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AMERICA'S ORDEAL

Activists Demand Info On Detainees

By Roni Rabin
STAFF WRITER

October 31, 2001

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A week after a Pakistani waiter died in a New Jersey jail, civil libertarians and local Pakistani leaders are demanding information about 1,028 people held since Sept. 11 in connection with the World Trade Center attacks. To date, none of the detainees has been charged with a crime related to the terror attacks.

The civil libertarians said many of those in custody were being held for minor infractions of immigration law that prior to Sept. 11 most likely would not have resulted in detention. They have had limited access to attorneys, and some are being held in solitary confinement, the organizations charged.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Justice Department, responding to the accusations yesterday, said department officials are releasing all and any information that can be made public without compromising ongoing investigations.

Of the 181 people detained for immigration violations, U.S. Justice Department spokeswoman Mindy Tucker said, "They have continued to be detained because in addition to the violation, they have connections to terrorist groups or have links to terrorist activities themselves. It would be irresponsible of us to let them go out on the streets."

But, Tucker acknowledged, the immigrants have not been charged with crimes related to terrorism. "They haven't been charged, and may not be, because we may not have enough information to charge them," she said.

Representatives of the Pakistani community insist that many of their countrymen detained since Sept. 11 are hard-working, tax-paying immigrants who have little interest in politics. Muhammad Rafiq Butt, 55, the father of five who died in a Hudson County jail on Oct. 23, was waiting tables at one of the oldest Pakistani restaurants in Jackson Heights to support his family back home.

"They didn't find anything against him except that his status expired," said Ahsanullah "Bobby" Khan of the Pakistani Community Center in Brooklyn. "The people of the United States should raise their voice that it is not fair what's going on."

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people have been detained as material witnesses in connection with the terror attacks of Sept. 11. All of those have counsel and have been before a judge, Tucker said. The third and largest group of detainees were picked up for unrelated crimes in the course of the World Trade Center investigation; information about those charges will be made public unless sealed by a judge, Tucker said.

On Monday, the American Civil Liberties Union and 24 other organizations filed a Freedom of Information request with the U.S. Justice Department, demanding basic information about the detainees, such as the number detained, the basis for the detentions and whether those in custody have access to attorneys.

Officials of the organizations acknowledged that extraordinary times may call for extraordinary measures, but insisted the terror attacks do not justify the wholesale abandonment of basic civil rights and due process. In many cases, they said, the detainees have not been given any explanation for their detention and, in the absence of charges, cannot defend themselves.

"We're living in a different world, and different security measures may be appropriate," said Chris Dunn of the New York Civil Liberties Union. "It may be that in these times people can be held on less suspicion. It doesn't mean people should be held on no suspicion."

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Pakistani detainees in US: tales of betrayal and backstabbing

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON, Aug 6: Many Pakistanis arrested in the United States after the Sept 11 terrorist attacks were betrayed by their friends, relatives and family members. Official record tells sad tales of backstabbing and betrayal.

In the greater Washington area, two Pakistani food chains reported at least 80 Pakistani nationals to the US authorities to settle scores with each other.

In other cases, in-laws led immigration officials to estranged spouses, often over minor domestic disputes. There were also cases of family members ratting on each other.

"At least 25 per cent of the detainees were betrayed by someone they trusted," a Pakistani social worker, who provides legal advice to those in trouble, said.

"Sometimes local Americans were more helpful than their fellow Pakistanis and Muslims," the social worker said, displaying a bunch of pamphlets published in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Bengali languages by the American Civil Liberties Union.



The pamphlet tells Muslim immigrants living in the United States what to do and who to approach when confronted by the INS officers. It tells them what legal rights does an immigrant have in the American society and how he could defend himself.

Some 18 Pakistanis contacted the embassy in Washington, asking the staff to report a particular person to the police or immigration officers because he refused to lend his car to them or failed to return the money he had borrowed. Imran Ali, a Pakistani diplomat who provides consular assistance to the immigrants in trouble, complains that the lawyers also exploited the situation to make money. "They often gave them wrong advice, asking them to apply for political asylum or change their address or simply run away from the police," he said.

Although the lawyers knew that once the order was issued it's almost impossible for an immigrant to avoid deportation, yet they continued to mislead their clients. "Many of these lawyers were from the subcontinent but local American lawyers also took advantage of the situation," Mr Ali said.

INS officials say that a large number of Pakistani immigrants came to the United States during the Clinton era when immigration control was not strict and visa restrictions were also relaxed.

Surprisingly, most of the Pakistanis who came during this period (1992-2000) were from a rural belt in Punjab - Wazirabad, Sialkot and Gujrat - rather than the major cities. "The credit goes to a gang of expert forgers operating in those areas in the 1990s," the social worker said. "They were so good that even the INS recognized them as expert forgers."

Once they cleared a US port, most Pakistanis, like other immigrants, never went back, not even after their visas expired. "But unlike other immigrants they were not good at legalizing their stay," says a Pakistani lawyer who helped some of them.

"Instead of trying to join the mainstream, they were contented with working at jewellery shops, desi grocery and liquor stores and gas stations as illegal workers, receiving less than the minimum wages," the lawyer said who did not want to be identified. "And when they thought of legalizing their stay, most of them went to South Asian lawyers who would tell them how to dodge the system rather than telling them how to find a way out within the system," Mr Ali said.

The most common advice that they received was: apply for political asylum. "Overnight Punjabis and Pathans became MQM workers, Mohajirs became Baloch nationalists. Sunnis became Shias and Ahmadis. And those who had never participated in politics claimed they were political stalwarts," the lawyer said.

Since most of them had no background in politics they were rejected. They went back to the same lawyers who then advised them to marry American women. What they never told the immigrants was that once a deportation order is issued,

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even the marriage could not legalize their stay in the US. They had to return home and apply for immigration at a US mission abroad.

So when after Sept 11 the campaign to catch illegal immigrants began many of those who were married to American citizens and had been living here for years, were also arrested. "This led to many tragedies. Families got separated. Husbands and fathers were deported while wives and children were left behind," Mr Ali said, who saw many families being ruined by the forced separation. "And it's not just the emotional stress. Many small businesses went bust because those who were running the shops or restaurants were deported and those left behind were too young and inexperienced to replace them."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Less Welcome

In Pakistani Areas Of New York City, A Lingering Fear

Arrests, Deportations Spread
Alarm Among Immigrants;
Some Flee North to Canada

A Child Drops 'Mohammed'

By MARGARET VALBRUN
And ANN DAVIS

NEW YORK—At Public School 217, classmates were teasing Iraj Shaheen. "You are from a terrorist country," one little girl told the eight-year-old boy last fall.

Iraj's father, Afzal Shaheen, had come to the U.S. from Pakistan 12 years earlier. He owned an electronics store in the Midwood section of Brooklyn that employed five people.

But Mr. Shaheen was seeing sales slump as some of his fellow Pakistani immigrants, who make up the bulk of the store's customers, left the country in the wake of Sept. 11.

Mr. Shaheen, 42, worried that he would be deported. He had entered the country on a tourist visa that expired in 1990. He says he had always intended to seek legal status but hadn't made it a priority.



Afzal Shaheen

"I considered the U.S. my homeland," Mr. Shaheen says. "We worked hard and were paying our taxes." But in May, he and his wife and three children moved to Toronto, leaving the store in the care of his brother.

Here in the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, the country's largest Pakistani-immigrant community has been deeply shaken in the 14 months since the attacks. Terrorism fears have led to the arrest, jailing and deportation of residents. Anxiety about U.S. government scrutiny has seeped into the daily lives of once-optimistic merchants and professionals. Some families, like the Shaheens, have left for Canada or Pakistan.

A good measure of the unease among the more than 150,000 Pakistanis in New York stems from immigrants' failure to secure legal residency. Still, the government's pursuit of terrorism's tendrils has had a tremendous and little-seen cost. Many families who were leading productive lives, some who are here legally and some who aren't, have now seen those lives turned upside down.

"DON'T CALL ME MOHAMMED," the Pakistani child said.

In the days after Sept. 11, the boy, a schoolmate of Iraj Shaheen at P.S. 217, told fellow students not to use the name that many Pakistani males attach to their given names in tribute to the Muslim prophet. School officials and teachers say it was a common reaction among the 1,300 mostly Pakistani students at the elementary school.

The boy, who asked to be called "Aslam" instead, has since moved back to Pakistan with his family, says the school's principal, Mary Buckley Teatum. P.S. 217 has lost about 50 Pakistani students in the past year, a higher attrition rate than usual, Ms. Teatum says. Their families moved away, afraid they might be targeted by authorities looking for terrorists or jailed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the principal says. Some feared their children would be harassed at school.

P.S. 217, a five-story, red-brick building, is nestled in the middle of the heavily Pakistani Midwood neighborhood. A few blocks away, Coney Island Avenue is crowded with bins of Pakistani music tapes and racks of the colorful *hijab* scarves which women use to cover their heads. Shop windows are marked with Urdu letters, and the aroma of curry wafts from small restaurants. Foot traffic has dissipated along the usually thronged strip since Sept. 11, especially at night, when most Pakistanis now stay home.

Nasreen Syed, a classroom aide at P.S. 217 who is fluent in English and Urdu, keeps her own two youngest children.

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Continued From First Page

children, ages 12 and 8, from playing in front of their home nearby. She fears what strangers might say or do to them. "I know what's going on outside," Mrs. Syed says. "I read the newspapers. I watch the news."

Mrs. Syed, 41, says she and her husband, Mansoor, had a good life in Pakistan, where he was a physician. But they came to the U.S. in 1986 "for our [two] daughters and our son, so they could have a better education and a better life," she says. The couple recently were sworn in as U.S. citizens.

In the past year, Mrs. Syed has traded in her billowing *shatwar kameez* dresses and pants ensembles for mainstream American skirts. She still wears her *hijab* scarf but in a way that only partially covers the back of her head, so she isn't as conspicuously Muslim.

She has tried, without success, to discourage her 16-year-old daughter, Maryam, from wearing a *hijab*. But the 11th grader at Midwood High School says it's part of her identity. "It feels weird when you're, like, going to school and wearing it for so many years, and then one day you just take it off," Maryam says. "It just didn't feel right to me. What are you, scared?" The teenager says she hasn't encountered hostility at school.

Fear Among New York's Pakistanis

EVEN MORE SKITTISH than Maryam's mother are parents of young men.

Queens is home to many Pakistanis who have been in the U.S. for decades. One is Farzana, a 49-year-old mother of two sons. She says she has been a U.S. citizen for 13 years and normally considers herself outspoken, but she declines to provide her full name for fear of attracting government attention. Sitting in the Kabab King Palace restaurant in the Jackson Heights neighborhood one evening, she describes her struggle to constrain the activities of her American-born boys, who are 19 and 21, both in college.

"They are the age everyone is looking for," she says, referring to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's openly stated campaign to question Muslim men between 18 and 33. About 1,200 men have been detained as part of sweeps related to Sept. 11, and of those, some 500 deported, according to federal authorities. Many Pakistani immigrants point out that the U.S. has called their homeland an ally in the war on terrorism, even though Pakistan has also harbored numerous anti-American militants.

The woman's older boy recently had a job raising money for his college in the Midwest. One man he called taunted him about his name, she says. "Is that Muslim?" the man asked. "Why don't you see the light and become a Christian?" The boy responded, "Sir, I don't need your donation" and refused it, a move that almost led to his being fired, his mother says.

Farzana, dressed in a burnt-orange sari, says she tells her sons to travel with non-Muslim friends. Her sons tease her about her fears, saying, "Mom, I'm growing a beard," or "Mom, the FBI called me." Farzana tries to laugh along, but she is worried that federal agents are in fact watching. "I'm pretty sure they check our e-mail, our phone," she says, although she doesn't offer any evidence of this.

AFZAL SHAHEEN, the Midwood electronics-store owner who moved his family to Toronto, says: "I get calls from friends in New York every day who are thinking of coming. They want to know how the situation is. Is there work here? Will they be more safe?" He says he tells them, "Stay in the U.S. if you can, but if you can't, come here and the country will be welcoming to you."

Naeem Ahmed, vice consul at the Pakistani consulate in Toronto, says his office has seen a sharp increase in requests for immigration assistance from Pakistanis who have lived in the U.S. but now want Canadian passports. "Since Sept. 11, because of harassment and all, they are thinking about coming here," he says. Canada has more-permissive immigration laws and is generally perceived by Pakistanis as more-welcoming to outsiders. Mr. Ahmed adds. The Canadian government has said this year it needs more immigrants to meet the country's labor needs.

Mr. Shaheen in 1998 was granted legal residency in Canada after traveling there for years for personal and business reasons. But despite his fondness for Toronto and its large Pakistani community, he says he didn't want to leave the U.S., where, before the Sept. 11 attacks, he had successfully done business and felt comfortable. He says he had intended to seek an "investor-immigrant visa" and build a home on Long Island in New York. The investor visa allows immigrants to gain legal residency by starting U.S. businesses that create jobs. Before Sept. 11, though, he hadn't acted on this plan.

Now, Mr. Shaheen says he is putting down roots in Toronto and planning to open a new electronics store there. Young Iraj, however, asks his parents regularly whether they can move back to Brooklyn. He tells them he misses his school and his old friends.

Mr. Shaheen had a brush with U.S. authorities in July. He had returned to his Brooklyn apartment to retrieve belongings. Two men identifying themselves as New York police showed up, he says. They asked why his son, Iraj, had stopped attending P.S. 217. He told them the boy was in Canada and wasn't coming back. He showed the men his Canadian residency card.

Three days later, at 6 a.m., INS officers arrived at the apartment with a deportation order for Mr. Shaheen, he says. By then, he had returned to Canada. His brother, who is running the electronics store and living in the apartment, spoke with the agents and displayed papers showing that his own request for permanent U.S. residence is pending and he is in the country legally, Mr. Shaheen says.

An INS spokesman declines to discuss Mr. Shaheen's case in particular but says that if he has moved to Canada permanently, that would meet the requirements

of a deportation order.

Lately, Mr. Shaheen's brother, who asked that his name not be used, has urged Mr. Shaheen to sell the store in Midwood, so that he, too, can move to Canada. Mr. Shaheen says his brother told him: "I cannot live in fear like this. I'm afraid when the wind blows at the door that it is the authorities coming to get me."

LIVING IN THE BASEMENT of his sister's stucco home in the Holliswood section of Queens, Usman Rana, a 39-year-old software engineer, wonders if he might have an easier time making it in another country.

When he came here from his native Pakistan in 1998, Pakistani programmers seemed to have their pick of jobs. He landed a position with DockMaster Software Systems, a Lake Worth, Fla., maker of software for marine facilities. The company raised his annual pay to about \$45,000 when another firm tried to hire him away. He and his wife, Saba, enjoyed Florida, where the hot weather reminded them of Pakistan. They took up tennis and went on boat rides,

snapping photos of yachts and mansions along the Intracoastal Waterway.

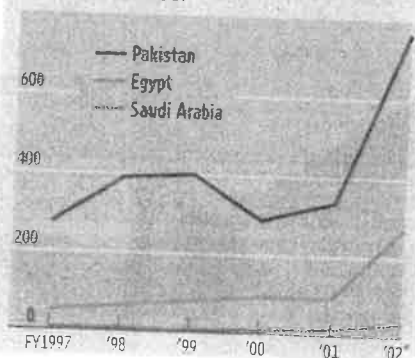
Mr. Rana and his co-workers listened on the radio together as the Twin Towers collapsed. He previously hadn't felt uncomfortable as the office's only Muslim, but on Sept. 12, he began to worry. Later that week, he recalls that his boss, Clifford Ponce, asked him, "Is everybody treating you good?" and suggested that Mr. Rana take a day off.

Upon his return, his boss summoned him again—to fire him. "You didn't do your job properly," Mr. Rana recalls Mr. Ponce saying. "Is this due to Sept. 11?" Mr. Rana asked. Mr. Ponce said no.

Mr. Ponce, director of development at DockMaster, says in an interview that Mr. Rana's firing had "no relationship" to Sept. 11 and was solely related to his performance. He says he doesn't recall telling Mr. Rana to take a day off. Mr. Ponce says that on a personal level, he was "sorry" to let Mr. Rana go and has since provided

Sent Home

Deportations of immigrants from some Muslim countries.





David M. Russell (top); Gabe Palacio (bottom left); Scott Gries/hageDirect (center); Shannon Stapleton/FilmMagie (bottom right)

Pakistani Immigrants in Brooklyn and Queens, N.Y.: Pakistani shops line Coney Island Avenue in the Midwood neighborhood (top). Nasreen Syed (bottom, left) forbids her young children from playing in front of her home for fear of harassment. Usman Rana (bottom, center) is sometimes hesitant to say his first name, which sounds like 'Osama.' Ahsanullah Khan (bottom, right) fears fellow immigrants aren't asserting their rights.

him with "a good recommendation."

The Ranas moved to New York, where Ms. Rana took a job with the city's finance department. They moved in with Mr. Rana's sister. He pursued several jobs, but Sept. 11 kept coming up in interviews, he says. He eventually got a \$55,000-a-year programming job with a Long Island manufacturer of aviation microelectronics.

It bothers Mr. Rana that now he often is searched before boarding a flight. Among westerners, he is hesitant to say his first name, which sounds like "Osama."

One day, a Pakistani friend in Oregon told him he had been visited by the FBI. The friend had gone to a department store to have his daughter's passport photo taken. When he returned home, FBI agents were waiting to question him. Mr. Rana's friend suspected that a store clerk had reported him as suspicious.

"Before, it was like freedom, no worries," Mr. Rana says. "I used to go out at

night with my cousins [in Florida] as late as midnight. After Sept. 11, we never went out." Only recently did he venture into Manhattan, taking his wife to dinner in Times Square with his sister and her husband. Mr. Rana says he felt oddly out of place.

His sister, Rahila Malik, a 44-year-old mother of two, says her brother's experience, along with continued reports of immigrant detentions, sadden her: "You're a part of something, and, all of a sudden, something happened, and you are not part of it. It's a strange feeling."

AHSANULLAH "BOBBY" KHAN also feels that disconnect.

The personal financial adviser says he is currently working as a volunteer with 45 Pakistani-immigrant families in New York and New Jersey whose male relatives have been arrested. He visits the men in jail and attends several court hearings a week.

A prominent figure in the Pakistani-immigrant community, he says he began getting collect calls from area jails soon after last year's attacks. Young Pakistani men

told him: "We are not being helped. Nobody is visiting us. Nobody is following our arrests." That fall, Mr. Khan helped start the Coney Island Project, a collective of Christian, Muslim, Jewish and nondenominational groups that assists Pakistanis and other immigrants in New York.

Working from the project's one-room office, he steers families of detainees to low-cost attorneys and helps them navigate Byzantine jail bureaucracies. He also helps organize protests outside jails and "Know Your Rights" seminars.

In his native Pakistan, Mr. Khan was a student-opposition leader who agitated against Gen. Zia ul Haq, who ruled Pakistan from 1977 to 1988, mostly under martial law. Mr. Khan moved to Washington in 1995 to cover U.S.-Pakistan relations for a Pakistani newspaper. The paper went out of business shortly after he arrived, and he moved to New York, where he started selling life insurance in the Pakistani-immigrant community. His then-employer filed immigration papers that helped him become a U.S. citizen.

About two weeks ago, Mr. Khan took a medical leave from his job at the Brooklyn branch of Principal Financial Group Inc., a financial-services company based in Des Moines, Iowa. He says he is being treated for stress, related to the competing demands of his job and volunteer work, as well as tension at the Principal Financial Group office. Some colleagues, he says, have cracked jokes within his earshot about Pakistani employees being terrorists. He says he has complained to superiors, but to no avail. Mr. Khan says he felt even more embattled when three Pakistani colleagues were fired recently.

