

## *Caught up in terror war;*

### *INS expels rising number of illegals to Muslim lands*

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## **Body**

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An anxiety that has gripped foreign nationals from 16 Muslim nations is spreading among students, tourists and businesspeople from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They have until Feb. 21 to report to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the latest citizens of several Muslim nations to be fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed in a program to track foreign visitors.

The prospect petrifies some who work and pay taxes but have overstayed a visa, said Rehan Khan, a Henry County businessman and former president of the Pakistani American Society of Atlanta. He said they worry "they will go to jail and be deported" and wonder why the government singles out visitors from countries whose governments have allied themselves with the United States in the war on terrorism.

"They are not pointing to Mexicans or Chinese," he said. "Why are they pointing to Pakistanis?"

AJC

In Georgia and around the United States, the INS has significantly stepped up the detention and deportation of foreign nationals from Muslim nations in response to public pressure to safeguard the United States from terrorists like the ones who struck Sept. 11, 2001. The number of people deported to Muslim countries in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia multiplied faster than for citizens of virtually every other country, according to a Journal-Constitution computer analysis of INS records.

The new focus disrupted the routine of Carma Said of Bethlehem, Pa. She said the INS deported her husband to Egypt even though it had approved his request for legal residency.

"They just destroyed a whole family," she said. "The country that I love and that I'd go fight for let me down."

Paul Virtue, a Washington immigration lawyer and former INS general counsel, said the increased attention to Arab and Muslim immigrants makes sense.

"That's where the threat is," he said.

Others decry a selective enforcement that they say provides only the illusion of security. They point out that no Arab or Muslim immigrant detained or deported after Sept. 11 has been charged with a crime related to terrorism.

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"The government is engaging in racial, religious and ethnic profiling. They're not doing anything that's making us any safer," said Dalia Hashad, the ACLU's advocate for Middle Eastern and South Asian immigrants. "This is selective enforcement, and it's ridiculous, inappropriate punishment."

The 19 hijackers who struck Sept. 11, 2001, were from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates. Three had overstayed visas and were in the country illegally.

The U.S. Justice Department secretly detained at least 899 immigrants during the terrorism investigation, mostly from Middle Eastern or South Asian countries. Authorities say 765 were held on immigration violations, such as overstaying a visa, and 134 were charged with some crimes unrelated to terrorism, such as credit card fraud or lying on a passport application, but advocates say the real number is closer to 1,200. Most were deported.

### Few terrorists found

Doris Meissner, INS commissioner from 1993 to 2000, said she doubts authorities would have deported people who threatened national security --- they would have charged them as terrorists instead. She said the focus on Muslim nations "was inevitable and predictable right after 9/11, but I think it became clear pretty quickly that focusing that way was not unearthing terrorists."

Jorge Martinez, spokesman for the Justice Department, disputed that.

"That a detainee has been deported from the United States does not necessarily indicate that he or she had no knowledge of or connection to terrorism," the department said. "In many cases, the department determined the best course of action to protect Americans was to remove potentially dangerous individuals from the country and ensure they cannot return."

In the past two months, the INS required male visa holders from 18 mostly Muslim countries to be fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed at INS offices nationwide. About 500 people in California and a handful in Georgia were detained when they showed up to register. Most were held for immigration violations, but lawyers say some were jailed even though they had applied for legal status. A judge will decide whether they should be returned to their native countries.

In Georgia and three nearby states, the number of foreign nationals from Jordan and Pakistan who were detained by the INS increased faster than the number of detainees from any other country from October 2001 through September 2002. Even though Jordanians and Pakistanis account for only 1.1 percent of Georgia's foreign-born population, they made up 4 percent of people detained by the Atlanta INS last year, according to an analysis of records obtained through the federal Freedom of Information Act.

