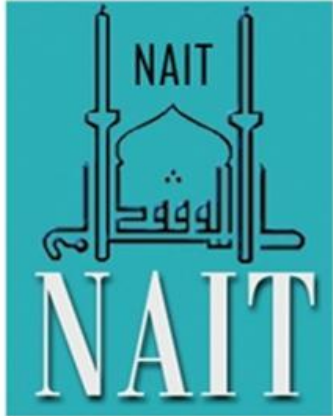


THE NAIT TIMES



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Trump inauguration and civil liberties: An action plan.

The 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, has been inaugurated. There are those who say, "This is just another transition of power from Democrats to Republicans, what's the big deal? We should support our President no matter what." And there are others who say, "the President does not represent me and I will not support this man given his character and intended policies." Then there are some who say, "we will fight his policies at every turn".

On the one hand, we believe in our democracy and the rule of law, and the smooth transition of power. Thus, as Americans, we should support the office of President. However, many in our community will inquire, how can we support a President whose policies will be pernicious to the Muslim community, immigrants, Latinos, African-Americans, the poor, the disabled, and others. So, what are we to do?

Alarms and threats in the current situation:

We, at NAIT, believe that there will be three pernicious effects of the Trump administration policies relevant to our community: 1) Immigration; 2) Terrorism designation; and 3) Increase in hate crimes against Muslims and people of color.

Immigration

Within just a few days, Donald Trump is already in the process of dramatically altering US immigration policy. In order to justify his rhetoric of banning Muslims from the United States, President Trump will restrict and temporarily reduce immigration from some Muslim countries. He will seek to eliminate refugees, and asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq. He will seek to slow down immigration from other failed states like Somalia, Libya, and Afghanistan, and from countries such as Iran. This means visas could be summarily denied, but also revoked upon re-entry. Also, an increase in deportations and detention of undocumented Americans is more likely.

The Muslim Brotherhood Boogeyman

What many members of the community and media have been discussing for months, the bill to designate the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization called "Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act," has already been submitted on January 17, 2017 by Texas Senator, Ted Cruz, and Florida Representative Mario Diaz-Balart. What is most concerning if the Trump administration declares the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization is that the administration will then attempt to link American Muslim leaders and organizations with the Muslim Brotherhood thereby shutting down Muslim organizations and harassing Muslim leaders. This is possible because of

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legislation passed by Congress after Sept. 11, 2001 which affords the President such broad, and sweeping powers. Let us not forget, this was done in the past by the Bush administration with its harassment of American Muslims such as Brandon Mayfield and the witch hunt prosecution of Sami al-Arian, and also the shutting down of Muslim charities such as the Holy Land Foundation and KindHearts. With Donald Trump’s inherent anti-Muslim sentiment, and with some of this cabinet selections, it should come as no surprise if the Trump administration implements these measures.

Increase in Hate Crimes

Finally, unlike the Obama administration which actively sought to enforce civil rights through the Justice Department and agencies like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Trump administration may scale back these efforts in an attempt to appease the “lower case KKK” members of his base. Remember the case of Samantha Elauf, the Oklahoma woman who sued Abercrombie & Fitch for not hiring her because she wore a hijab? That case was brought by the Obama administration and helped establish an important precedent in the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of religious freedom. Additionally, the Justice department intervened quite aggressively in defending the civil rights of religious minorities and African-Americans. This will most certainly be curtailed or reduced.

So how do we deal with these threats as community leaders, Muslim religious organizations, individuals and families? Rest assured, with every threat and difficulty comes an opportunity. As a community we need to focus on this very aspect reminded to us multiple times in the Quran. So here are some of the practical things we can do:

Keeping ourselves informed: First, for a Muslim, seeking and obtaining knowledge has a religious and practical significance. We must keep ourselves aware and pay attention to the policies and conduct of the Trump administration. Critical to this is a realistic evaluation of the facts of the problem, and not baseless assumptions and innuendo triggered by fear. Fear is a vicious cycle that can make us lose focus; so fear will not do. Now is not the time for naïve wishful thinking and false hopes or assumptions that Mr. Trump will reform himself as President and will not be “that bad.” In just the first week after the inauguration, we have already seen that he seems committed to fulfilling all his campaign promises. Indeed, it is that bad!

Being prepared: We have difficult days ahead of us. We must be ready to respond to the policies that will directly affect the Muslim community at large.