Principal Financial Group, in a statement, says it has been trying to contact Mr. Khan "to more thoroughly address his concerns" but that he hasn't responded. Beyond that, the company declines to discuss his situation. "We absolutely do not tolerate any discriminatory behavior," the statement adds. A company spokeswoman separately says the three other men were fired for regulatory violations.

Mr. Khan says he frets about more than his job. He lies awake nights worrying that one day the authorities might knock on his door. "If they come after me, they are going to take my wife, too, because she is working on this issue with me," he says. "So my small daughter will have no one to take care of her."

He also mourns what he considers the passivity of most Pakistani immigrants. "People in the community are saying, 'Don't do or say anything. Don't make trouble.' I say, 'These are your rights. Talk about your rights.'"

On the one-year anniversary of the attacks, he joined a peace march through Midwood. Amid dozens of U.S. flags and signs proclaiming Pakistanis' love of New York and America, Mr. Khan carried a handmade sign reading, "Bury Imperialist War Fascism Racism Sexism Now."

A worried Pakistani-immigrant mother tells her college-age sons to travel with non-Muslim friends. Her sons tease her, saying, 'Mom, the

A Family on the Edge

With dad jailed, now they fear deportation

By Mae M. Cheng
STAFF WRITER

For the four Naveed children of Maspeth, a relatively comfortable and carefree life has been turned upside down.

Their father, Malik Naveed, 40, the family breadwinner, was arrested under a deportation order after his request for asylum was denied.

Their mother, Fozia Naveed, 38, is raising the children by herself while struggling to stay healthy after undergoing heart-valve replacement surgery two years ago.

Now, worst of all, the family has to deal with the grim possibility that it may be deported to Pakistan.

"If they send us back, we're going to be very poor," said Moeed Naveed, 13, the oldest child and the only one born in Pakistan. He arrived with his parents in the United States when he was 3.

"Over here, we're surviving," said Moeed, who has been raised with Halloween costumes, Rollerblades and McDonald's. "Over there, people will think I'm different because I've been here. I won't be able to adjust."

Malik Naveed filed for political asylum shortly after showing up in the United States with his family in 1993. He claimed a fear of persecution in Pakistan because of his involvement in an opposition political party. But his asylum request was denied in 1998, and the Naveeds were given a month to leave or face deportation.

By then, Moeed's three sisters had been born. According to a deposition filed by Fozia Naveed, the family was unable to raise enough money to return to Pakistan within the month. They decided instead to remain in their rented Maspeth apartment.

Although they were undocumented immigrants, the family settled into a comfortable routine, with Malik Naveed working as a cab driver, picking up his children after school.

On Jan. 8, everything changed. On the way home after picking up two of his daughters, Malik Naveed was stopped by officials who had been dispatched to arrest him on a deportation order. He is among many immigrants who have been arrested since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks under a federal crackdown. Ultimately, he was sent to a New Jersey jail, where he continues to be held.



The Naveeds, from left: Fozia, with daughters Mifrah, Mawra, Moeizza and son Moeed. Father Malik, in photo, is in jail. Newsday Photo / Jiro One

Malik Naveed calls his family twice a week, and the children have seen their father once since his arrest, his wife said. The hardest part for Moeed and his siblings, Mawra, 9, Moeizza, 8, and Mifrah, 5, is the thought that they may have to move to Pakistan. An immigration judge has given the family until tomorrow to file a request to have immigration officials reconsider their asylum case. For a judge to reopen the case, though, officials would have to find the case compelling enough to co-petition with the family.

"It's not easy, but it's possible," said Liz OuYang, an attorney assisting the nonprofit Coney Island Avenue Project on the Naveeds' case.

OuYang contends the family's situation has changed dramatically since its asylum case was originally filed. Now, there are three U.S.-born children

in the mix, and all three would have a difficult time adjusting to a new life in Pakistan.

Fozia Naveed herself fears Moeed might be kidnapped because of his pro-American views, or her daughters might end up as child laborers or even prostitutes due to the poverty in Pakistan. She is frequently in tears.

"The three U.S. children can't be left here without their parents, nor can they be sent back to be targets of anti-American sentiments," OuYang said.

Mark Thorn, a New York immigration service spokesman, said his office could not comment on asylum cases because of confidentiality concerns.

For now, the family is surviving on a sliver of hope. "My kids don't want to go to Pakistan," Fozia Naveed said. "They love this country."

Etats-Unis Alors que l'on juge John Walker Lindh, peu d'Américains se préoccupent de



Coney Island Avenue, au cœur de Brooklyn. La rue des Pakistanais, donc des soupçons, par excellence.

Les détenus maudits

Les journalistes ne sont pas bienvenus à la Passaic County Jail. Pour avoir accès à la prison de Paterson, New Jersey, il faut s'annoncer comme « un ami » de détenu. En l'occurrence de Qasim, un Jordanien de 30 ans, qui a accepté de nous recevoir malgré la peur – ceux qui « parlent trop » sont parfois battus et insultés – parce qu'il se sent perdu. Il a le visage collé contre une des dix vitres qui percent la paroi du réfectoire. Ici, les visites, c'est comme l'accès à l'air libre: une fois par semaine, pendant 30 à 45 minutes. On ne peut

pas se toucher. On se parle par l'entremise de téléphones, un par oreille, le visage scotché de part et d'autre de la vitre.

Qasim, petite moustache et visage pâle, esquisse des blagues en mauvais anglais. Il pleure quand on le questionne sur sa vie. « *J'ai eu tellement de malchance.* » Membre des forces armées jordaniennes, il a déserté courant 2000. Il s'est réfugié dans le Bronx, où il a trouvé un emploi dans une blanchisserie. L'automne dernier, le FBI a débarqué chez lui. Il ne sait comment. Rapidement lavé de tout soupçon d'activités terroristes, Qasim a été

maintenu en détention pour violation mineure (un visa échu) de la législation sur l'immigration. Il y a deux ans, il aurait sans doute été relâché. Dans la fureur de la « guerre contre le Mal », sa situation est sans appel. Qasim sera bientôt « déporté » en Jordanie où il est condamné à trois ans de prison et risque la torture.

Jeune, mâle, musulman, originaire du mauvais coin du globe et de surcroît en situation illégale: Qasim est la caricature des « détenus » appréhendés aux Etats-Unis au lendemain du 11 Septembre. Selon les chiffres officiels, ils auraient été 1200. « *En réalité, leur nombre*

taines de musulmans arrêtés arbitrairement sous couvert de lutte contre le terrorisme.



SAYED a été libéré il y a peu, après neuf mois de prison.



MOHAMMED Emprisonné depuis dix mois.



ERIKA Son fiancé a été arrêté il y a plus de trois mois.

fait dix mois que je suis en prison.» Mohamed est également sans nouvelles de sa femme qui «ne veut pas d'ennuis». Depuis un an, une chape de plomb s'est abattue sur les migrants musulmans. Les Américains sont trop peu conscients de leur situation. Lorsqu'ils le sont, les rumeurs de guerre contre l'Irak et la peur des attentats dominent. Les ONG américaines peinent à trouver des fonds pour aider ces victimes collatérales du terrorisme. Se soucier de leur sort est plutôt mal vu, et peut même attirer des ennuis. Adem Carroll «se sait» sous surveillance. Ecoutes téléphoniques, sans doute quelques filatures.

Le Pakistan de Brooklyn

Coney Island Avenue est une artère large et droite, au cœur de Brooklyn. On y croise quelques Juifs, mais surtout des Pakistanais. Des nuées d'enfants voilés de vert sortent de la mosquée. C'est au numéro 1117 que Bobby et Nabila Khan ont installé le Coney Island Avenue Project (CIAP). «Nous avons immédiatement su que notre communauté allait payer un prix élevé», raconte Bobby, un ancien militant du People's Party de Benazir Bhutto, qui a pris le chemin de l'exil après avoir encaissé trois balles et nombre de déceptions. *Jamais je n'aurais cru que de telles choses puissent se produire aux Etats-Unis.*

Dès le 12 septembre, les agents du FBI, de l'INS et de la Joint Terrorist Task Force ont perquisitionné commerces et bureaux, agences de voyages et sociétés financières. Les raids de nuit se sont multipliés. «Les migrants de la classe laborieuse sont les plus touchés. Une fois appréhendés, il arrive qu'ils disparaissent; leur famille n'a plus aucune nouvelle.» Nabila, double nationale, s'est remise à porter l'habit pakistanais: «Parce que je veux que ma communauté redresse la tête et qu'elle se batte pour ses droits.» Elle aide son mari à gérer le CIAP, antenne qui, tout à la fois, recherche les détenus, leur trouve des avocats, récolte des fonds pour venir en aide à leur famille laissée sans ressources, tente d'ameuter les médias. Une tâche de titan pour quelques bénévoles. Selon Bobby Khan, quelque 150 personnes ont déjà été arrêtées dans le quartier.

Dans le restaurant pakistanais, de l'autre côté de l'avenue, une femme attend. Voile noir et sari vert, elle est enceinte de huit mois et porte sa fille de dix-huit mois sur un bras et son fils de trois ans sur l'autre. Elle est venue chercher de l'aide auprès des Khan. Elle ne parle qu'ourdu, ne compte aucun parent dans la région, et c'est la première fois qu'elle

e Bush

pourrait approcher les 2500 à 3000 individus, estime Adem Carroll, de l'Islamic Circle for America. Ce chiffre de 1200 ne comprend que les premières arrestations. Et depuis, elles n'ont pas cessé.» L'administration Bush refuse toujours – malgré l'arrêt d'un juge – de révéler l'identité des prisonniers. «Nous savons qu'ils ont été, pour la quasi-totalité, lavés de tout soupçon et, en grande partie, renvoyés dans leur pays», poursuit le New-Yorkais converti au soufisme. Une loi de 1996 qui criminalise les étrangers en situation illégale était déjà appliquée avant les attentats. Mais

aujourd'hui, elle l'est beaucoup plus durement, et au détriment de la communauté musulmane. Les arrestations sont le plus souvent fortuites, au hasard d'un contrôle routier ou de la dénonciation d'un voisin trop patriote.

A la vitre numéro 8 du réfectoire des visites, c'est Mohammed, un Egyptien au visage rond, qui raconte son histoire. Marin sur un cargo de marchandises, il s'est installé au nord de l'Etat de New York le jour où il a été piqué par l'«American dream». Il est rapidement devenu manager d'une succursale Dunkin Donuts, et a même épousé une Américaine. En octobre 2001, il se rendait avec son épouse à un rendez-vous avec les services de l'immigration et de la naturalisation (INS) pour légaliser sa situation. «Des agents du FBI m'ont demandé de les suivre pour répondre à "quelques" questions. Cela

→ se risque seule dans les rues de Brooklyn. Son époux, chauffeur de taxi, a été arrêté le 9 août. Quatre hommes et une femme ont fait irruption chez eux à 6 heures du matin. Ils n'ont pas présenté de mandat d'arrêt, ni indiqué de motifs d'arrestation. «*Ils nous ont séparés. Mon mari a essayé de s'expliquer; ils lui ont ordonné de se taire. Je ne l'ai plus revu.*» Elle ne s'est pas rendue en prison car, son visa de séjour étant échu, elle craint d'être arrêtée. Elle lui parle de temps en temps au téléphone. Son mari vient d'ailleurs de lui demander de vendre le taxi pour nourrir les enfants. «*Ils arrêtent les hommes et se lavent les mains de ce qui arrive à leur famille*», dit Nabila.

Dans les couloirs de la mort

Erika, une jeune Américaine d'Oklahoma, perdue et désabusée, triture ses ongles rouge vif sans parvenir encore à comprendre. «*Regardez cette robe!* dit-elle en sortant une photo de son sac. *Nous devons nous marier en juin, Ayub a été arrêté dix jours avant. Que vais-je devenir? Je dépends complètement de lui.*» Erika craint pour son fiancé. Amnesty International a qualifié les conditions de détention de «*punitives extrêmes et injustifiées*»,

compte tenu du motif de détention (violation de la législation sur l'immigration). Parfois, elles violent même le droit (*lire encadré*).

Shubh Mathur, Américaine d'origine indienne, défend les plus faibles depuis qu'elle a vu, dans sa ville de Jaipur, les hindous – les siens – massacrer des musulmans. Enseignante en anthropologie, elle consacre son temps libre à rendre visite aux détenus, pour organiser leur défense et localiser les nouveaux venus. «*Certains n'ont pas de famille*

aux Etats-Unis et personne ne se préoccupe d'eux. C'est ainsi que j'ai retrouvé Mohamad Qayyum. Des détenus m'ont parlé d'un vieil homme qui pleurait toute la journée.» Cela faisait trois mois que le Pakistanais, arrêté dans une mosquée, était emprisonné, sans contact avec l'extérieur et sans avocat. Son cas n'a rien d'exceptionnel.

Sayed et Tania Bokhari se serrent l'un contre l'autre. Cela fait quatre jours que Sayed, 30 ans, casquette et T-shirt Armani Exchan-

Le droit bafoué

Dans un rapport publié en août, qui fait suite à une vaste enquête sur les arrestations qui ont suivi le 11 Septembre, Human Rights Watch (HRW) conclut à «*une érosion persistante et délibérée des droits élémentaires garantis par la Constitution américaine et le droit international*». La liste est longue: détention arbitraire prolongée, sans chef d'accusation ni être informé des raisons de sa détention; non-respect des procédures légales en vigueur et de la présomption d'innocence; mauvais traitements et insultes. HRW accuse: nombre de détenus ont été arrêtés uniquement sur la base de leur nationalité et de leur religion, ce qui ne constitue pas en soit «*la preuve d'un comportement illégal*». Les autorités américaines ont abusé des lois d'immigration de manière à pouvoir maintenir en détention des personnes interrogées pour de supposées activités terroristes, instituant une forme de détention préventive n'existant pas dans le droit américain. Ainsi, elles ont aussi pu faire l'économie de garanties prévues par le droit pénal: notamment le droit à être présenté devant un juge dans les 48 heures suivant l'arrestation et le droit à un avocat commis d'office.

Pour plus d'informations: www.hrw.org



ge, a été libéré. Mariés «par amour», souligne le couple, ils ont passé la quasi-totalité de leur première année de mariage séparés. Elle, 19 ans, détentrice d'un passeport américain, a couru les ONG pour le faire libérer. Lui, l'immigré, est passé dans quatre prisons différentes, dont l'une des plus dures: le Metropolitan Detention Center de Brooklyn.

Leur vie a pris ce tournant le 29 décembre 2001, alors qu'ils faisaient la fête, chez eux, à Long Island. «Quelqu'un a frappé à la porte. C'était un détective, raconte Tania. En quelques minutes, notre rue a été envahie de voitures de police. Les policiers ont séparé les femmes des hommes, tout fouillé. Ils ont embarqué ceux qui n'avaient pas la nationalité américaine.» Dont Sayed.

Son interrogatoire commence quelques heures plus tard, à 3 heures du matin. Il en durera près de quatre, en absence d'avocat. «Ils m'ont demandé: où est Oussama Ben Laden? Quels sont tes liens avec Al-Qaïda? Quelle est votre prochaine cible? se souvient le jeune homme débarqué aux Etats-Unis en 1998. Ils m'ont dit que j'avais le droit de me taire; mais j'étais trop terrorisé pour garder le silence.»

Sayed est incarcéré dans les couloirs de la mort, «death row», le quartier de haute sécu-



BOBBY KHAN «Nous avons su immédiatement que notre communauté allait payer le prix fort.»

rité. Il y passe deux mois et demi dans une cellule de 3 mètres sur 2, avec une seule fenêtre caviardée, et la lumière allumée 24 heures sur 24. «J'ai paniqué, eu des crises d'angoisse. La haine des gardiens à mon égard était telle que je n'osais pas m'endormir.» Pendant

les quatre premiers mois, Sayed n'a droit à aucune visite. «Ils m'ont octroyé un coup de fil tous les 30 jours. Si la ligne est occupée, tant pis: tu attends le mois suivant.»

Comme les autres, il sera finalement inculpé de violation des lois d'immigration. «Au Pakistan, c'est difficile d'obtenir un visa. Je me suis rendu en Afrique du Sud et j'ai menti sur mon identité. Quelqu'un m'a dénoncé aux autorités américaines.»

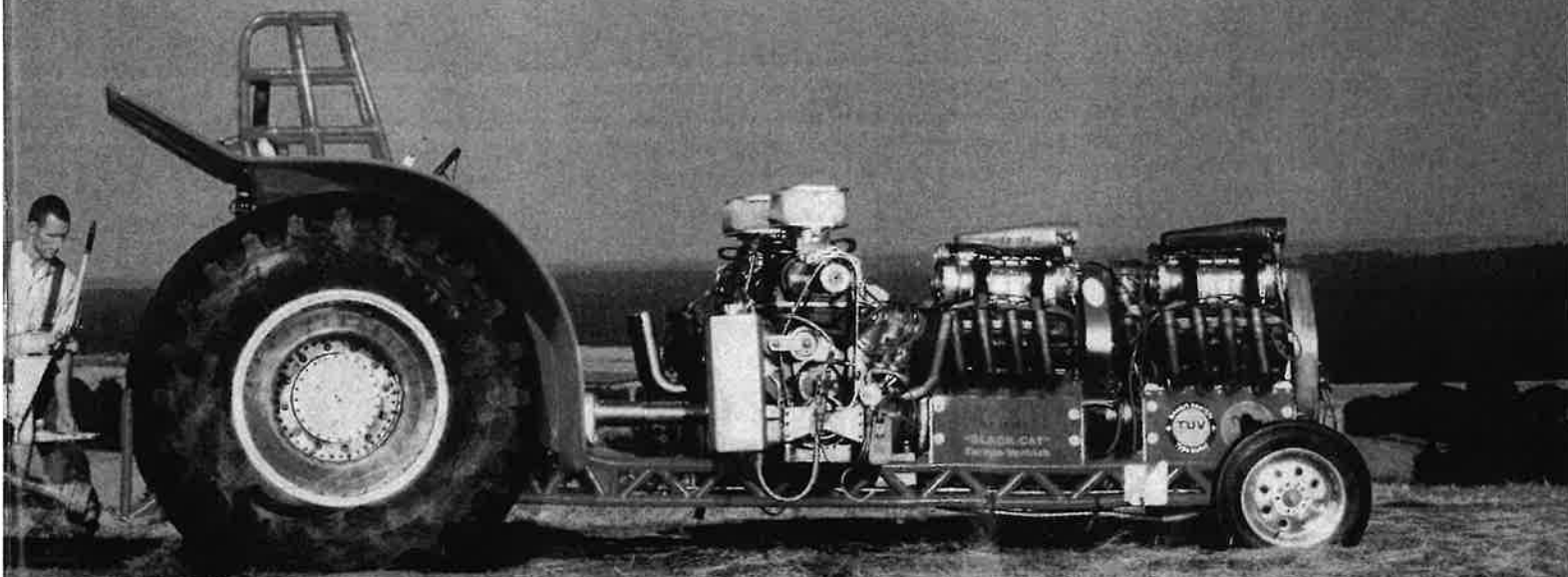
Avant, Sayed était gérant d'un commerce pakistanais. Il gagnait bien et subvenait aux besoins de dix personnes restées au pays. Libéré sous caution, il risque maintenant d'être banni des Etats-Unis pour dix ans: «Faute d'argent, mes frères ont dû interrompre leur scolarité. Mais je ne suis pas fâché contre les Américains. Vous savez pourquoi? Parce que je n'ai pas cette option. Je suis responsable de ma famille. Je dois trouver un moyen de rester à New York.»