"The Atlanta district has increased its focus on immigration violators from those countries identified by the president to be supporters of terrorism since 9/11," said INS spokeswoman Sue Brown. "While it is not part of a specific national targeting strategy, the events of 9/11 have highlighted the need for the INS to focus its efforts on protecting national security by identifying and taking enforcement action against all of those looking to exploit the immigration system."

At least two Middle Eastern immigrants detained by the Atlanta INS are listed in records as "possible terrorists." One is a 22-year-old Saudi Arabian man who overstayed a visa. He was detained Sept. 30, 2001. The other is a 38-year-old Moroccan who also overstayed a visa. Authorities took him into custody March 26. The records also show one Pakistani detained in a "sensitive case" and another of "special interest" taken into custody. A third Pakistani was jailed after his name was associated with a name on a "watch list," records show.

### 5 detainees released

Records show that two "possible terrorists" and three Pakistanis were released from INS custody within a few months. That suggests they were deported, since most immigrants detained by the INS are sent home for one of two reasons.

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Some committed a crime that would trigger the removal of any immigrant, legal or illegal, such as a drug sale or possession, burglary or robbery. Others were deported solely for violating immigration law.

The INS has wide latitude in targeting people in the latter group --- the agency calls them "noncriminal" immigrants. It has 2,000 officers to enforce immigration laws in a country with an estimated 9 million illegal immigrants.

Last year, the **number** of "noncriminal" immigrants deported from around the country to Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Tunisia and Morocco increased 166 percent to 407 percent, greater than for any of 127 nations with at least five citizens deported the previous year.

Many left behind friends and relatives like Said, the Pennsylvania woman.

Never got notice?

She gave this account of events that led the INS to deport her husband, Akram, to Egypt:

He entered the United States illegally in 1993 and applied for asylum. The INS let him work until a judge decided his asylum request. He became a chef at the City View Diner in Bethlehem, Pa., and met Carma, a waitress. They married in August 2001.

Akram Said applied for legal residency, based on his marriage to a U.S. citizen, and the INS approved it, but a green van pulled **up** to his house last May 29. INS officers stepped out and handcuffed him.

"They grabbed my 15-year-old son by the shirt and asked him if he was Egyptian," Carma Said said.

The officers said a judge had denied Akram's asylum claim in 2000 and ordered him deported. They said the agency mailed him a deportation notice, but Carma Said said her husband never got it. She said he has lived in the same house since 1996 and had frequent contact with the INS as he renewed work authorization and applied for legal status.

"He paid his taxes. He donated to the police station, the fire station," she said.

Carma Said was several months pregnant when her husband was detained. He was deported before the baby was born. He has never met his 7-week-old daughter, Laila.

A cleaning business he ran folded after he was deported.

"I feel like I'm walking in the twilight zone," Carma Said said. "He's missing out on the baby."

Carma Said can't even bring herself to tell friends and relatives what really happened. She tells them her husband went to Egypt to visit his mother and is facing delays in returning because of security precautions.

It's the kind of case that upsets Hussein Ibish, spokesman for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Washington.

"The people who are being targeted are not terrorists anymore than the Japanese [Americans] detained in the '40s were spies or saboteurs for the Japanese government," he said.

"We have reintroduced national origin discrimination into our immigration system for the first time in decades."

## Graphic

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## Caught up in terror war; INS expels rising number of illegals to Muslim lands

Photo: Gisroo Mohajeri and husband Ali, a U.S. citizen, leave INS offices in Los Angeles, where they tried to get her Iranian-born son, Hossein Ahmadi, 16, out of custody last month. The couple had taken the boy in to register voluntarily for INS screening./ JEAN-MARC BOUJU / Associated Press; Graphic: DEPORTATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER SEPT. 11, 2001

The **number** of Arab and **Muslim** immigrants deported from the United States increased after Sept. 11, 2001, despite an overall drop in deportations. Here's a look at the top 10 of 185 countries ranked by percentage increase in citizens deported October 2001 to September 2002. Eight of the 10 are Arabic or **Muslim** nations. The figures for Mexican nationals, who represent the majority of all deportations, are included for comparison.

