children, ranging in age from 17 to 10.

"My life is going to be hell in Jordan," he **said**. "I'll be on the street begging. There are no jobs there."

## Graphic

---

PHOTO;

MIKE DERER, Associated Press

Ibrahim Baker works as an auto mechanic. He overstayed his visa and is being deported.

## Classification

---

Language: ENGLISH

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (90%); **ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS** (90%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (90%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (89%); ARAB AMERICANS (89%); **MUSLIMS** & ISLAM (87%); RELIGION (87%); CITIZENSHIP (78%);

Muslim illegal immigrants say grace is tougher;Some say Bush's 3-year offer is for Latinos.A White House spokesman says it is for all nationalities.

FOREIGN LABOR (78%); **MUSLIM** AMERICANS (78%); TERRORISM (76%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (75%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (73%); LAWYERS (70%)

**Company:** VOLKSWAGEN AG (58%)

**Organization:** NEW YORK YANKEES (56%); NEW YORK YANKEES (56%)

**Ticker:** VWA (AMS) (58%); VW (SWX) (58%); VOW (FRA) (58%); VOA (PAR) (58%); VKW (LSE) (58%)

**Industry:** LAWYERS (70%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, NY, USA (71%); MICHIGAN, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); MEXICO (94%); UNITED STATES (94%); LATIN AMERICA (77%)

**Load-Date:** August 22, 2005