Tania et Sayed tentent d'attirer l'attention des médias sur leur sort. Mais les flashes et les caméras ne s'intéressent ces jours-ci qu'au «taliban américain» John Walker Lindh, citoyen américain jugé pour avoir servi la cause des ennemis.

Anne-Frédérique Widmann, New York

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A target of INS anti-terror zeal

Around 6 a.m. on Nov. 8, immigration agents and police charged into an apartment in Bushwick, Brooklyn, and arrested Faisal Ulvie, a Pakistani living in this country illegally since 1995.

Also inside the apartment were Ulvie's wife, Nadine, the couple's 2-year-old child and her two young children from a prior marriage — all American citizens.

According to Nadine, the agents broke through the downstairs front door of their apartment building, pounded on the family's apartment door and rushed past 7-year-old Britany. Ulvie was still asleep in the couple's bedroom, and his wife was in the shower.

A clothing store salesman, Ulvie had never been in trouble with the law. But like many other Pakistanis and Muslims in this country, he was caught in the federal government's semi-secret but expanding dragnet for potential foreign terrorists.

"Every week for the past few months, I've gotten reports of five or six Pakistanis or Muslims being picked up in Brooklyn," said Ahsanullah (Bobby) Khan, who runs the Coney Island Project, a community group that assists Muslim immigrants.

"Many of these people disappear. Their families sometimes don't even know where they are," Khan said. "And none of them have any involvement with terrorism."

Agents carted Ulvie off to an Immigration and Naturalization Service detention center at the Middlesex County jail, where hundreds of detainees were being held. Ulvie originally came to the United States at age 18 as a member of a Pakistani martial arts team.

After a tournament in Georgia, he applied for political asylum. But when he failed to show up for his final asy-



JUAN GONZALEZ

lum hearing, an immigration judge ordered his deportation.

Ulvie overstayed his visa and disappeared, eking out a living as an illegal immigrant in Brooklyn.

He and Nadine were married in April 2001.

The week after his arrest, his wife, with help from Khan, hired attorney Elizabeth OuYang.

"He has no criminal record, he's married to a U.S. citizen with three children," said OuYang. "Due process would allow for him not to be deported until this issue could be resolved by an immigration judge."

On Sunday evening of Nov. 17, Ulvie telephoned his wife and told her he was being deported.

Nadine got in touch with Khan, who was working late at the offices of the Coney Island Project. Khan and OuYang immediately drove to the Hudson County jail, where Ulvie had been moved.

Bus to the plane of deportation

OuYang said jail officials told her Ulvie was being moved again, but that she would have to find out where from the INS. OuYang waited in the jail parking lot until 3 a.m., when she spotted a white INS bus. She waited for another 90 minutes but saw no one get on or off.

The lawyer drove back to New York and called the INS emergency hotline. That was when she learned from an INS official that her client was scheduled to be deported from Newark Airport at 11:30 that morning.

OuYang rushed to 26 Federal Plaza to ask an immigration judge to block Ulvie's deportation.

At 10:15 a.m., federal immigration Judge Patricia Rohan approved the request and agreed to give Ulvie a hearing.

By then, Ulvie and scores of other Pakistanis were al-



Nadine and Faisal Ulvie

ready waiting to take off. The judge had to call the aircraft on the cell phone of an airport immigration officer.

Rohan ordered Ulvie taken off the plane.

INS officials referred all requests for comment on Ulvie's case to the Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review. Elaine Komis, spokeswoman for that agency, said the department cannot discuss cases that are of "special interest" — the government's jargon for all immigrant deportations under stepped-up anti-terrorism efforts.

So far, Ulvie's worst crime appears to have been living here illegally.

"I would never have thought that these clandestine deportations are taking place if I hadn't been in that parking lot and seen that bus come to take those men," OuYang said.

E-mail: jgonzalez@edit.nydailynews.com

Back Home After Release

By Mae M. Cheng
STAFF WRITER

After nearly three difficult months apart from his wife and four children, Malik Naveed returned to his Maspeth home Friday, greeted by a shower of balloons and American flags.

Naveed, 40, was released in the late afternoon from a New Jersey jail, where he was held as immigration officials sought to deport him to his native Pakistan. With \$7,500 borrowed from a cousin, Naveed posted bond Friday for his release.

"I was missing my whole family," Naveed said shortly upon his arrival home. "I can't believe my eyes that I'm with my wife and my kids."

Naveed, 40, a cab driver, came to the United States in 1993 with his wife and 3-year-old son. He applied for political asylum, but the request was denied in 1998 and the family



Newsday Photo / Nelson Ching

Malik Naveed, center, his wife, Fozia, right rear, children and relatives on Friday.

was given a month to return to Pakistan. By this time, the family had grown to include three American-born daughters. Naveed found that he did not have enough money to go to Pakistan, so he settled his family in Maspeth. On Jan. 8, he was arrested for illegally being in the United States.

Naveed filed court papers to reopen the asylum case, claiming that the family and world situations have changed so much so that it would be difficult and dangerous for the family to return to Pakistan and live there.

A Manhattan immigration judge granted the motion Tuesday, paving the way for Naveed's release. He is scheduled to return to immigration court on June 4.

"The judge's ruling is a recognition that there are situations in Pakistan that would be of detriment to this family," said Liz OuYang, an attorney assisting the nonprofit Coney Island Avenue Project on the Naveeds' case.

"To send this family back under the escalating circumstances would be suicide for this family," said OuYang, referring to anti-American sentiments in Pakistan.

Both Naveed and his attorney said they are hopeful the family will eventually win the right to remain permanently in the United States.

Until then, Naveed was happy Friday with the thought of a hot shower and appeasing the wishes of his four young children to have a night out at McDonald's.

Leave Home Without It

Credit card companies cancel on Muslim New Yorkers.

By Hilary Russ

Say that you are one of those fortunate people who manage to pay off most of their credit cards every month. Then imagine your surprise when one of your cards is cancelled for no apparent reason. You'd be outraged, especially if you found out this was only happening to you and your friends.

That's exactly what Farooq Firdous experienced. Last summer, Firdous, a Pakistani who got his green card in 1997 after 11 years of legal residence in the U.S., received a phone call from an American Express representative regarding a credit card he held. The rep requested that he send the company a mountain of paperwork: three years of tax returns, six months of bank statements and a job verification letter.

His wife, Yasmin Khan, who is Indian, received a separate phone call that same day for her own AmEx credit card. In each case, the rep told them they had 15 days to submit the paperwork or their cards would be cancelled. Firdous and Khan called back later—twice—to ask reps if they could send the request in writing. They refused.

Firdous and Khan were confused, to say the least, because they always paid off their AmEx cards on time. After conferring with his wife, Firdous called the company back again. "I told them strictly, 'You're probably discriminating against minorities with Muslim names,'" he recalls. He and his wife refused to submit the documentation, which on at least three different occasions company reps said they needed for "security reasons."

A few weeks later, each received a letter saying his or her credit card was cancelled: "You did not provide the banking information, financial statements, income tax return, and/or identification documents requested." The let-

ters also stated that the reasons for cancelling the account included "information received from a consumer reporting agency," hinting that credit problems might be to blame.

But Firdous' credit is excellent, according to the credit report he subsequently obtained. (Indeed, after his AmEx card was cancelled, he immediately applied for and received a Citibank Mastercard.) The status of his closed AmEx account reads "Paid/Never late."

The government's post-9/11 infringements on civil liberties have been well documented and debated. But what happens when private companies take the fight against terrorism into their own hands? If you're Pakistani, or Muslim, or both, you might just find your credit cards cancelled, despite the good credit you've worked hard to build.

City Limits has found 12 cases in which Muslims, nearly all Pakistani-Americans, with good credit, all of whom claim they made no unusual or exorbitant charges or late payments, had their American Express credit cards cancelled. We found no cases of non-Muslims' credit cards being cancelled outright, or even non-Muslims who were asked to send in paperwork for existing accounts.

For Pakistanis in particular, losing access to financial services is neither simply the misfortune of discrimination, nor minor fallout from the U.S. war on terrorism. All over New York City, Pakistanis are proprietors of small businesses: medical practices, bodegas, restaurants and, in Firdous' case, a computer store in Sheepshead Bay. For them, maintaining access to credit and other financial services is a matter of survival.

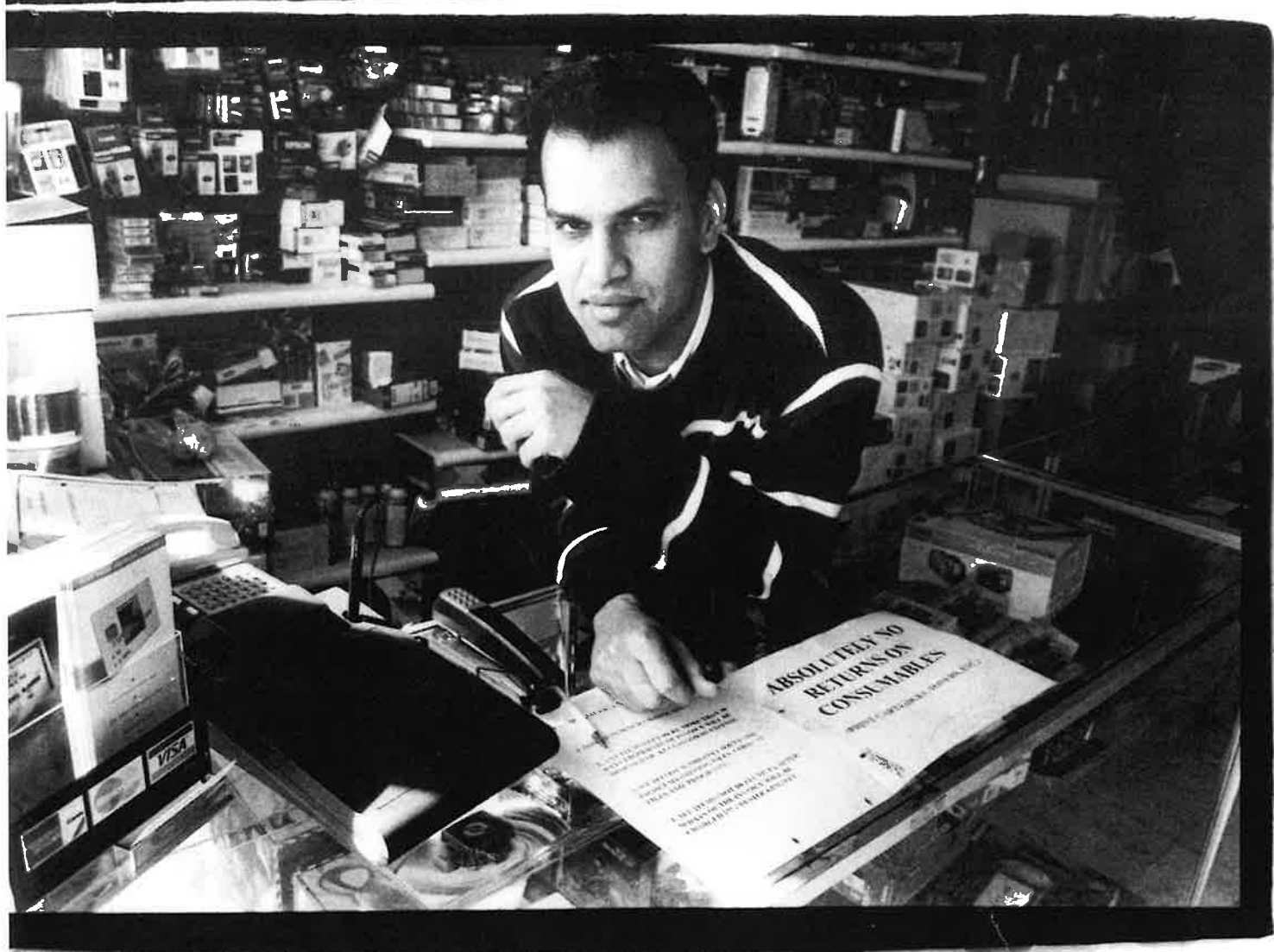
So Firdous was alarmed when he soon began

hearing more stories like his. He had considered the AmEx matter a freak event—until he brought it up at a dinner party a couple of months later on Long Island. That's when he and his wife realized they weren't alone.

Two other guests at the table, Dr. Iqbal Siddiqui and his wife, Dr. Faizah Zuberi, who live in a stately home in New Jersey, had gone through almost exactly the same baffling series of events: Same request, same documents, same cancellation. And the same, immediate suspicion of discrimination. "They asked for too much stuff. I said, 'Why are you asking all this? We have very good credit. There's no need to do this,'" says Siddiqui. "We are sympathetic Americans; we like America. They gave me bullshit on the phone." Siddiqui and Zuberi recall reps telling them that they had been selected at random. The couple had used their AmEx almost exclusively to buy groceries at the local Costco.

After the dinner party, Firdous conducted his own informal survey. He discovered that American Express reps had contacted at least five more of his friends and acquaintances, requesting information for their existing American Express accounts. All of the friends' cards were then cancelled, whether they sent in the paperwork or not. All are Muslim, while none of his Jewish or Chinese friends, he says, have received the dreaded call. "He was pretty angry about it," recalls one American-born Chinese friend who did not want to be named.

Zuberi noticed the same trend, and even asked the AmEx representative, "How come I ask a lot of family members and friends and they say it all happened to them, but when I ask my American colleagues it hasn't happened to them?" she recalls. "They say, 'We have a lot of Joneses and Smiths on the list, too.'" Zuberi



Margaret Meady

wasn't convinced.

American Express Vice President of Public Relations Tony Mitchell claims that company policy prohibits him from going into detail on Firdous' or Khan's specific cases, even though *City Limits* obtained their permission to do so. "We routinely monitor all of our card accounts," Mitchell says. "As part of that, we may ask a card member for additional financial information to gain a fuller picture of the account and to assess the current credit and financial condition of the cardholder."

Financial institutions have always had to be diligent about checking customers' identities. After September 11, notes American Bankers Association spokesperson John Hall, the federal government has increasingly scrutinized all financial institutions, especially their ability to identify customers. "There's a need to go beyond just checking ID and actually verify who they are," says Hall.

The banking industry has been actively assisting the government in post-9/11 efforts to find and block money directed to terrorists, using the

same tools they've employed for years in the war on drugs. Financial institutions work with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, or FinCEN, part of the Department of Treasury. Companies and banks check names against the 80-page-long list of names maintained by OFAC, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. It includes approximately 5,000 "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons"—people and organizations with whom Americans are not supposed to do business, including terrorists, narcotics traffickers and money-launderers. Banks have used this list for about a decade, but "September 11 served as a stark reminder to everyone involved that they should really be rigorous in looking at these names," says OFAC spokesperson Tony Fratto.

When new names are added, financial institutions check them against their own customer lists. The repercussions of noncompliance with reporting requirements are very serious: Institutions can be held liable if they even inadvertently do business with one of the Treasury Department's banned customers—up to \$10 million in fines and 30 years in prison.

Farooq Firdous takes American Express at his computer store, but he can't have a card himself—the company cancelled his account for "security reasons."

None of the full names of people mentioned in this story appear on OFAC's master list. But other lists of alleged terrorism supporters are now proliferating. Just after September 11, the FBI drew up a list of names of people it wanted to question, giving the dossier out to private businesses, such as hotels and airlines, here and abroad, as a new experiment in information-sharing called Project Lookout.

But the FBI soon lost control of the Project Lookout list, and bootleg copies with added names and even typos were passed around the private sector. As many as 50 different versions may now exist. "This thing took on a life of its own," says FBI spokesperson Bill Carter, who says that from the very beginning, companies

Leave Home Without It

continued from page 20

bodega, who didn't want to be named, was contacted by American Express for his merchant's account. Last spring, a representative called to request that he send in tax returns and three months of bank statements. He couldn't find his tax returns, so he just sent in the bank statements. His account was closed, and now he can no longer take American Express cards from customers. He claims that the representative told him that because customers who charged items at his store with their AmEx cards were not paying off the charges, the company had to cancel his merchant's account. An AmEx rep then requested that he send in paperwork for his personal account also; since they had nixed his merchant's account, he didn't want to bother, figuring they would do whatever they wanted regardless. So they cancelled his personal card, too. "It's like they put duct tape over his mouth, plastic on his face," says his best friend, also Pakistani, who didn't want to be named either. "It's a shame really. Who's gonna listen?"

Still more Pakistani businesses have been targeted. Hani Khoury, a lawyer and vice-president of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee of New Jersey, mentions the money-wiring business belonging to one of his clients. The man, he says, has always been licensed, kept detailed records, played by the book and even gave customer information to the FBI. Yet late last year, Citibank and the Bank of New York called and told him they were dropping his accounts with them—claiming, according to Khoury, that they were entitled to close accounts at any time without having to offer any explanation. "He was considering hiring a blond, blue-eyed American woman to deflect suspicion," says Khoury. (The Bank of New York has since reopened his account.)

For Pakistanis without green cards, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services' new special registration program has provided one more opportunity for prying into financial records. Sin Yen Ling, staff attorney at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, reports that during the government's special registration interviews, immigrants are repeatedly asked for detailed information about their credit cards. It's "as if being South Asian and Muslim and using a credit card is a huge crime," she says.

A slow but steady stream of customers flows into the computer store that Farooq Firdous co-owns. A trio of young kids with dreadlocks and knit caps wait for their father to finish his trans-

action with Firdous. The shop's fake pine-paneled walls are bare of decoration but plastered with cables, cords, software, games, printers, headphones, and other computer bits and parts.

Business here was good until 2000, when the stock market sagged, say Firdous and his business partner. They haven't escaped the post-9/11 economic sinkhole, either. But in Muslim communities, tough economic times are exacerbated by pervasive fear.

First there were hate crimes: the 481 reported incidents in the U.S. in 2001 against Muslims included 3 murders and 35 arsons. Ordinary Muslim-Americans were subjected to shouts of "Terrorists, go home!" in random encounters on the street, which happened to Khan and her 4-year-old son.

Since then, government intrusion into nearly every facet of Pakistanis' lives has created a sense of vulnerability that has slowly soaked through entire communities. Now there's a fear of deportation, even for green card holders like Firdous.

The FBI has visited Firdous' business three times and his home twice. They marched into the store, looked around and then left. He says he was afraid to ask why they were there. "When you ask one question, you don't know what will happen," he says. "I stayed quiet." At home, an agent first showed Khan a photo, and asked her if she knew the man in it. On the second occasion, the FBI asked her name and left.

"In these neighborhoods, there's a lot of surveillance and movement of law enforcement agencies, which has created a lot of harassment and intimidation," says Ahsanullah "Bobby" Khan, founder of the interfaith Coney Island Avenue Project, which he set up right after September 11 to provide legal, financial and educational assistance to Muslims. "Those neighborhoods are marked," he says. "Now they don't think that this is the place for them to live, and

they're leaving voluntarily."

Thousands of Pakistanis, most but not all undocumented, have tried to flee to Canada. From this January to March 15, more than 1,600 applied for refugee status after crossing the Canadian border. Many others are returning to Pakistan.

Coney Island Avenue's moniker, "Little Pakistan," may not ring true for much longer. Proprietors of Pakistani establishments are moving out of Brooklyn, waiting only to see if they can get a good price for their business, and restaurateurs have never before seen so few customers. "Brooklyn in Midwood, if you go to Brighton Beach and downtown Brooklyn, if you go in Queens, Jackson Heights, Astoria, Steinway Street," says Bobby Khan, "all these shopping areas were relying on these immigrants."