Finding resolve and facilitating unity: The Quran reminds us, “*O ye who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allah, in order that ye may succeed.*” (3:200). We all know that the name of Islam and Muslims will be part of the rhetoric and negative discourses for at least the next four years. In this environment, it is important for the Muslim community to develop resolve and toughness. This requires us to remain patient, and also to develop love and compassion for our community at large. In so doing, we must set aside any past or current disputes among the community members, leaders, family members, friends, etc.

In other words, we have to unite in the face of a greater threat. We need to set aside ideological and sectarian differences despite the situation in the Muslim world. American Salafis, Sufis, Madhabis (i.e. Hanafis, Shafi`i`s, etc.), Sunnis, and Shia all need to set aside their ideological and political differences and unify to defend the community. Similarly, American Muslim converts, immigrants, Latinos and African Americans, Arabs, South Asians, etc. need to work together toward a common goal: defending everyone's rights against the unilateral, arbitrary and unjust acts of the Trump administration.

We must affirm that in this political environment, if a Muslim leader or Muslim organization is attacked, then we are all attacked, and therefore we need to stick together. This is not the time to separate for the sake of cozying up to those who seek to deny our rights as Americans.

Building strong alliances: As we have known for a long time, "all politics is local." Every masjid and Islamic center should be engaging with their local community and building political, civic, and social alliances. This means developing good relations with neighbors, and local religious leaders in churches, synagogues, and temples. It also means developing and sustaining relations with local governments whether it is the mayor's office, village board, or law enforcement. Take the opportunity to develop Open Mosque Days in your town and visit your local church and local government offices and get to know them. As Americans, we have been engaging in these activities for many years. So this is merely a reminder.

Protecting and defending each other: We must actively protect and defend each other from hate crimes no matter what race, color, ethnicity or religion someone belongs to.

- In particular, help protect our children and Muslim sisters from discrimination and harassment. If you see something, say something and help spread the word around instead of burying or ignoring the hate crime.
- Ask your children if they have been or are being bullied in school. Talk to them and show them love and support.
- Actively communicate with the school administration and get a commitment in writing that they are protecting all of the children especially the most vulnerable from bullying and discrimination.
- Consider offering self-defense training at your organization, particularly for sisters.
- Immediately report any hate incidents to local law enforcement **and** to organizations like Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) or the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).
- Encourage yourself, family and friends to provide financial support to organizations that are representing the interests of the Muslim community at large, and are also on the frontlines of protecting civil rights such as CAIR, Muslim Advocates, Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Muslim Bar Association, and others.

Let us continue to have faith in Allah, azza wa jalla and have hope. But let us also be aware, united, compassionate, organized and prepared.

Peace and blessings to us all.

Looking for Sharia compliant Investments for Individuals:

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Time for Vigilance from Threats

One of the most significant concerns for both profit and not-for-profit corporations is the issue of cyber security. Due to recent high profile cyber-attacks or computer/network hacking against banks and retailers and organizations like the Democratic National Committee, and corporations like Target, organizations are beefing up their security of electronic data and information. In this day and age, no organization is immune from cyber-attacks and hacking. Therefore, all Muslim organizations should consider reviewing their internal protocol for computer usage, downloading information, storage functions and capability.

For masjid and Islamic centers, security should be a major component which covers everything from safeguarding the physical space of the masjid, school, or center to making sure data, and legal and financial documents are protected from theft or from accidents or other hazards like fire or water-related damage.

Every center or organization should evaluate security risks and develop remedies to minimize or eliminate those risks. Every center should maintain liability and general insurance coverage, including directors and officer's liability coverage. NAIT recommends using Church Mutual which specializes in insuring religious organizations at very reasonable rates across the country.

In addition to the foregoing, masjid, Islamic centers, and schools should be vigilant about growing threats of violence against the Muslim community. Recently, it was learned that the FBI issued an intelligence bulletin warning of possible targeting of the Muslim community by right-wing extremists and militias.

Masajid, Islamic centers, and schools must increase vigilance and take precautionary measures to face this emerging threat. Congregants should be educated about potential threats and how to report suspicious activities. Invite your local law enforcement and fire department for presentations about safety and how to deal with emergency situations. Large gatherings should have police presence. The masjid or center should have a security team assembled for Friday prayers, Eids and large gatherings.

Every center should install a digital video camera system that is visible and which provides useful information, and acts as a deterrent against anyone who may wish to do harm.

Strangers and suspicious individual should be monitored and questioned before walking into facilities to make sure they pose no threats. Many masjid leave buildings unlocked for night or fajr prayers. This is a dangerous practice and should be eliminated.

We live in strange times. Those who wish to do harm will look for places that are easy targets with minimum security and a very lax attitude. Make sure your center is secure. The families in your community depend upon it.

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