## Deportations

Rank.....	Oct. 2000.....	Oct. 2001-.....	Percentage (of increase).....
Country..	Sept. 2001.....	Sept. 2002.....	change
1..... Tunisia.....	13.....	52.....	300%
2..... Morocco.....	32.....	109.....	241%
3..... Egypt.....	92.....	273.....	197%
4..... Yemen.....	18.....	49.....	172%
5..... Guyana.....	130.....	311.....	139%
6..... Jordan.....	82.....	193.....	135%
7..... Lebanon.....	49.....	113.....	131%
8..... Pakistan.....	335.....	767.....	129%
9..... Samoa.....	10.....	22.....	120%
10..... Algeria.....	18.....	38.....	111%
119..... Mexico.....	141,277.....	106,837.....	-24%
Total (all countries.....)	177,316.....	145,940.....	-18%

Note: The list ranks countries that had at least 10 citizens **expelled** between Oct. 1, 2000 and Sept. 30, 2001.

Source: AJC computer analysis of INS records / ELIZABETH LANDT / Staff; Graphic: A SHIFT IN FOCUS

During the year before Sept. 11, 2001, the Atlanta Immigration and Naturalization Service detained 2,090 immigrants from Mexico. The next year, that **number** dropped to 1,238. Just the opposite was seen in the detention of immigrants from the **Muslim** countries of Jordan and Pakistan. In the year after Sept. 11, 2001, Atlanta INS detentions of those immigrants more than doubled. The stronger INS focus on Middle Eastern, Arabic or **Muslim** immigrants here reflects a nationwide trend.

## Immigrants detained

Rank.....	Country.....	Sept. 2001.....	Sept. 2002.....	change
1.....	Jordan.....	11.....	28.....	155%
2.....	Pakistan.....	38.....	85.....	124%
3.....	Somalia.....	5.....	10.....	100%
4.....	Kenya.....	5.....	9.....	80%
5.....	Spain.....	5.....	8.....	60%
43.....	Mexico.....	2,090.....	1,238.....	-41%

Source: AJC computer analysis of INS records / ELIZABETH LANDT / Staff; Photo: Members of Not in Our Name protest the registration of foreign-born **Muslims** on Friday outside Immigration and Naturalization Service offices in Atlanta./ PHIL SKINNER / Staff; Graphic: DEPORTING "NONCRIMINAL" IMMIGRANTS

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Federal law requires deportation of legal or illegal immigrants who commit certain crimes, but the INS exercises discretion in deporting immigrants whose only crime is illegal presence. The following list shows the 10 countries with the largest percentage increases in "noncriminal" immigrants being deported after Sept. 11, 2001. Eight of the 10 are Arabic or **Muslim** countries. Figures for Mexican nationals, who represent the majority of deportations, are included for comparison.

### **Number** deported for immigration-law violations

Rank.....	Oct. 2000-....	Oct. 2001-..	Percentage
(of increase) Country.....	Sept. 2001....	Sept. 2002.....	change
1.....	Morocco.....	15.....	76.....407%
2.....	Tunisia.....	10.....	44.....340%
3.....	Yemen.....	11.....	35.....218%
4.....	Jordan.....	36.....	113.....214%
5.....	Saudi Arabia.....	8.....	24.....200%
6.....	Sudan.....	6.....	17.....183%
7.....	Algeria.....	11.....	30.....173%
8.....	Egypt.....	77.....	205.....166%
9.....	Mongolia.....	6.....	15.....150%
10.....	Cameroon.....	8.....	19.....138%
133.....	Mexico.....	83,935.....	52,065.....-38%
Total (all countries):.....105,445.....76,360.....-28%			

Note: The list ranks countries that had at least five citizens **expelled** between Oct. 1, 2000 and Sept. 30, 2001.

Source: AJC computer analysis of INS records / ELIZABETH LANDT / Staff

## Classification

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