Their absence in public life is obvious. On religious holidays, Firdous and his partner go to a Brighton Beach mosque, a building that was donated years ago by the father of Firdous' partner. The place is usually packed. But during Eid ul-Adha this February, it was practically empty. "Everyone is leaving," sighs Firdous.

Firdous and Khan often discuss what they would do if they and their kids were forced to leave, even though that's an unlikely scenario. "We discuss contingency plans," he says. "She's Indian; I'm from Pakistan. Our position is very difficult. She doesn't want to go to Pakistan, and I don't want to go to India." Their children only speak English. "We're very confused," he repeats three times. "They can come and take me away anytime. What will my family do?"

As Firdous talks about the case, he absently taps a neon orange pen, which blinks red every time it hits the desk. In his methodical manner of speech, which is almost a drawl, he says, "A lot of people are scared to come forward. They said 'Forget it,' like I did." •

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By Michael Powell

May 29, 2003

The FBI grabbed the cook at Lazzat Pakistani Pizzeria as he spun dough. The plump newsstand man from Lahore rode the D-train to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service -- and never came back. The owner of Kashmir Travel pulled down his metal gate one night and vanished. His darkened store sits there, paperwork, copiers and gumballs in place.

Qamar, 25, drove his mom, dad and younger brother north a month ago. His brother had a visa problem so his parents decided to apply for asylum in Toronto. Now the younger brother calls Qamar in Brooklyn each night.

"He wanted to know all about prom night at Dewey High School," says Qamar, who asked that his last name not be used. His hair is gelled and brushed forward, his jeans ride low; his affect is Pakistani boyz in the New York 'hood. "He still thinks he's coming back.

"I tell him: 'Hello! Brother, that life's over.' "

Once the mosque on Coney Island Avenue was so crowded on Friday afternoons that white-capped Pakistani taxi drivers and computer analysts placed their prayer rugs on the sidewalk. Once the restaurants were so crowded that scents of saffron and rose water and vindaloo wafted across the broad avenue all night.

Now Little Pakistan in Brooklyn is a neighborhood being pulled up at its roots. Of the 120,000 or so Pakistanis who lived near here, 15,000, maybe more, have left for Canada, Europe or Pakistan, according to Pakistani government estimates. The departures began after Sept. 11, 2001, when federal agents began stopping and detaining hundreds of Pakistanis. The exodus accelerated five months ago when the Department of Homeland Security required that every male Pakistani visa holder age 16 or older register with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Pakistanis make up the largest immigrant group of the 25 nations, almost all of them predominantly Muslim, named in the registration requirements. The immigration bureau acknowledges that more than 83,000 males have registered and that 2,747 are currently detained, but refuses to specify the number of Pakistanis. Although Pakistan is a U.S. ally, key al Qaeda leaders have been arrested there and federal investigators have turned their attention to the community here -- with disquieting results.

The mosque on Coney Island Avenue is one-third empty on Fridays. Restaurants close at 10 p.m. Hairdressers and pizza joints report a 40 percent drop in business. Sada-E-Pakistan newspaper, written in Urdu, sells 60 percent fewer ads. The United States has deported enough illegal immigrants to Islamabad to fill four jetliners.

In what was the tightest of labor markets, "For Rent" and "Help Wanted" signs sprout on lampposts and in grocery stores.

The Pakistani Embassy reports that immigrants from the nation -- the largest concentration of them living in New York -- have shipped hundreds of millions of dollars back home. Its foreign exchange holdings have

jumped from \$1.2 billion on Sept. 11, 2001, to \$10 billion today.

In the rowhouses and apartment buildings of Brooklyn and Queens, the sense of being watched is pervasive. Pakistani immigrants with their proper South Asian English accents and their 70-hour workweeks and their ever-more-American ways live in a state of suspicion. Children are pulled out of schools by parents fleeing to Pakistan. Wives watch husbands being taken into detention. Many fear their phones are tapped, their e-mails monitored.

In his storefront office at the Council of Pakistan Organization, Mohammad "Moe" Razvi, a gregarious bolt of a man who was 6 years old when his family arrived here from Lahore, rummages through his desk drawers. He pulls out a laminated book and flips to two pages of FBI and INS business cards. For months, these cards have appeared in door jambs and mailboxes throughout the neighborhood.

"Hello," reads the handwritten note on the back of a card. "I'm with the FBI. Please contact me ASAP."

Most Pakistanis complied and many disappeared into detention facilities. Fear of the cards grew. "A friend of mine saw that card and didn't come home again for four days," Razvi recalled. "Not a day goes by that someone doesn't ask me: What's next?"

FBI officials describe the Muslim communities as engaged in a mutually beneficial dialogue, and they defend questionings as needed to safeguard national security. Some mosques -- although none that are predominantly Pakistani -- have been linked to fundamentalist clerics. The FBI has assigned a team of agents who investigate terrorism to visit mosques and talk with the ethnic media, and to assure both that no ill will is intended.

"We understand that you feel frightened and afraid and angry," special agent Mary Jo Lyons, clad in a black head scarf, told 200 people assembled in a mosque in Little Pakistan a week ago. "We are in a war on terror, and the only way to overcome the fear is to work hand in hand with us."

Pakistani immigrants readily agree that the United States has a right to police its border. The Pakistani Embassy estimates that 30,000 of its nationals live here "without status," meaning that they have overstayed their visas or lack proper working papers. As the saying goes here, these people live on the mercy of circumstance.

But the United States is a nation -- and New York is a city -- stuffed to the gills with immigrants. Each ethnic community has its legal citizens and visa holders, as well as illegal immigrants. The government has subjected only a handful of these communities to intense government scrutiny, few as rigorously as the Pakistanis. This disparity confounds them.

No Pakistanis, they note, were among the Sept. 11 hijackers. Just four of the roughly 410 Pakistanis deported by the United States were felons, according to the Pakistani Embassy. Three residents of Little Pakistan -- an emergency medical services worker, an auxiliary cop and a businessman -- died inside the World Trade Center, and commemorative photos of the towers adorn the walls of grocery stores and restaurants here.

Asad Reza, a painfully polite man dressed in slacks, a polar vest and a gray cap, sits, legs crossed, in a dimly lit room on Coney Island Avenue, waiting to speak to a lawyer. He's a 53-year-old gray-haired bookkeeper. A month ago, he took his two sons to register at Federal Plaza in Manhattan. The INS officials put them in handcuffs and held them overnight in a room with no chairs.

It turned out that Reza's application for permanent resident status had a technical glitch. It's the sort of problem, immigration lawyers say, that would be easily remedied in better times. Reza faces deportation.

"My sons, 16 and 18, are on the roll of honors at their high school." Reza blinks and wags his head. "Actually, they are very worried.

"We love this country," he said. "Please tell me why we are being singled out."

'I Live in Fear of Police'

"An officer accused me of being terrorist. I live in fear of police and FBI raid . . . "

-- A grocery store packer

"I am a taxi driver, night shift, my boss threatens to fire me because he says I'm a terrorist."

-- Car service driver

"They chased me for three blocks and told me to go back where I came from or they would kill me."

-- A 13-year-old junior high school student

-- From city Human Rights commission surveys filled out by Pakistanis on

Coney Island Avenue

Bobby Khan turns the key and opens the door to the one-bedroom apartment and it's as though someone just left. A coffee grinder sits on the kitchen counter, the TV set stands in the living room, the air conditioner is plugged in. There is a phone list for Little Hands Pre-K and a saying from the Koran on the refrigerator: "Be Patient." Khan's friends, a father and mother, lived here for 10 years with their three U.S.-born children -- until they packed a few bags in February and took an overnight bus to Montreal.

These ghost apartments are scattered across Brooklyn and Queens. Families fled and friends now watch over the apartments, pay the rent for a few months, in hopes of -- what?

Khan shrugs. Dark-haired and bearded, with circle-rimmed eyes, he is a trained financial analyst who volunteers seven days a week as an interpreter and advocate for his embattled community. "They had been in New York 18 years," he says of his friends. "He was a cabdriver; I knew him from Pakistan. They were very happy, but their status was unclear. It's hard to think about leaving forever."

Qamar, the young man whose mom, dad and brother live in a Toronto motel, stops by his parents' apartment in a dowager of a prewar apartment building in Brooklyn's Bath Beach neighborhood each week. He runs the washing machine, waters the plants, looks at old photos. Sometimes he packs their clothes.

"My mom and I talked about it; they are fully Americanized but they can't leave my brother alone," said Qamar, who is married to a U.S. citizen. "When they are ready, I will close the apartment and drive their boxes up to them. This life is past."

That's hard for many to accept -- they see Little Pakistan as built of collective effort. Accountant Ashgar Choudhri, dressed in tweed jacket and pants, with a plaid vest and a professorial aspect, recalls coming to Coney Island Avenue in the early 1960s. He found a desolate strip of walkups and storefronts, wedged between the Victorian houses of Flatbush and growing Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods of Midwood and Borough Park.

A mosque, the granddaddy of the present one, opened in a basement. Immigrants with degrees in engineering and accounting and medicine worked construction, drove taxis and hawked tabloids on the Brooklyn Bridge.

Many underwent the slow metamorphosis from tourist visa holder to green card to permanent resident status. About 40,000 became citizens. "When you return to Pakistan, I tell you, everyone can see you're not the same," Choudhri said. "You walk different. You talk different. You are an American."

By the 1990s, Pakistani dentists and obstetricians had busy practices. The halal butchers expanded to service the Orthodox Jews. Crime plummeted, and each Friday cops from the 70th Precinct allowed livery drivers to double-park so they could pray. On Pakistan Day in August, 10,000 people crowded onto Coney Island Avenue to listen as mayor and governor wished them well.

"My God, you don't know what it is to feel the freedom here," Choudhri said, slapping his battered brown leather briefcase for emphasis. "Freedom of speech, freedom of movement."

Which explains why those who fled are so reluctant to relinquish their homes. Regardless of status -- and some who fled are citizens -- they hope one day to trickle back. Those who remain wonder about the shape of that future. "I try to speak out for those who are being harassed," Choudhri said. "But sometimes I keep quiet now. Because you see" -- his smile is sheepish -- "I, too, am scared."

That Knock

She imitates the sound of knocking on her apartment door at 2 a.m. She recalls peering through the peephole and seeing two plainclothes detectives holding up their badges. She opened the door that night in December 2002, and her life changed.

The police wanted her husband, a car service driver and a grocery worker. He requested political asylum years earlier -- the application had languished. The detectives took him into detention a few days later. His home is a cell in New Jersey.

Razia Sultana has three children, ages 5, 6 and 10. A striking woman swathed in a periwinkle headdress, she personifies the economic impact of the two-year crackdown. She has no work permit, she has run up \$200 a month in charges for collect phone calls from her husband in prison, her rent is overdue. She cannot afford meat or new clothes; her Kashmiri butcher and Punjabi sari shop owner have lost a customer.

"Life was good and my husband worked very hard," Sultana said. "But to survive on our own -- New York is very hard."

The Islamic Circle of North America held a fundraiser on Coney Island Avenue two weeks ago that took in \$55,000 for 275 families whose men are in detention. "Sometimes we can pay the rent," said Adem Carroll of ICNA. "Sometimes we can give just enough to keep them in a state of misery."

In the way of immigrant communities, waves of misfortune in Brooklyn ripple through Lahore and Islamabad and dusty Indus River villages. Many Pakistani immigrants send dollars to relatives in Pakistan -- an illiterate bricklayer who lived with three other men in an apartment on Ditmas Road in Brooklyn said he supported a family of nine in Pakistan.

Those who fled with their American nest eggs have fueled a housing boom in Islamabad, where prices have tripled. "This has never happened in Islamabad," said Imran Ali, a Pakistani Embassy official. "There are no jobs to support these lifestyles in Pakistan."

The Friday custom is well-established in Little Pakistan. As mosque services end, families stroll in search of a late-afternoon snack. Lazzat pizzeria sits across the street, a spotless, glass-lined eatery that promises customers, in no particular order, eggplant parmigiana, halal fried chicken, Lahori dall Chawal and baked ziti. A 52-inch satellite TV shows cricket and soccer matches.

This is Javed Chaudri's palace, and it's empty when it should be full.

"It is over," he said, waving a hand, wearily, at 13 empty tables. "I used to make \$1,800 in 24 hours -- now I make \$800. My chef was arrested six months ago, and he's gone back to Pakistan to start a construction business."

Chaudri climbed a well-worn immigrant ladder. He washed dishes, sold newspapers, drove a taxi. "I was 24 when I came here and I'm 40 now," he said. "I spent the prime of my life in struggle, and now my business goes down, down, down."

Would he return to Pakistan? He shakes his head without hesitation. Chaudri is a U.S. citizen, and his oldest son will graduate high school and go to college next year. He loves this country even if it's scared of him just now.

"America has been very good to us," he said. "I have kept my cab license. I will struggle and this will pass."

Pakistani men walk to the mosque on Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn for Friday prayers. The mosque, once too small to hold all worshipers, is now one-third empty on prayer day. Pakistani men gather at the Coney Island Avenue mosque, which was once so crowded that prayer rugs had to be placed on the sidewalk. Pakistanis stroll along Coney Island Avenue, the once-bustling heart of Little Pakistan. Umar Farooq Zahid Qureshi, 12, joins Pakistani men at the mosque in Brooklyn's Midwood neighborhood. "I spent the prime of my life in struggle and now my business goes down, down, down," says Javed Chaudri, owner of Lazzat Pakistani Pizzeria in Brooklyn.

 **Comments**

More Than

By RACHEL L. SWARNS

WASHINGTON, June 6 — More than 13,000 of the Arab and Muslim men who came forward earlier this year to register with immigration authorities — roughly 16 percent of the total — may now face deportation, government officials say.

Only a handful have been linked to terrorism. But of the 82,000 men who registered, more than 16 who registered, more than 13,000 have been found to be living in this country illegally, officials say.

Many had hoped to win lenient treatment by demonstrating their willingness to cooperate with the campaign against terrorism. The men were not promised special treatment, however, and officials believe that most will be deported in what is likely to be the largest wave of deportations since the Sept. 11 attacks.

The government has initiated deportation proceedings, and in some immigrant communities across the country, an exodus has already begun.

Quietly, the fabric of neighborhoods is thinning. Families are falling apart; some are splitting up. Rather than come forward and risk deportation, an unknowable number of migrants have burrowed deep underground. Others have simply fled — for Canada or for their home countries.

The deportations are a stark example of how the Bush administration increasingly uses the nation's immigration system as a weapon in the battle against terrorism.

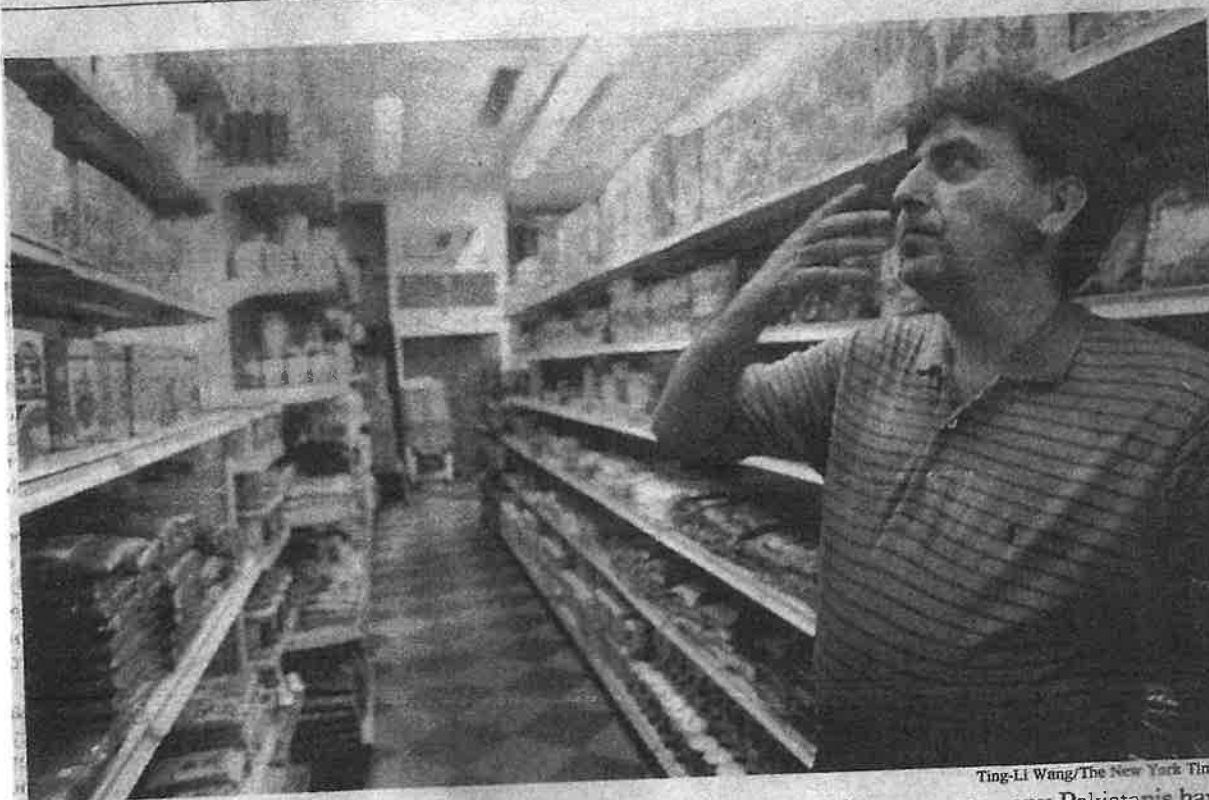
For decades, illegal immigration have often flourished because officials lacked the staff, resources or political will to deport them. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the government has been detaining and deporting illegal immigrants from countries considered breeding grounds for terrorists.

"There's been a major shift in priorities," said Jim Chaparro, acting director for interior enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security, which has subsumed the immigration service.

"We need to focus our enforcement efforts on the biggest threat," Mr. Chaparro added. "If a lot of people can be exploited by an immigrant, it can also be exploited by a terrorist."

Advocates for immigrants say that such a strategy — including the administration's sweeping reorientation of law enforcement toward terrorism prevention — can be criticized by government officials.

They note that, though it does not deal directly with the registration program, an internal Justice Department report was released this week that was deeply critical of the



Ting-Li Wang/The New York Times

Mohammad Iqbal, 45, who owns the New Apna Bazaar on Coney Island Avenue, says many Pakistanis have moved because they don't feel safe. Officials say the Pakistani population in the area is down 40 to 50 percent.

In Brooklyn, 9/11 Damage Continues

By ANDREA ELLIOTT

The signs in Midwood, Brooklyn, surfaced slowly at first. Curry packets at the New Apna Bazaar started to accumulate. The line of cars at the Sunoco station began to thin.

And then the crowd dwindled at Friday Prayer at the Makki Mosque on Coney Island Avenue. This, among worshippers once so numerous they prayed on the street for lack of room.

"Now the rooms are empty inside," said Danieyel Yaqoob, 32, a taxi driver who lives in Midwood. "It's hard to live here now. People don't have too many friends like before."

In this heavily Pakistani community, the word "before" begs no further explanation. It refers to a crucial turning point — Sept. 11, 2001 — in this neighborhood's modern history, a date that marked the start of an exodus of thousands of Pakistanis and the arrival of a new discomfort in day-to-day living for those who remained.

Arrests, closer scrutiny and an increased threat of deportation have plagued Arabs and Muslims nationwide. In New York, Egyptians, Moroccans, Jordanians and Lebanese

have seen numbers of detentions. But no group appears harder hit than the Pakistanis.

Before Sept. 11, an estimated 120,000 Pakistanis lived in Brooklyn, concentrated in Midwood and Brighton Beach. Since then, between 40 and 50 percent have been detained or deported or have left on their own, said Bobby Khan, executive director of the Coney Island Avenue Project, which was formed after the attack to help Arabs and Muslims who were detained.

Some Pakistanis have migrated to Canada, while others have returned home, leaving divided families behind. About 1,000 have been detained, and 80 percent of them have been deported, Mr. Khan said.

"Even with the papers, people are scared of what's going on and they feel it's safer to move somewhere else," said Mohammad Iqbal, 45, who owns the New Apna Bazaar on Coney Island Avenue.

For Mr. Yaqoob and his friend and fellow taxi driver, Mohammed Ihsan, the heightened scrutiny translates to many sad interruptions in routine. The two men used to meet with a group of friends to watch cricket on satellite television.

Now they fear a meeting would suggest subversive behavior, or pique the suspicions of, perhaps, a building superintendent.

"We can't get together," said Mr. Ihsan. "If you're sitting at someone's home, six or seven guys, they'll ask, 'Why are you sitting there?'"

The economic fallout of this exodus, matched with New York's struggling economy, is also widely apparent. Pakistani-owned stores have closed, or are on the brink of going out of business. Mr. Iqbal, whose grocery sells lentils, paprika and other products for Pakistanis as well as kosher and Russian products, said he had seen business drop by half in the last 18 months.

Mr. Yaqoob, the taxi driver, waved a hand south along the shopping strip of Coney Island Avenue. "This used to be all Pakistani stores. Now it's become Russian stores."

The Arab exodus has also surfaced in sudden requests for one-way tickets out of the country, said a travel agent in Downtown Brooklyn.

"When they come, they ask for a one-way ticket because they have to go. We don't ask them any questions," said the travel agent, a 31-year-old Sudanese who spoke on condition of anonymity.

For 18-year-old Sameena Kausar, among the harder things to witness is the drain of fellow students in her Koran class and services at the Makki Mosque.

"It was crowded before," she said. "It's not many people now."

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BY ALISA SOLOMON

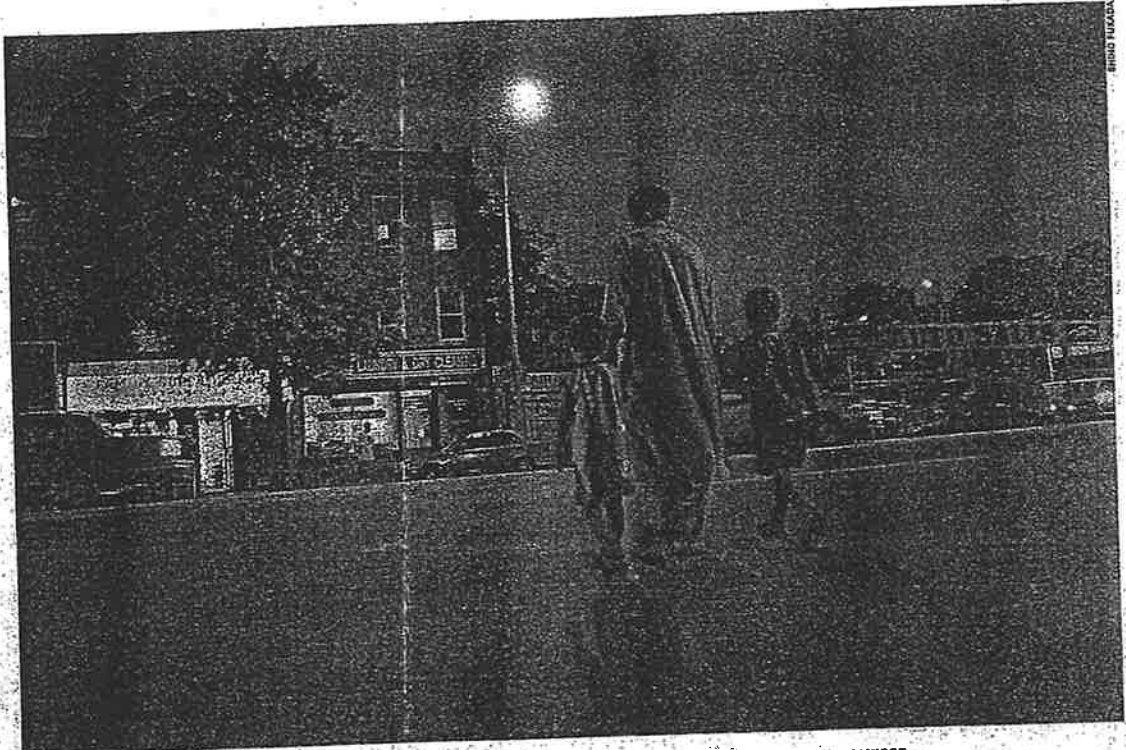
FLEEING AMERICA

Post-9-11, Thousands of New York's Pakistanis Leave the U.S. Under Pressure

Donald Rumsfeld will lay a wreath at Arlington Cemetery. Michael Bloomberg and George Pataki will join a ceremony at ground zero. Families for Peaceful Tomorrows—an anti-war group of relatives of victims of the 9-11 attacks—will lead a candlelight procession and silent vigil. In the Pakistani enclave of Midwood, Brooklyn, New Yorkers will also remember the gruesome day when three of their community members lost their lives at the World Trade Center. But for "Little Pakistan," where a hefty portion of the U.S.'s 500,000 immigrants from that country make their homes, the date also marks another, related tragedy: the beginning of their neighborhood's undoing. In two tumultuous years, the once thriving community has become a casualty of the "war on terror."

Since 9-11, according to the Pakistani embassy, the New York area Pakistani community has lost some 10,000 of its estimated 120,000 residents—many of them fleeing America in pursuit of liberty and opportunity elsewhere.

"This country betrayed us," says Syed, who, like most Midwood residents who spoke to the *Voice*, requested that his last name not be used. "Why did I leave my country, my relatives, my home?" he asks, leaning over the counter of a five-and-dime on the community's main thoroughfare, Coney Island Avenue, where he has been working for 18 years. "Because over there is no freedom, and over here is much more freedom. But not now. Over here is no more freedom." On the eve of the second anniversary of the WTC attacks, Midwood feels like a shtetl bracing for another imminent pogrom.



THAT EMPTY FEELING: EERILY CALM CONEY ISLAND AVENUE IN MIDWOOD

■ In a bizarre inversion of the story America likes to tell itself about its splendor as a nation of immigrants, thousands of Pakistanis living in the United States have joined in a mass exodus of business owners, day laborers, students, cabbies, bricklayers, housewives, hairdressers, and peddlers. Historically, notes Nancy Foner, author of *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*, sizable portions of migrants to the U.S. have spent some time working here and then left, having intended all along to return home with their earnings. But the current flight of Pakistanis marks the first time in at least 100 years, she says, when "a group actually feels forced into the decision to leave. It's very alarming."

And those are just the voluntary, though reluctant, departures. Since September 2001, the government has removed five chartered sent many more away on commercial flights. And now, this month, immigration hearings are beginning for men who answered last winter's call that they present themselves for interviews, photographs, and fingerprinting as part of the government's "special registration" program. These hearings are likely to result in more forcible deportations, shrinking even

further the population of Muslims in Midwood.

Some, who had spent years building businesses only to see them falter as customers vanished into detention or deportation—or just plain feared to venture out of their homes—figured that America was no longer a place where entrepreneurial drive and hard work were enough to make a go of it. They left goods on the shelves, middle-class homes, friends, relatives, and even U.S.-citizen children behind, and they purchased one-way tickets to Lahore or Karachi.

Others, terrified that returning to Pakistan would drop them in the middle of sectarian violence or into the hands of a government they had been punished for opposing—or maybe just into an impossible economy with Canada, saying they were fleeing persecution in Pakistan and America. Like the family of a

25-year-old security guard named Raza, more than 2,200 Pakistanis residing in the U.S. have sought refuge in Canada between January 1 and March 31 of this year; the vast majority are from the New York area. (Whether Canada will grant them refugee status remains to be seen in most cases; the processing can take as much as a year. But in the meantime, at least—unlike in the U.S.—applicants are authorized to work.)

The dwindling of the local population was evident at the annual Pakistan Independence Day parade down Madison Avenue on August 24. In less anxious times, some 80,000 people turned out for the festivities; this year, says Choudhri, one of the event's organizers, 35,000 would be an optimistic count. In Atlantic City, New Jersey, leaders of the community recently reported, the area's Pakistani population has dropped from a vibrant 2,000 to a weary and wary 1,000. But nowhere is the devastation greater than in Midwood.

Midwood was an obvious target for post-9-11 sweeps, says longtime community advocate Asghar Choudhri. "When a person goes fishing, he wants to go where there are a lot of fish," he explains, noting that in a concentrated immigrant neighborhood like theirs, casting a net wide will easily catch people with expired visas, even if it doesn't trap any terrorists. No surprise, then, that despite Pakistan's official cooperation with the U.S., migrants from that nation made up about a third of the 762 immigrants the U.S. rounded

up and held after the attacks—and two-thirds of those were from the New York area. Fear gripped Little Pakistan as FBI and INS agents pounded on doors in the middle of the night and hauled hundreds of people away. Choudhri remembers running errands for his neighbors who, knowing he's a U.S. citizen, figured it would be safer to ask him to pick up their groceries than to venture to the corner themselves. Popular restaurants sat empty.

Then came special registration. Men with expired visas or those working without authorization had to choose whether to present themselves to authorities and face likely detention and deportation, or break one more immigration law by going further underground. Or, like Raza's 18-year-old brother and parents, leave the country. Community groups that had sprung up after 9-11 to assist detainees began to organize free legal clinics on registration requirements. In its storefront office on Coney Island Avenue, for instance, the Council of Pakistani Organizations (COPRO) handled hundreds of such cases. Harder than drumming up pro bono attorneys to assist, admits director Mohammad Razvi, was knowing what to say when people asked him what they should do. "We explained the law," he says.

Many of those taking a chance in Canada are breaking their families apart. Raza was married on August 31 and had to implore distant relatives to offer the parental blessings that are part of the traditional ceremony. Missing his mother and father See SOLOMON page 36

his momentous day wasn't something he'd thought about back in February when he drove his family up to Buffalo so they could cross the border into Canada and ask for political asylum as Shiites fearing religious persecution in their homeland. "I feel so bad," he says. "But I didn't have any choice." They had wanted to spare Raza's younger brother from special registration because they worried that he would be deported to Pakistan. Unlike Raza, who holds a green card, his brother and parents have no valid U.S. documents.

Raza and his family had good reason to worry. Those men who did register and were found to have overstayed their visas or to be out of status were given "notices to appear" (NTAs)—dates when they would have to attend hearings before an immigration judge. Most will be sent away—even some with strong arguments for staying. Ahmed, a 48-year-old grocery store worker, for instance, was deported by his employer for a green card more than two years ago. But sluggishness at the U.S. Labor Department, which must first issue work certification, has delayed the application. As a result, Ahmed was still officially undocumented when he showed up for special registration. Now, if his papers don't come through within a month or so, Ahmed may find himself on a plane to Islamabad for no reason other than bureaucratic lassitude.

As the NTA dates draw near for dozens of Midwood residents, a new wave of anxiety has clutched the community again.

A first-time visitor to the enclave might not notice anything amiss. A handful of stores and travel agents, kebab houses, and clothing centers along Coney Island Avenue are still up, but many more are open, and there appears to be plenty of activity: A man wearing a traditional *shalwar kameez* holds forth with a man in an Iverson jersey, shouting over the Pakistani music video blaring out of a buffet restaurant, two women on a stoop argue in Urdu about which of them spilled garbage in front of the building where they both live; toddlers and teens play on the sidewalks, squealing away the last days of summer. But anyone who lives there will tell you that it used to be so crowded on a late-summer evening that you had to weave like a running back to get down the street. On Fridays, worshippers at Makki mosque used to put prayer rugs down on Coney Island Avenue's sidewalk because there was no more room inside; nowadays the mosque is barely half full.

And business is on a relentless decline. Ummi seeds and ground coriander have not been moving at all at New Apna Bazaar, whose winning promises "Pako-Hind" provisions as well as Russian and kosher goods. (Midwood drew Pakistanis when they surged into New York in the early 1980s—pushed by martial law and pulled by U.S. immigration policies favorable to South Asian engineers and technicians—because the surrounding Jewish community had plenty of kosher butchers that could serve Muslims observing halal laws.) "We hardly survive here," says Apna's owner, Mohammad Iqbal, noting that business fell 40 percent after 9-11 and then plummeted 40 percent more after the special-registration requirements were announced. Those selling less essential goods have fared even worse. Mahmoud, the owner of Rani Fabrics—one of many such shops that were for years a major draw for South Asians from all over the metropolitan area—has seen a 60 percent drop in sales. As for the once trendy gold jewelry stores on the avenue, several have closed, those that remain have lost as much as 90 percent of their trade. At Pak Jewelers one day last week, the owner's teenage daughter Farrah Iqbal, filling in for a laid-off clerk, didn't see her first customer until 6:30 pm.

Beyond the fear and declining population, those who remain in the area have less money to spend. When an undocumented owner of a

driving, 10-year-old midwood constructor business was deported earlier this year (despite a pending sponsor application and an appeal for asylum), 25 local workers were suddenly out of jobs. Such events, repeated on various scales, have affected the local economy all along the food chain. In the face of declining demand, Iqbal no longer keeps his grocery open 24 hours, so his three employees have seen their hours, and thus their incomes, cut.

But it's in the less visible, private realm where the desolation runs deepest: Within traditional families, breadwinners are gone. Men who gave up on, ran from, or have been kicked out by America typically bring their wives and children with, or after, them. (One grammar school in the neighborhood saw some 50 Pakistani children disappear early in the winter semester as they joined their fathers in flight from special registration.) But families who have had to stay behind have little systematic support, despite the charitable efforts of small local organizations. COPO is trying to help such families apply for food stamps and other benefits to which at least their U.S.-citizen children are entitled, but says director Razvi, many are afraid to engage any official state agencies for fear of being turned over to immigration authorities.

Rukhsana Saeed, for one, has been struggling to get by with her three children—12, 12, and 1 1/2—since March 2002, when her husband was nabbed for visa violations in a late-night raid just days after she'd given birth to their youngest child. With support from the Coney Island Avenue Project (CIAP), a local activist group, and from some larger agencies, she managed to cover the \$700 monthly rent for her one-bedroom Midwood apartment for a while—but not for long enough to avoid the eviction notice she was served recently. Through an interpreter, she expresses her anxiety and despair as her baby sleeps curled in her lap. Because of the violence in Pakistan, she says, joining her deported husband is not an option. But in Midwood, she feels isolated and ashamed: Her neighbors have shunned her, fearing both that authorities might regard them as suspicious if they are seen with the wife of a deportee, and more so, perhaps, that Saeed might ask them for assistance they can't afford to give.

Community groups—from grassroots types like COPO and CIAP to old-political ward-style organizations like Asghar Choudhri's Pakistani American Federation, N.Y. Inc.—are assisting people as best they can, albeit with little coordination among them. Still, they're all the immigrants have got. Even the most localized parts of city government appear clueless that there's a crisis in Little Pakistan. "These are uncertain times for everyone," says Terry Rodie, district manager of Community Board 14, dismissing the notion that Pakistani businesses are suffering more than anyone else's. The area's City Council representative, Simcha Felder, did not reply to questions about what could be done for the neighborhood. Borough President Marty Markowitz offered a statement through a press aide asserting that he is "troubled" by what is occurring, since the Pakistani community has played such an important role in making Brooklyn what it is today. When asked what the borough office was specifically doing to support Little Pakistan, the aide mentioned Markowitz's appearance at the Pakistani Independence Day festival on Coney Island Avenue last month.

Raza, the newlywed whose folks are in Toronto, didn't bother attending the festival himself. He's trying to work extra hours at his job because he's been sending a couple hundred dollars to his parents every month. And besides, he feels nervous about being out too much. "I do have a green card," he says, not to mention, as of two weeks ago, an American-citizen wife. Nonetheless, he adds, "You have to be careful. Over here, anything can happen."



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02 November 2003

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When even detention would do

By Anjum Niaz

- Gawasjee
- Ayaz Amir
- Mazdak



Working hard to raise her two boys, Rani Shahnaz, one grim evening, turned in the key to enter her New York home only to find FBI agents sitting in wait.

Dressed in prison garb, the middle-aged woman is escorted by the warden to a cubicle from across where sits her younger sister and her two daughters anxiously waiting for a reunion.

Sharing the pain and touching the wounds with a gentle and tender hand, the two women are silent in their moment of despair; confusion. The reality of their powerlessness; grief rents the air.

Instinctively, both reach out to touch each other. But the cold glass comes between them. They just look into each other's blank eyes, a stream of tears is all they can manage.

"Nano, Nano, I want to touch you," says the two-and-a-half-year-old impatiently. "Nano, Nano, I love you," she continues.

The sisters sob silently.

Meanwhile, the eight-year-old, who till now has been playing the big sister and calming her hyper sibling, really looks troubled seeing her mom and aunt crying. To hide her confusion, she puts her thumb in her mouth and with the other hand pushes a paper against the glass that has a prayer in Arabic that our Holy Prophet

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(Peace be upon him) advised Muslims to recite in times of trouble.

Her aunt gently moves her lips to read the prayer through the glass.

Working stiff all these 20 years to raise her two boys, Rani Shahnaz, one grim evening, turned in the key to enter her New York home after a dreary day of slog, only to find FBI agents sitting in wait. The 50-year-old Pakistani woman crumpled with fright.

The inevitable had happened. Her little world that she had so diligently built was collapsing before her eyes.

It was nine at night - darkness had closed its cadaverous fangs around her, "take off all your jewelry and come with us," barked the men as she struggled to stand up and ask why.

Her pounding heartbeat and the reeling pain menacingly whispered in her ear that she would never again breathe freedom.

The battered wife, who fled an abusive marriage some two decades ago back in Pakistan, had arrived in the "land of the free" tightly clutching her toddlers, ridding herself forever of the domestic violence to begin life all over again.

The transition for Rani was traumatic - a single mom enveloped in an endless struggle to survive as an alien without legal status to work or live in America. But she persevered, never giving up her search for a way to become legal.

Nemesis struck in her choice of an attorney. He turned out to be a shyster and got arrested himself! Rani's chances of getting her petition for a permanent resident status accepted fell through the cracks. Unsophisticated in immigration laws - aren't most of us? - she innocently continued to think that her case was still being processed and all was well.

Three weeks ago, the long arm of the law got to her, picked her up and threw her in prison. "My boys know I like to drink tea when I return from work. They had made it for me, but the FBI agents didn't even let me drink it...they even didn't let me change my work shoes," Rani tells me as we talk through the phone. Shabnam, her younger sister, has brought me to meet Rani at the Detention Centre in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

"How are you feeling now," is all I can mumble.

"Life for me is over after the way I have been dragged around, thrown in jail, handcuffed, finger-printed like a common criminal - they have moved me from jail to jail that I really don't know if I am living or dead," Rani says, as she wipes her tears with the edge of her sleeve.

"I have never known enjoyment - all I have done is work, work and work. I didn't even go to Manhattan for an evening out, always dutifully coming home each night to be with my boys and cook them their meals. They are totally broken now.



I cannot bear to leave my children...they are my life."

Shabnam coos, "Mama, don't cry...you will Insha-Allah come back to us very soon."

She calls Rani 'Mama' and the girls call her 'Nano'. "After my parents' death, my sister raised me up - she's the mother I have always known, how can I ever leave her now," Shabnam tells me.

Is Rani's luck running out?

Hold on....

She would have been sitting in Pakistan by now along with the 48 other miserable Pakistanis deported last week from Buffalo on a chartered Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) flight. She was taken to Buffalo for that purpose.

Rani got pulled out of the plane minutes before it was to take off for Islamabad!

"She has got a stay order from the courts for one week only. We're afraid for her, very worried she will be sent back after that," says Bobby Khan, a Pakistani activist based in Brooklyn who has helped hundreds of Pakistani detainees and their families. "If she's sent back, the persecution risk (domestic violence) is still very much there."

General Musharraf and Prime Minister Jamali don't like raising the issue of Pakistanis being cruelly deported on minor visa violations with their American hosts when they come here, says Bobby Khan. "The voice of protest from our government is missing, their silence is deafening. The Embassy and the Pakistani community is disinterested and couldn't care less. All this is so disheartening and frustrating, specially when we see leaders of other countries being so proactive." However, Bobby is quick to concede that the "Embassy here gives us logistical support, even if the political support is missing."

Shabnam doesn't think so. "My sister is suffering and nobody is helping her, nobody has come to our help. The Pakistan Embassy has washed its hands off her," she tell me when I first call her at her store. "What good will your writing do?" Shabnam asks when I tell her that I write for *DAWN Magazine*. "I need Rani's story to appear in the mainstream media here - so that someone with a conscience can help my sister...she is not a criminal, she has always paid her taxes and lived by the law...she is a single mom who has worked to bring up her two sons as good, decent human beings."

Shabnam's faith in the Pakistani government in rescuing Rani is zero. "I don't want Rani to go back to the hell she came from. She's better off here - even if she is under detention."

Her words - spontaneous and unmasked - speak volumes of the heart-wrenching sadness, the helplessness and hopelessness faced by Pakistanis in America that

never make the headlines in newspapers here or back home.

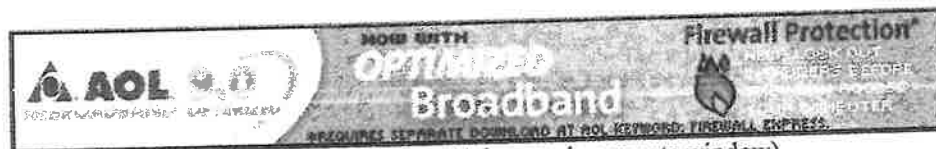
Rani's two sons, 21 and 19, are devastated. "I have brought them to my place," says Shabnam.

Time is up, the two sisters say goodbye. "Mama, I'll be back on Monday," Shabnam tells Rani in tears as she gets up to leave, "don't worry, don't give up."

A ray of hope, of fierce determination, crosses Rani's face, her eyes suddenly spark and her alabaster complexion takes on a beautiful glow, "I am not ready to give up my fight yet - after being humiliated and robbed of my dignity - what else have I left but to fight till the very last."

Rani Shahnaz's case deserves sympathy. Doubtless, she has made serious blunders, most of them based on the wrong legal advice she received. If sent back to Pakistan, she's finished - the domestic tyranny she fled will once again confront her in full - God only know what her fate will be.

Can no one help her?



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John Ashcroft's misplaced zeal

Ismail, visibly nervous and frightened, broke into tears several times yesterday as he told his story to a crowd of protesters outside 26 Federal Plaza.

The 50-year-old Pakistani immigrant and gas station attendant is among 82,000 Arabs and Muslims ordered to report to immigration centers around the country in a program that Attorney General John Ashcroft created a year ago as part of the war on terrorism.

Last March, Ismail reported to the 10th floor of the Federal Building as requested in a letter from the government. He claims he was immediately handcuffed and denied food or access to a lawyer.

After 24 hours of interrogation, he was released on bond and is now awaiting a final deportation hearing.

Ismail (his lawyers would not divulge his last name) is one of 13,000 Arab and Muslim men who were slapped with deportation orders for being in the country illegally. Many since have been expelled.

The expulsions have not been limited to those with illegal status, says Bobby Khan, who runs a nonprofit immigrant rights project in Coney Island.

"I know of at least 40 Pakistani doctors here on legitimate work visas who traveled back home to visit relatives and then were denied permission to reenter the U.S.," Khan said.

As far as anyone can tell, Ashcroft's dragnet — officially known as the Special Registration Program — has failed to snare any terrorists. Admittedly, it's hard to tell these days, since those suspected of terrorist ties routinely vanish into secret detention and secret trials.

But it's not just Arabs and Muslims who have been victimized, said Margie McHugh of the New York Immigration Coalition. With so many federal resources directed to rounding up Middle Eastern immigrants, other immigrants also are paying a steep price.

"People with legitimate claims can't get their green cards processed," said Guillermo Chacon of the Salvadoran National Network.

When he ran for President in 2000, George Bush tried to curry favor with Hispanic voters by promising to re-

duce the waiting time for green card applicants to six months. He has done just the opposite.

"The waiting period for a green card in New York City has skyrocketed from 28 to 42 months," McHugh said.

The targeting and scapegoating of immigrants is nothing new in the U.S. Before John Ashcroft, there was Mitchell Palmer and Francis Biddle and Herbert Brownell.

Palmer was Woodrow Wilson's attorney general in 1919, when anarchists tried to set off a wave of bombings against leading American politicians. One Italian anarchist blew himself up outside Palmer's Washington home.

On Nov. 7 that year, Palmer and his eager young assistant J. Edgar Hoover rounded up 10,000 suspected Communists and anarchists, most of them immigrants — and most eventually were released without any charges.

In the end, only 247 were deported to Europe.

In 1941, Francis Biddle, Franklin D. Roosevelt's attorney general, interned thousands of innocent Japanese-Americans in camps in California without trials. Not until decades later did Congress recognize the injustice and agree to pay reparations to the victims.

And in 1954, Herbert Brownell was Eisenhower's attorney general when nearly a million Mexicans, many of them U.S. citizens, were rounded up in Operation Wetback and deported by the trainload during an upsurge of anti-immigrant hysteria.

Ashcroft has surpassed Palmer's deportation totals but still trails Brownell by a big margin.

A second year of special registration starts soon, however. Given more time, who knows what records Ashcroft and Bush may set.

E-mail: jgonzalez@edit.nydailynews.com



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Immigrant Screen Eased

By Mae M. Cheng
STAFF WRITER

The federal government today will end a year-old program that required male visitors from 25 foreign countries to register annually, a practice that immigrant groups called discriminatory.

Department of Homeland Security officials said that while the registration program has "proven valuable" in tracking visitors to the United States, a new system, using digital photography and fingerprinting, will be rolled out Jan. 5 that will be more effective.

When the new system is fully implemented by 2006, it will be able to collect arrival, departure and other information on most visitors to the United States, officials said. "The idea is to target individuals of concern and not to target groups of people," Bill Strassberger, a department spokesman, said yesterday.

Under the registration program that began in November 2002, male visitors from 25 foreign countries — almost all with large Arab or Muslim populations — had been required to report to immigration officials annually or face arrest or deportation. The program was started by the Justice Department after Sept. 11 and was inherited by Homeland Security when the agency took

who's not aware of what the mayor's accomplished." Department of Homeland Security spokeswoman Rachael Sunbarger said the agency "recognizes the unique needs of the New York City urban area, which is why the department has taken steps to ensure that New York has received the largest amount of grants."

While the city has gotten the largest total amount, it ranks near the bottom in per-capita funding. That's prompted some observers to float the idea of calling in Giuliani.

"I think getting Rudy involved is a very good idea," Ed Koch said. "He's well-liked by the Republicans and he's done a lot of fund-raising for them and I'm sure that they would be very responsive to his initiatives . . . I just would hope he wouldn't charge the city."

Jerome Hauer, a former director of the city's Office of Emergency Management under Giuliani, said it was time for Bloomberg and Kelly "to stop beating up Republicans" over funding and come up with new lobbying strategies.

Giuliani, he said, may be just the man to do it. "I've been to a number of meetings Rudy has spoken to down here, and people down here look at Rudy as someone who walks on water," Hauer said. "He's listened to. He carries an enormous amount of weight. He could have an impact, but he wouldn't do it unless Bloomberg asked him to."

Skyler and Giuliani spokeswoman Sunny Mindel both declined to comment on the idea.

over the Immigration and Naturalization Service in March. As of the end of September, 83,519 foreign visitors had registered. Of those, nearly 13,800 were put in proceedings that could lead to deportation because of their undocumented immigrant status.

Immigrant advocates had argued that many who were put in deportation proceedings were on their way to legalizing their status and would eventually have done so were it not for the registration program that brought them to the government's attention.

But despite the program's end, those facing deportation must still go forward with their cases, officials said.

"There should be something that can give them the proper relief to stay here and work here and be with their families," said Bobby Khan, head of the Coney Island Avenue Project, a nonprofit immigrant advocacy group.

Others agreed that the announcement was a positive step but remnants of the program remain problematic. "It's a little bit of a break in the clouds in the storm that the newcomer community has been experiencing since Sept. 11, but we're far from a sunny day," said Angela Kelley, deputy director for the National Immigration Forum, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

APPLAUSE IN COURTROOM

Judge says immigrant can stay

BY ROBERT POLNER
STAFF WRITER

More than 6 feet tall and broad-shouldered, Faisal Ulvie was a minor sensation as a kickboxer in Pakistan in the late 1990s. So when a national team was assembled to compete in Atlanta, Ulvie was on it.

None of that mattered, though, when federal agents knocked down the door to the three-story Brooklyn building in which Ulvie lived in an apartment with his wife and three children early on a chilly November morning in 2002.

Having resolved to live in America, but carrying a long-expired visa, he was carted off to a New Jersey jail. He learned much later that he had been ordered to appear for a deporta-

tion hearing, a letter he says must have been sent to an old address because he never got it.

Three weeks after he was taken out of his Bushwick home, a white bus carried Ulvie to a jet scheduled to take him and 150 other Pakistani detainees back to their homeland. Ulvie had not been allowed to see a judge or lawyer, and did not know why he was being deported. He called his wife, Nadine Young-Ulvie, a Brooklyn-born U.S. citizen, and pleaded for her to get immediate help.

"I thought I would never see my children again," he said.

In the end, Ulvie, 28, was lucky compared to thousands of Muslims who were detained, deported or who otherwise left the United States during the Bush administration's terrorism-related

immigration dragnet in Muslim-infused neighborhoods.

With a half-hour to spare before the plane left, Ulvie's lawyer, Elizabeth OuYang, persuaded an immigration judge in Manhattan to make a cell phone call resulting in the prisoner's return to jail. OuYang got him released, conditionally, a month later.

Yesterday, in a brief hearing at 26 Federal Plaza, Ulvie was permitted by the same judge, Patricia A. Rohan, to remain in this country legally to apply for permanent residency. The government prosecutor raised no objections at the hearing.

When Rohan issued her decision, Ulvie's relatives and friends applauded, and OuYang wiped her tears. Ulvie's wife wept. "Thank you, your honor, thank you," she said, corraling

her children, Shaheen, 3, Brittanie, 8, and Devon, 11.

Also on hand was Absanullah "Bobby" Khan of the Coney Island Avenue Project, a group formed after Sept. 11, 2001, to help Pakistani detainees.

"This is a typical case," said Khan, referring to Ulvie's ordeal. "Thousands have been arrested and deported without even knowing why. Unlike Faisal, they had no attorney."

The federal clampdown continues, but it has slowed down, Khan said.

Ulvie works as a salesman for a Jimmy Jazz clothing store in Harlem. His wife is employed by KeySpan. Neither could get much sleep the night before his fate was determined by the court, said Ulvie. "It was a very heavy night," he said.



Faisal Ulvie, a Pakistani immigrant, with his wife, Nadine, and daughters Shaheen, left, and Brittanie.

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■ INMIGRACIÓN

“Nos liberan o nos morimos de hambre”

Immigrantes detenidos en un centro de Queens se declaran en huelga de hambre hasta que sean procesados

JOSÉ L. LLANES

Un grupo de 175 inmigrantes detenidos en el Wackenhut Detention Center de Queens se declararon en huelga de hambre indefinida en reclamo de ser liberados y sus casos procesados.

El anuncio fue hecho ayer por Coney Island Avenue Project, una organización que defiende los derechos de los encarcelados, en conferencia de prensa frente al edificio Federal Plaza en Downtown, sede del Departamento de Inmigración.

“Ninguno de los prisioneros actualmente en huelga de hambre en Wackenhut tiene antecedentes terroristas u otros cargos criminales en su contra”, dijo Bobby Khan, representante de Coney Island Project.

“Todos fueron escogidos al azar después de los actos terroristas del 11 de septiembre y permanecen encerrados 23 horas al día, sin derecho a abogado, atención médica ni medicinas, sólo Tylenol. Muchos de ellos están casados con ciudadanas americanas”, aseguró el activista.

El vocero de Inmigración en Nueva York no respondió a las llamadas de Hoy. Khan dijo que en Wackenhut un



■ **DECENTAS DE MANIFESTANTES PROTESTARON** ayer frente al Federal Plaza exigiendo garantías de derechos para los inmigrantes encarcelados.

y trabajar por 1 dólar al día. Entre los oradores figuraban esposas, hijos y familiares de los detenidos y la directora del capítulo local de la Unión de Libertades Civiles, Donna Lieberman.

En plena conferencia, uno de los huelguistas, el paquistaní Saifal, llamó por teléfono desde la cárcel. “Hay personas

de asilo político desde 1990. La boricua Ana Zafar, esposa de Hamid Zafar, otro paquistaní encarcelado desde hace seis meses, dijo que sólo ha visto a su esposo a través de un cristal. “A veces no sabía si era de día o de noche porque no le permitían salir”.

La hispana agregó que lo detuvieron porque tenía dos re-

jer. “Estas personas tienen derecho a ver a su familia, a consejería legal y sobre todo a no ser castigados durante el proceso”, dijo Donna Lieberman.

Joahanna Jiang, una filipina ciudadana americana, esposa del detenido chino Jan Le Jiang, exigió la libertad de su pareja “porque tenemos derecho a estar juntos y a ser una familia”.



■ **EL HUELGUISTA** pide el regreso de su padre a casa.

a estar con su familia y como ciudadana americana me asiste el derecho a que él sea liberado y regrese al seno de su familia”, dijo la guayanesa Mahanine Persaud, esposa del guyanés Ricardo Persaud, acompañada de sus tres hijos de 8 y 3 años y una bebida de seis meses.

“La huelga de hambre es la última salida para ellos”, dijo Khan. “Esto es una vergüenza para la administración Bush”.

Esta no es la primera huelga de hambre de inmigrantes en la cárcel Wackenhut. En octubre del 2003, otro grupo de 65 detenidos se declaró en huelga de

FOTOS/USSETTI BOSLES

200 locked away & under the radar

There is a little gulag in New York City. And it is nothing to be proud of.

Its name is the Wackenhut Detention Center, and more than 200 human beings — men and women — languish ignored within its walls. Yet most New Yorkers have never heard about it.

The situation of the people inside the privately run immigration maximum-security jail is so hopeless that on Monday, 175 of the imprisoned men resorted to a desperate measure: They went on a hunger strike.

"Nobody is eating," said Makham Singh in a telephone interview. An immigrant from India in his 30s, Singh has a wife and two children who are American citizens. He has been in Wackenhut for six months.

"They bring us food and we send it back," added Singh.

The Wackenhut prison is a converted warehouse building with no windows in the middle of a warehouse district in Springfield Gardens, Queens.

It is drab and anonymous and out of the way, which works out well for keeping the men and women imprisoned in it out of New York's collective consciousness.

But the detainees are determined to do whatever it takes to let everybody know about the prison and what goes on inside it.

"We need people to know about our situation," Singh said. "We must be heard, and we will starve if we have to."

The strikers' demands are nothing if not fair. They are asking for the right to be treated humanely, the right to due process and appropriate medical care, the review of their cases and the immediate release of all noncriminal prisoners so they can be reunited with their families.

Many of the Wackenhut prisoners — people from all over the world — have been deprived of freedom for years even though no terrorism-related or other criminal charges have been brought against any of them.

"Yet they are locked up 23 hours per day, and several have been there a year or

more," said Bobby Khan, a member of the Coney Island Avenue Project, a group based in the Pakistani community in Brooklyn that advocates for the rights of imprisoned immigrants.

"Most of them were picked up in the aftermath of 9/11 and have been held without criminal charges or due process and, in some cases, without access to a lawyer," Khan added. "The food is insufficient and inadequate, and even though some of the detainees have heart conditions or suffer from diabetes and ulcers, medical care is practically nonexistent."

Like Singh, several of the detainees — all of them confined for alleged immigration violations — are married to U.S. citizens and have American children. Yet the government refuses to release information about their status or what their future might be — even though few, if any, of the immigrant detentions since 9/11 have yielded any useful results for President Bush's "war on terror."

Shameful as it is, the misfortune of these immigrants and their families is just one more opportunity for big profits for Wackenhut, the private corporation running the jail under contract with the federal government.

"For example, the food they are given is so bad and so little that detainees have to buy cafeteria food," Singh said.

Inmates receive one dollar a day for work they do within the prison walls.

Pretty low stuff in anybody's book.

Yes, there is a little gulag in New York City. It is located in Queens and its name is the Wackenhut Detention Center. And everybody should know about the more than 200 human beings languishing behind its walls.

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VOICES THAT MUST BE HEARD

the best of new york's ethnic and immigrant press

Pakistanis among 170 inmates on hunger strike in Queens' detention center

**By M.R. Farrukh, Pakistan Post, 25 August 2004.
Translated from Urdu by Mohammed Jehangir.**

About 170 prisoners, including several Pakistani nationals, have gone on a hunger strike at the Wackenhut Detention Center in Queens. They are protesting against the poor quality of the food and health services and the length of their detention.

The prisoners expressed the determination to continue the hunger strike for an indefinite period. Many of the prisoners, who suffer from heart ailments, diabetes and ulcers, don't have access to health care and their health is deteriorating with each passing day. As well, the prisoners are forced to buy food from the center's cafeteria because of the poor quality of food served to them.

Ehsanullah Bobby of the Coney Island Avenue Project, a non-governmental organization, told *Pakistan Post* that the strikers included 25 Pakistanis. He said the prison authorities have asked the prisoners to formally present their demands. Last year, between 60 to 65 prisoners staged a similar hunger strike. Following that strike, all the strikers were transferred to other detention centers, where some were kept in solitary confinement.

According to Bobby, some of the prisoners have been under detention for a long time. Some, he said, requested voluntary deportation to their respective countries, but are still waiting to hear on that. When asked if the hunger strike was protected by law, Bobby commented that all social justice movements that attained fame and importance in the world were started because of a denial of rights to the people. "I believe that such movements are beneficial for winning rights and freedom."

Bobby reported that there are 30 women who are also detained at the center, rounded up for various violations of immigration law. Asked if these female detainees' problems were conveyed to any elected official, he said the issue was brought to the attention of Congressman

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Pakistan Post
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Major R. Owens, during a town hall meeting last week. Owens, a Democrat, is U.S. Representative from the 11th Congressional District, Brooklyn, New York

"Americans know what's going on in jails in Afghanistan and Iraq," said Bobby, then adding that they know nothing about the treatment prisoners receive in prisons and detention facilities in the United States. According to him, Congressman Owens requested the details on this issue.

The Coney Island Avenue Project set up a booth at the Brooklyn *mela*, an annual festival held to celebrate Pakistan's independence day, to make public the plight of the detainees and to demand for their speedy release. Bobby reported that the police tried to remove the booth and forced the collaboration of the festival organizers to do so. However, Bobby refused to oblige. "I told them to go enjoy the festivities at the fair since the booth would not be removed."

Earlier, Ms. Madeeha Tahir of the Coney Island Avenue Project, said the prisoners started their hunger strike on the morning of August 16 and would continue until their demands were met. Madeeha said immigration authorities had so far not taken notice of the hunger strike. Earlier, a press conference was held at Federal Plaza, where relatives of the detainees and representatives of several civil rights groups spoke. They demanded that the prisoners' rights be protected and the release of all those who were not involved in a crime.

The wives of three of the detainees – Deeba, Juayna and Aena – along with their children also attended the press conference. Two of the women's husbands are Pakistanis. Representatives of New York Civil Liberties Union, United for Peace and Justice and New York Immigration Coalition also attended the press conference. Ehsanullah Bobby urged the Pakistani community to raise its voice for the rights of the detainees to bring hope to those behind bars.

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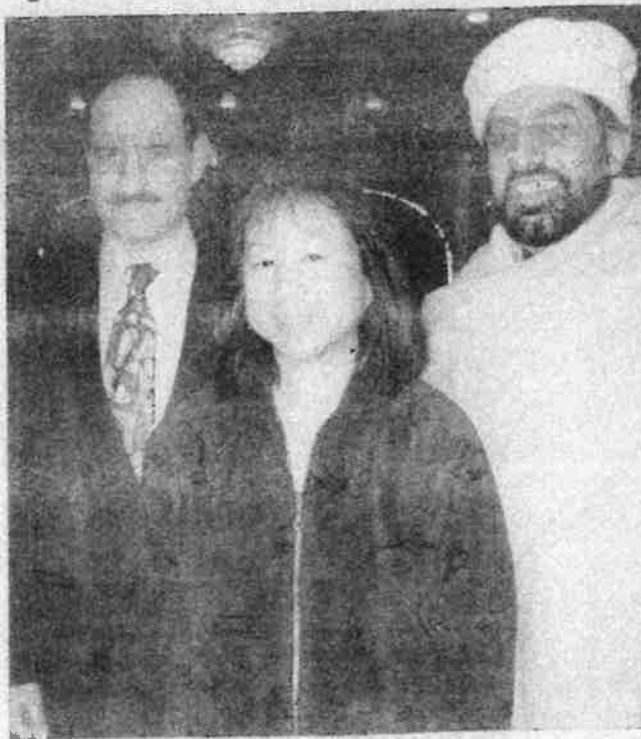
CIAP, Community Well-wishers Celebrate Official US Asylum of Pakistani Musician

By Adrienne Haywood-James

NEW YORK: Community leaders and well-wishers broke bread together to celebrate the official release of musician Ashfar Ali, a former Special Registration detainee of Pakistan origin. Through the efforts of Coney Island Avenue Project and case attorney, Elizabeth OuYang, Ali was granted political asylum to the United States.

Bobby Khan, Coney Island Avenue Project Executive Director said: "Ashfar Ali has obtained political asylum in the States. CIAP together with Attorney Elizabeth OuYang, are here tonight to show the community that, together, we can fight this thing." He commented that Ali was allowed to remain in the US during his proceedings.

Elizabeth OuYang, attorney for the case, thanked the crowd of over thirty who attended the celebratory dinner held at Afghan Kabab Restaurant located at the corner of Coney Island and Newkirk Avenues in Brooklyn. She said, "Tonight is a celebration. Immigration has allowed Ashfar to stay in the United States." She continued, "What has happened after 9/11 in the Muslim and Arab com-



From left, Ashfar Ali, Attorney Elizabeth OuYang, and Bobby Khan are all smiles at the dinner celebrating Ali's release Wednesday, January 19. - Photo by Adrienne Haywood-James

munities is wrong and all of us must stand together to fight that. I do believe in time we will be successful. I am glad that Ashfar can now play his music in the US freely, and we look forward to the day his children and his wife can join him."

However, it still will be a while before Ali receives full legal immigrant status. OuYang commented that while Ali is filing for his green card, it could take up to eleven years because of immigration paper backlogs. "In 2004, more than 160,000

people filed for political asylum so it will take approximately 11 years", she said. However, for now, Ali now has work authorization.

Among those at the 8 p.m., Tuesday, January 18 dinner, were Nadila Khan and friend Emily Damron. Nadila who is Khan's wife, is also a CIAP member, and volunteers at the organization. She said, "We are here to celebrate a victory for our client Ashfar, (a musician) who emigrated from Pakistan." Damron said, "I am here to support Bobby and Nabila in their important work at CIAP." Congressman Major Owens was slated to appear but was a no show.

As the dinner ended, Ali played several musical selections on the sitar, a stringed instrument. Several in the audience clapped and sang while showing their appreciation of Ali's skill.

The event was held at the Afghan Kabab Restaurant, located at the corner of Coney Island and Newkirk Avenues in Brooklyn. Hamed Lewal, owner of one of the three family owned restaurants (Speemghar and Bahar in Queens, NY), said that Bobby Khan arranged the evening's event. "It was beautiful, and I enjoyed (Ali's) song", Lewal said.

We Are All Suspects Now

Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11



Tram Nguyen

Foreword by Edwidge Danticat, author of *The Dew Breaker*

Becoming Suspects

Brooklyn and New Jersey

Muhammad Rafiq Butt had a wife and five children to support back home in Pakistan, and sending them money was his biggest concern in life, according to those who knew him. His two sons were too young to help, and his three daughters were close to marrying age. So he embarked on a journey as many others had, living among other men, alone, working without papers in the teeming anonymity of New York City's immigrant economy.

"He had a lot of pressure in his mind. His wish was one day to have enough money so his daughters can be married. His responsibility was to get them married. That is very important to our culture," said his friend Rashid Ahmed. "He had a lot of burden, a lot of pressures."

During his year in New York City, after arriving on a visitor visa in September 2000, Butt had been unable to find regular work. He spoke little English and his age, fifty-five, was a disadvantage when applying for the heavy labor and odd restaurant jobs he strung together. One of these jobs was at Shaheen Sweets, a restaurant and sweetshop in the "Little India" neighborhood of Jackson Heights. There, he worked alongside Ahmed and about a half-dozen other men and women in the basement, stirring vats of cheese and milk, molding mounds of dough into balls by hand, and filling white plastic bins full of the sticky-sweet *rashogollahs* that were boxed and shipped to suppliers around the country. Unbeknownst to anyone, perhaps even

himself, Butt had a congenital heart defect and had developed blockages in his coronary arteries. But this didn't keep him from working every day he had a job.

Ahmed, about the same age and also living alone and supporting his family in Pakistan, often gave Butt rides to the house in Queens that he shared with a nephew and several other roommates. Then came a day in September 2001 when Ahmed arrived at the restaurant and heard from the other workers that Butt had been taken by the FBI. That was all they knew, but it did not come as a complete surprise. Many others had also begun to disappear from the streets and homes of Jackson Heights, Astoria, Midwood, and other neighborhoods across Brooklyn and Queens, and fear was starting to spread.

"You know FBI has a big name everywhere in the world," Ahmed said. "Rafiq was a very simple person. Can you imagine a person who was working for his family, who was a very simple man, how can he do anything like World Trade Center, like plane hijacking?"

On September 19, following a tip from a local caller, FBI agents arrested Muhammad Butt at his home in the middle of the night. After being held for a day at 26 Federal Plaza, immigration headquarters in Manhattan, he was transferred to Hudson County Jail in New Jersey. Inside the drab brown building, circled by barbed wire, Butt lived for the next five weeks. Out of the thousands of men being picked up and held in detention across the Northeast at that time, no one would have ever heard of him. But on October 23, 2001, his ailing heart gave out. Muhammad Butt now had the unfortunate distinction of having died in U.S. detention following the post-September 11 roundup.¹

A taxi driver named Bilal Mirza, whose niece was engaged to marry Butt's nephew, got the phone call from the Pakistani consulate informing him of Butt's death. Jail officials declared car-

diac arrhythmia as the cause of death and closed the case, but rumors swirled in the community. A follow-up investigation by Human Rights Watch found that Butt had complained to his cellmate of chest pains and in the days leading up to his death had unsuccessfully tried to get medical attention.² Mirza, who prepared the body in Muslim tradition for the funeral, waved aside rumors of any beatings. "No, no, no. I wash his body with my own hands, and I see he have no rash, no bruises," he said.

Rashid Ahmed, nevertheless, refused to believe that his friend's death had been due to natural causes. "I say it was not a natural death," he said, sitting in the Shaheen restaurant nearly four years later. "A person who never went to jail in his own country. He never face a single police officer in his own country. When he was in jail, maybe he thinking every time, what is happening, what is happening?"

Butt's body was shipped back to Pakistan, along with a thousand dollars he'd asked Ahmed to keep for him. It was his last remittance to his family.

In a way, it was Muhammad Butt's death that changed life for Bobby Khan. Two years later to the day, Khan, a regular visitor at Hudson County Jail, was standing in the waiting room, remembering Butt on the anniversary of his death.

But back in 2001, Khan had not yet heard of Muhammad Butt, and he was hoping never to go near a jail again. A financial analyst living in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighborhood, he was trying to concentrate on "doing very well, focusing on making money and stuff for once." He was forty-two years old, a father of two who drove a Lexus SUV with a child's car seat in the back. His days were occupied with consulting for clients among Little Pakistan's burgeoning professional and business class. The routine of a suburban husband, father, and corporate employee, while busy, was the most peace Khan had known in his life thus far. He remembered writing to friends in Pakistan after eight

months in New York: "I really like living here, and it's much, much better than the circumstances back home. So I think I'm going to live here the rest of my life."

The words later struck him as ironic: "9/11 smashed all those feelings," he said. Several years after September 11, he still had trouble sleeping. Khan has deep sunken eyes and a patient, often excruciatingly polite manner that made up for a tendency to overbook his schedule and constantly run late. His placid exterior, however, belied a tumultuous past. More than twenty years before, this son of a Lahore trade unionist had rallied thousands of students as a leader in the protest movement against Pakistan's military dictatorship. Khan, whose actual first name is Ahsanullah ("Bobby" is a family nickname), was four when his father was arrested for organizing steelworkers. He remembered soldiers coming to their house, and his father disappearing for almost a year. Khan began university in Lahore in 1977. That July, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq deposed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and had him hanged. Zia established absolute control of the government and began instituting repressive laws. In response, university students joined huge street rallies protesting the dictatorship. Khan was arrested for the first time when he was seventeen.

"Torture was very common. Not only torture but lashing you in front of people to embarrass you. Hanging [you] upside down, electric shock on sexual organs; they had so many techniques," he remembered. "It wasn't that I was physically very strong. But I survived it because I believed that I was doing something against the injustices and oppression, and this was what I believed, and still believe, is the basic mission of life."

Pakistan's image today, after the United States' war on neighboring Afghanistan, after the declared war on terrorism, after the kidnapping and killing of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi, and after revelations that the state had played a

murky role in the international black market for nuclear weapons materials, is of a country teetering on the edge. Pakistan is perceived to be both a key U.S. ally in the war on terror and a breeding ground for terrorists, with Osama bin Laden believed to be hiding in its northern territory. It was because of this precarious position in the war on terror, some observers said, that Pakistani immigrants in the United States faced particular scrutiny. "The mujahideen is why Americans focus on Pakistan. Ordinary Pakistanis don't know what's going on," commented journalist M. R. Farrukh of the *Pakistani Post* in New York City. "[President] Musharraf thinks he's doing great by capturing an al-Qa'ida member once in a while. But Pakistani people living here—the American government thinks we're friends of al-Qa'ida."

The Pakistan Khan remembered was a country in the throes of a dictatorship but flush with the vibrancy of a mass democratic movement. "It was a huge resistance. Millions of people were out on the streets," he described. Thousands were jailed, and hundreds were executed by the military regime. After he was released, Khan went right back to student organizing. Six months passed, and he landed in prison again. It became a routine throughout the years of his youth. Eventually, some of the political graffiti on university grounds began to read, "Free Bobby." Khan laughed to recount his more than twenty arrests in fifteen years. At a reunion of Pakistani political exiles in New York years later, on the anniversary of Bhutto's election, old comrades recognized him by asking, "Are you the same Free Bobby?" Khan laughed again. "Me and prison go together."

Thousands of exiles ended up leaving the country during the period between 1980 and 1990, emigrating to Europe and the United States. Khan, too, left for the U.S. in 1995, initially to work as a journalist for a Pakistani newspaper and then becoming a financial analyst. Finding relief in the "general freedom of

speech and employment” of his new environment, Khan let friends persuade him to stay and get a break from his political work in Pakistan.

The day he heard about Muhammad Butt, Khan had just come home to his house in Park Slope. He felt his anxiety rising as he told the news to his wife. They knew the community would be in an uproar. “It was a big shock. Everyone was alarmed —people are being killed? The common feeling was that if anybody would talk, they would be facing dire consequences,” he recalled.

In the days that followed, there was more bad news. Khan heard of one man who, while he was at work, had his apartment raided by the FBI. When he found out that the FBI was looking for him, the forty-something man suffered a fatal heart attack. In Khan’s neighborhood of Park Slope, a Pakistani journalist was beaten unconscious by three men who told him he looked like Osama bin Laden.³ Stories like these circulated rapidly, thanks to what Khan characterized as the “communal, joint living style” of the Pakistani immigrants. This mirrored the wave of hate crimes across the nation. From September 11 through February 2002, hate crimes and incidents of discrimination toward Muslims soared to 1,717, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations.⁴ The violence included murder, physical assaults, death threats, harassment, vandalism, and arson.

Within the ten to fifteen blocks of Midwood, federal agents began visiting all the businesses owned by Pakistanis, asking everyone for identification, and conducting predawn raids at homes. “You can call this the phase of midnight knocks,” described journalist Mohsin Zaheer of the weekly *Sada-e-Pakistan* in Midwood. Arrests began to mount. Hundreds of new arrivals were filling up Hudson County Jail and Passaic County Jail in New Jersey, the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, and the Varick Street detention center in Manhattan.

They were disappearing into a vast system of immigration prisons that had been detaining 150,000 people annually since the mid-1990s and now hold more than 200,000 people each year. It is a system made up of hundreds of detention centers, local jails contracted to hold detainees, and prisons run by private corporations. For some asylum seekers, noncitizens who had served criminal sentences for felonies, as well as thousands of undocumented immigrants picked up by the Border Patrol, this almost invisible system of warehousing—and “removal” or deportation—had been operating and growing quietly for years before September 11.⁵ Between 1994 and 2001, the daily rate of detentions had more than tripled, according to INS records. More than 60 percent of these detainees were being held in over a thousand private prisons or local jails around the country with which the INS had contracted to make room for their charges.⁶ The whole system operated on the basic premise that noncitizens had to do their waiting in jail—whether they had arrived in the country by boat or plane and were waiting for an asylum hearing, or had already served prison sentences and were waiting to be deported. What the INS termed “administrative detention” in effect equaled jail time because of the conditions under which detainees were held. Yet before September 11, public concern over the detention system was negligible, mostly confined to a specialized circle of immigration attorneys, church-based groups, and human rights activists.

“After 9/11 it was just unbelievable, the scale with which specific populations started getting targeted,” said Subhash Kateel, an organizer who had been working with a group of Jesuit volunteers at the Elizabeth detention center in New Jersey just before September 11. “It went from courtrooms being relatively diverse—in New York they’re incredibly diverse, Chinese, Caribbean, all people of color—to being all Pakistani, all Yemeni, all Egyptian from September until June of 2002.”

It wasn’t until early 2002 that Amnesty International was

able to obtain information and release a report on 718 detainees, mostly from Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, and Yemen, along with a few from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Jordan.⁷ Investigations by newspapers, including the *Washington Post* and *Newsday*, also attempted to piece together a picture of the scale of detention during that period. But the Department of Justice announced on November 8, 2001, that it would no longer release a running tally of the post-September 11 detainees, and the official count remained at 1,182. However, this figure reflected only the people who were being held at any given time, and not the total of all who had been arrested or the unknown amount who had been released or deported.⁸ The DOJ's Public Affairs Office stopped releasing cumulative totals because "the statistics became too confusing."⁹ Of the approximately 1,200 detainees, 762 were acknowledged later to be of "special interest" to the government's terrorism investigation. Charged with immigration violations, they were jailed for periods ranging from a few months to a year, waiting to be cleared by the FBI before being deported. The FBI's sweep, known as the PENTTBOM investigation, lasted from September 11, 2001, until August 6, 2002.¹⁰ Though launched in response to the terrorist attacks, the federal crackdown opened the door to heightened, ongoing scrutiny in targeted communities that would lead to many more arrests. As the post-9/11 detainees were deported, more immigrants continued to take their places in jail cells in the following years. They were being nabbed during periodic raids and stings that had shifted from an antiterror roundup to what was fast becoming an immigration cleanup. Since the post-September 11 fallout, community advocates and lawyers working with detainees estimate that the total arrests and detentions in the Northeast have reached up to 10,000.¹¹

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Bobby Khan is a Muslim ("not a very good one" he adds, chuckling) who keeps a small prayer rug thrown over a shopping cart piled with coats and blankets in the back of his office. He seldom found time to use it, crisscrossing the boroughs to meet with clients for his day job as a realtor as well as to visit detainees' families.

In the week following Muhammad Butr's death, Khan joined a hastily organized forum put on by several human rights and community-based organizations. He became something of a community spokesman to reporters after the event and began visiting prisoners and their families in the area. Eventually, he helped form a volunteer-based organization called the Coney Island Avenue Project, after Midwood's main street, to visit detainees, arrange free legal representation for them, and mobilize community speak-outs and protests.

Like Khan, others in the hot spots spread between Brooklyn and New Jersey had formed grassroots responses to the crisis unfolding around them. A community-based organization called Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), led by young South Asian organizers in Jackson Heights, had been working with immigrants in prison for several years prior to 9/11 and started to notice the new arrivals when they visited the New York-New Jersey area's main detention centers. Family members of detainees reached out for help to groups like DRUM, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, which began finding out where loved ones had been taken and what was happening to them.

"It was December 2001 when I became aware of the disappearances. And they were really disappearances at that time," recalled Adem Carroll, the coordinator of the Islamic Circle's post-9/11 relief project. "I would go to the Metropolitan Detention Center with families, and they were told their husbands weren't there. But their husbands' letters were arriving, after a

two-week lag or so, saying they were inside. We'd ask the staff of the jail, and they'd say no. It took until January when they started to admit they were holding them."

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On October 18, 2001, at about the same time that Muhammad Butt's body was making the final trip home, a young Pakistani man named Ali Raza parked his cab outside a friend's apartment in Jamaica, Queens. It was almost 2:00 AM, and he had just finished his shift. Raza was twenty-five, with a compact build and a goatee, a small hoop earring, and a diamond stud in his nostril. He had been living on his own in Queens since arriving in the United States alone from Pakistan at age fifteen.

Raza and his friend began cooking dinner in the basement apartment, turning on some rap music. Almost half an hour later, the front door came crashing in. "Freeze! Put your hands in the air and freeze!"

Before they could even react, the two young men had guns in their faces. There were six or seven FBI agents, according to Raza. Some of them started searching the apartment. They turned over furniture and began ripping up the carpet.

"Who lives here?" one of them asked.

Raza answered, "I'm visiting here and this is my friend's place." Still confused, he remembered wondering if the neighbors had called to complain about their loud music.

"The whole house was upside down," he recalled. "Then they left and two ladies in INS uniforms came in."

The INS agents demanded IDs, setting up a laptop at the kitchen table to run checks on the men's names. "What's your status?" they asked. Raza lied. "I got a green card, but it's at my house."

His friend also lied, saying that he was born in the United

States. "He had a better accent and everything, so he thought he could pull it off," Raza explained.

The agents apologized to the friend, having found nothing on his name. To Raza, they said, "Let's go to your house to look for your green card." Knowing the game was up for him, Raza admitted that he had no green card. They took him to Federal Plaza for booking that night.

"There were five hundred, maybe six hundred other guys. Egyptians, Arabic mostly. It looked like what they did with the Japanese after Pearl Harbor," Raza said. "Guards were screaming at them, cussing, calling them bin Laden, stuff like that."

Raza was given a paper to sign his consent for voluntary deportation, but he refused. "I wasn't believing them for anything because of the way they came to the house." He said they told him if he didn't sign, he would get twenty years for terrorism. All around him, immigrants were signing the papers, some who spoke no English at all. Raza said he noticed guards covering up the papers above the line where the men marked their names. By now it was 3:45 AM and Raza was taken to a cell, where he spent the rest of the night. His mind raced as he sat upright against a wall, crammed side by side with thirty-five other men.

"I had no idea what was going on. I thought, maybe I'm going in for terrorism. Or maybe I'll be sent back home," he remembered. "My only thought was they were blaming us for the terrorism."

The hours passed, and the next thing he knew, he was being shackled again and taken to a van with a dozen other men. His next destination was Passaic County Jail in Paterson, New Jersey. The first night there, he slept on the floor of a dorm with sixty-four other people. The dorms were built to accommodate twenty people, with three bunks to a row. Raza got a blanket, but he noticed some men were on the floor with no covering.

Later, he was assigned a bunk in a dorm with forty-five other

inmates, and this was where he stayed. For the next three and a half months, Raza lived in Passaic with no outside contact. Some of his fellow immigrant detainees were old men, many who barely spoke English. Sometimes, other inmates would take advantage of their naïveté about prison, confiscating their food at mealtimes. "One guy, he wouldn't give his food and he got his arm broken," Raza recalled. Or it would be the guards who turned on the fearful new prisoners. During a drug search, they were all lined up outside of their cells and ordered to face the wall and spread their legs. An older Arab man just stood there uncertainly. "I told you to face the wall!" the guard screamed into his face. Not understanding a word, the man looked back and forth in consternation. Raza said he and a few others who spoke English tried to explain, but the guard had already turned his pit bull loose. Raza later heard that the man, bitten on his leg and foot, was transferred from the jail.

The brutal treatment of detainees was later documented in numerous reports by human rights advocates and the Justice Department itself.¹² But at the time, little was known except for the stories that got out through jailhouse visits and collect calls from detainees. Some Muslims began writing to the Islamic Circle for help, and over the next year, Adem Carroll's collection grew to more than a thousand harrowing letters. Many, like the following account from a detainee in the Metropolitan Detention Center, described a combination of humiliation and physical assaults that eerily presaged the abuses revealed in military prisons like Abu Ghraib several years later.

I was brought back to MDC where Lt. Cush, De Francisco and other three officers with two cameras asked me to take off my clothes and said that they want me to bend over for checking. They told me three times and at the fourth time I said that you have checked me three times already. They laughed at me. I said that this is physical harassment . . . I was so embarrassed for what he was

ordering for. I was not able to do it again and Lt. Cush and De Francisco picked me up and threw me against the wall and I fell on the floor. They cuffed my arms and legs and dragged me on the floor. Lt. Cush started to kick me on my back and at the same time De Francisco started to punch me in my stomach and punched my left jaw near my ear. . . . I was all naked and bleeding while this was happening.¹³

Every afternoon, FBI agents visited Passaic. Almost four months passed before it was Raza's turn for an FBI interview, but when the day came, the much-dreaded interrogation seemed almost like a joke to him. He was taken to a separate questioning room, where a young Latino man in a suit sat at a table with two Pakistani interpreters, a man and woman. Raza thought the FBI agent looked to be the same age he was.

"I said I don't need no interpreter, but they stayed anyway," Raza said. The agent began asking questions in a professional, polite manner. He had a checklist of about twenty questions. "The funniest question," added Raza, "was who was your Islamic teacher in high school? My Islamic teacher was eighty-five years old. I don't remember his name! But he said, give me any name. I said, okay, but I'm making it up. He was like, okay."

The agent continued doggedly down the list. How many times do you pray? Have you gone to mosque lately? Did the imams preach negative things about America? The interview lasted an hour. Once he cleared the FBI inspection, Raza got a court date for three weeks later. During his time in Passaic, he tried to get word to his roommates in Queens. None of the post-9/11 detainees were allowed a phone call, but they soon figured out a way to bribe other inmates to make calls for them. Raza bartered his food with another man, who, when he called his girlfriend, gave her the number to Raza's apartment. But when the woman called there, the phone had been disconnected.

"Nobody knew where I was. I guess they all thought I was

deported, or taken to Guatemala," said Raza, meaning to say Guantánamo.

The secrecy surrounding the post-9/11 detainees rivaled that around their counterparts in the U.S. military prison in Cuba. On September 21, 2001, the chief immigration judge, Michael Creppy, issued his infamous memo ordering secret procedures and closed court hearings when dealing with "special interest" detainees. Closed hearings, combined with the Justice Department's refusal to release any names, meant that the detainees had entered a twilight zone where their families had no idea where they were, no idea of how long they would be held or what charges were being brought against them.

Despite violating constitutional guarantees of due process, the detentions had been authorized by the Department of Justice. Attorney General John Ashcroft had already announced in late September new regulations giving the government expanded power to hold noncitizens for forty-eight hours or indefinitely in a national emergency.¹⁴ Previously, the Justice Department had a twenty-four-hour deadline to either release detainees or charge them with a crime or visa violation.

Ashcroft's policy of "preventive detention" took advantage of immigration law to hold the suspects in a system where officials had almost absolute discretion, instead of charging them in the criminal justice system, where they would have more legal rights, including access to a free lawyer. The dragnet approach, however, was causing unease even among some law enforcement agents. As early as November, several ex-FBI agents went on the record with the *Washington Post* to criticize Ashcroft's policies. "One, it is not effective," said Oliver Revell, a former FBI executive assistant director. "And two, it really guts the values of our society, which you cannot allow the terrorists to do."¹⁵

Yet public opinion remained mostly supportive throughout the administration's antiterrorism campaigns. In late Septem-

ber of 2001, Gallup polls found that a majority of Americans favored profiling Arabs.¹⁶ A Zogby poll in 2005 found a majority of people, 54 percent, still approving of President Bush's handling of the war on terror.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the day of Ali Raza's court hearing arrived—more than four months after he'd been arrested without charge. The judge told him that he had been cleared of any connection to the World Trade Center attacks, but that now he had immigration charges against him.

"You want to stay here or go back?" he remembered her asking him.

"You think I look like I can go back?" he quipped.

The judge frowned. "The whole world wants to come to America. We don't have space for everybody."

"No, miss, I cannot go back," Raza replied soberly.

The judge set him a \$20,000 bond.

Back in detention, Raza had got hold of a hotline number from another detainee. The man told him that there was a group called DRUM helping detainees get free legal representation. After Raza arranged for another inmate to call the organization, DRUM sent Subhash Kateel to visit Raza and he soon had a lawyer, Regis Fernandez, who attended his next court hearings and managed to get his bail reduced to \$8,500. Community donations were raised to cover the bail, and by April 2002 Raza was free. He had spent a total of six months in prison.

Since he lost a deportation hearing in September of 2003, Raza was trying to prepare for an asylum appeal. "I don't have more than six months left if this appeal don't go nowhere. They can come any time to pick me up," he said. He hoped that he could convince a judge of the danger facing him in Pakistan. Pulling up his sleeve, he showed the ridged knife scars along his forearms from a kidnapping in Karachi when he was fourteen—the reason his parents sent him away to the United States.

By early 2003, most of the post-9-11 detainees were finally deported after the FBI had failed to find any terrorism links among them. Some of the letters in Adem Carroll's files reveal the toll on families living with separation and uncertainty over their future:

Ali finally managed to get some anti-depressants. I know he was crying a lot. I also had to take anti-depressants to keep going. I felt out of touch with reality and in constant shock. Still, I sent money every week for Ali to order extra food and buy phone cards to call me. I also sent him letters and cards frequently to try to keep up his spirits. There were times when he would lose all faith in the attorneys, this country, and me, and times that I was sure I was losing him. I'm still worried about losing my credit, my home, and everything we had struggled for to be together.

Since Ali's release, he has been talking through his ordeal. He said they treated him very badly in Montana during his isolation. They verbally abused him. He was not allowed a shower the entire time he was there. Ali pretended to be from Greece while on the plane so that he would not be separated as a terrorist from the rest of the detainees. In Denver, he had no reading materials or anything to do for an extremely long time.... He says that the food is extremely limited and that everyone is always hungry. Ali has lost approximately 15 pounds since being detained.... Since Ali has been released he has been constantly speaking with the detainees he came to know over the phone, wanting to visit them and help them. Leaving them behind hurts him as much as having been in there. We have started to heal but we have a long road still ahead of us.¹⁸

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On October 21, 2001, the Makki Masjid on Coney Island Avenue held a funeral ceremony for Muhammad Butt before his body

was flown back to his family in Pakistan. Hundreds of Muslims filled the prayer hall. "I wish you could have seen the faces of the people," said Mohsin Zaheer, the journalist. "It was so scary. The fear was very obvious on their faces."

Zaheer reported the story for the weekly Urdu-language newspaper *Sada-e-Pakistan*, whose offices are next door to the mosque. During the funeral, he walked up to the coffin and took a picture of Muhammad Butt—"I wanted his friends to have a final look." The photo ran the next day on the front page of the newspaper.

"It is up to us to decide," concluded Zaheer, "was he a victim or not?"

Since the mass sweeps stopped in 2002, at least five hundred Pakistanis have been deported from the New York area, according to Khan and others. Businesses have shut down and families have relocated to Canada and other countries. About twenty thousand people have left, according to local estimates. Coney Island Avenue today is a quiet street, once the lifeline of a vibrant and growing ethnic community.

Sada-e-Pakistan, housed in one L-shaped room at the end of two narrow flights of rickety stairs, was barely surviving as a newspaper, according to Zaheer. Before the September 11 fallout, businesses were growing very fast in the thickly populated area of Midwood and Flatbush. Zaheer estimated that 40 percent of the businesses have disappeared. The community had stopped growing, and Zaheer believed, "whatever is gone is gone. It will not come back."

He added, "The misery of this community—people blame not just Bush but President Musharraf. He has helped the U.S. all he can, but he did not take a stand for Pakistanis in America. We are deprived of rights and justice from both sides. It's a very sad story."

In Bobby Khan's tiny office a few doors down, a blind man sat waiting for him. The man, Malik Shaukat, became homeless

after losing his sight in a car accident. He had a deportation order under appeal and might be sent back to Pakistan before his next eye surgery at King County Hospital. If that happened, he worried that he would never get treated and, sightless, that he would be unable to support himself in his home country. After the man left, Khan sat down for a cup of sweet, milky tea. He finally said, after being pressed, that this work had worn on him. "I feel like crying all the time, but I cannot."

What lay ahead for his community? Khan, the former democracy activist, was silent a long moment before asserting a thought that sounded downright radical in the current climate: "We need to realize we have a right to be here, too."

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The end of the secret detentions did not mark the end of more post-9/11 crackdowns. Even while the detentions were in full swing, the Justice Department had begun using a database of more than three hundred thousand names to arrest immigrants with outstanding deportation orders. The program, begun in November 2001 and called the Absconder Apprehension Initiative, started out by pursuing "fugitive aliens" from countries believed to have al-Qa'ida connections. But this program went on to become one of the most wide-reaching of all post-9/11 policies as agents have expanded the pursuit to the entire list, which now numbers more than four hundred thousand people.¹⁹

At the same time as the detentions, federal agents initiated arrests at airports around the country, starting with twenty-nine Mexican workers detained in late September in Denver for using fake documents to obtain work. By December, this had become a multiagency undertaking called Operation Tarmac that eventually jailed more than one thousand mostly Latino airport workers.²⁰

The official chapter on the post-9/11 detentions came to a close two years later when the Justice Department conducted its own investigation of what happened within the Brooklyn and New Jersey prisons. The account released by the department's inspector general in June 2003 confirmed for the mainstream public what numerous human rights reports, media accounts, and community discussions had revealed about the treatment of detainees. The 198-page report focused on the treatment of 762 "special interest" detainees and found "unduly harsh" conditions, particularly at the Metropolitan Detention Center. Although the inspector general was careful to acknowledge the "enormous challenges and difficult circumstances" the Justice Department faced at the time, the report nevertheless painted a clear picture of due process violations and human rights abuses.²¹

Though the phase of the "midnight knocks" had more or less ended, many of the government's tactics and assumptions that informed this period could be seen in different contexts and different communities around the country in the following years. The expanded rules for holding detainees without charge remained on the books and could be used again. In fact, government agencies relied on their new "automatic stay" power a year later to detain Haitian asylum-seekers in Florida.²²

"There was 9/11. Then a post-9/11 era. And then there were the aftereffects of that post-9/11 era," Mohsin Zaheer summed up wearily. Sitting at his desk, he scribbled a list on a scrap of paper to emphasize his point: "Crackdowns, deportations, people leaving the country."

He looked up from his list. "Then everybody was seen like suspects."

Immigration Plan Restricts Visa Sponsors

By DEEPTI HAJELA

The Associated Press

Saturday, May 19, 2007; 2:33 PM

NEW YORK -- Nabila Khan wouldn't be in the United States if it weren't for her sister. Her sister sponsored Khan's immigration from Pakistan. Four years ago, Khan started the process to do the same for another sister, the only one left in their native land.

They are family, she says, and have a bond that hasn't lessened despite the distance between them and the years they've been separated.

An agreement to change the American immigration system announced Thursday by a bipartisan group of senators would put severe restrictions on the family members immigrants can sponsor for visas.

The agreement would alter the rules governing automatic family reunification _ being eligible for a visa because of a relative.

It would limit eligibility to the spouses and minor children of American citizens. Adult children and siblings _ who can be sponsored by an American citizen under the current rules _ would need other criteria to qualify. Bringing parents over would also be difficult.

But in cultures around the world, aunts and uncles are surrogate parents, cousins are as close as siblings, and blood ties stay strong through multiple generations.

"It's the social system we were raised in, that's what we grew up with," said Khan, a housewife in her mid-40s who lives in Brooklyn. "If they eliminate these categories altogether, I think it would be a disaster emotionally."

President Bush and other supporters view the family sponsorship rules as a crucial reform.

Allowing family members to bring relatives who in turn are eligible to bring other relatives _ known as "chain migration" _ is not the way to run an

[Enlarge This Photo](#)



Nabila Khan poses for a portrait at her office in the Brooklyn borough of New York Thursday, May 17, 2007. Khan's sister sponsored

Nabila's immigration from Pakistan, and four years ago, Khan started the process to do the same for another sister, the only one left in their native land. But agreement announced Thursday by a bipartisan group of senators and supported by the White House would put severe restrictions on the family members immigrants can sponsor for visas. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer) (Mary Altaffer -

AP)

"Don't Take My Father!"

NADINE YOUNG-ULVIE WAS in the shower in her Brooklyn apartment at 6:30 a.m. on November 8, 2002, when she heard a crash at her door. Her 7-year-old daughter Brittany went to see what was happening. She was greeted by men who demanded to be let in. They had broken down the front door to the apartment building. Nadine shouted to her daughter not to let them in, but the frightened girl screamed that it was the police. Nadine leaped out of the shower and attempted to close the bathroom door while she put on clothes. The men had already stormed inside, and ordered her to keep the bathroom door open while she dressed. They shouted for Nadine's three young children to go into the bedroom. Then they ordered Nadine's husband Faisal, a salesman in a clothing store, to get out of bed.

Faisal Ulvie is a Pakistani taekwon do expert who traveled to the United States in 1996 for a martial arts competition and then applied for political asylum. He failed to show up for his last asylum appointment that year and was ordered deported, but Ulvie remained in the country. Like so many others, the undocumented immigrant scratched out a living. In April 2001, he married Nadine Young, a U.S. citizen. He helped raise Nadine's two children from a previous relationship, Devon and Brittany. In 2001, they had a child of their own named Shaheen.

Faisal had never had trouble with the law. But now he was caught in the antiterror dragnet, and so was his terrified family.

"They told my husband to get out of the bed and to go into the living room," Nadine told me on *Democracy Now!* "I asked, 'What is the situation? What's going on?'"

"The officer replied, 'We only address questions to him. And you need to mind your business.' And I'm, like, 'But you need to provide me with a search warrant or a warrant for his arrest.' They

told me no. That was their answer." It set the tone for what was about to come.

"They asked [Faisal] to put up his fingerprints to place against a piece of paper. After they asked him some questions, they told him, 'Get dressed. We're taking you. You've got to go with us.'

"My son said to the officer, 'Don't take my father!' And I just gave [Faisal] a hug and a kiss good-bye. And I told him, 'Don't worry. I will fight this.'"

On Sunday evening, November 17, nine days after being detained, Faisal called Nadine. "They posted a handwritten letter next to my picture for me to pack up my stuff and get dressed," he told her. He feared, correctly, that he was going to be deported. Nadine immediately contacted Ahsanullah (Bobby) Khan, director of the Coney Island Avenue Project, a group that advocates for the rights of Pakistani immigrants, who called attorney Elizabeth OuYang.

Bobby had no time to drop his wife and 2-year-old daughter off, so he picked up OuYang and they all rushed to Faisal's jail. On the way, Nadine called Bobby's cell phone to say she was coming. OuYang said there was no guarantee Nadine would see Faisal.

Nadine replied, "I don't care. He's my husband. I need to be there."

It was pouring rain when they reached the jail. "When I went in there," OuYang said, "Faisal was in shackles and plainclothes. And he was scared."

Faisal told her, "I don't know what's going on. They ordered us to put our civilian clothes on and to pack up. There are twenty-two of us back there that were ordered to do this. They won't tell us where we're going or what they're doing." Despite the shackles on his ankles, he kept pacing back and forth.

She told Faisal, "Stay calm and we'll try to do everything that we can." As OuYang came out, Nadine arrived at the jail. She was not allowed to speak to her husband.

OuYang wanted to ensure that the INS knew that Faisal was married to an American citizen and was in the process of getting legal residency in the country. But she had another concern: "I have been told, I have heard stories, I have received e-mails, that mass deportations are going on."

The rumors came to life at 3:30 a.m., when a white bus pulled up to the detention center. IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE was emblazoned on the side of the bus in large green letters.

OuYang ran back inside and demanded, "I want to talk to Immigration. I want to know where they're taking Faisal."

In the tense encounter that followed, a prison guard came out to warn OuYang, "[INS] won't talk to you. They've got orders to take him." She said he added a threat: "If any of you follow that bus, you will be arrested."

Outside in the rain, OuYang calmed Nadine down as much as she could. Nadine wanted to follow the bus. OuYang reasoned with her. "If you get arrested, how will you help him?"

So they each went home to work the phones. Nadine called the Pakistani consulate, her Congressmember Nydia Velázquez, and Senator Hillary Clinton. At 5:00 a.m., OuYang reached an emergency deportation officer. She explained what had just transpired. "I don't know where they're taking him. I need information—please," the attorney begged. At 7:00 a.m., a different deportation officer called back. This officer was taking Faisal to the airport. He said, "All I can tell you is he's on a flight at eleven-thirty this morning." OuYang said if she was able to get the stay, how could she reach him? That's when OuYang got a crucial piece of information: the officer's cell phone number.

Only one option remained. OuYang rushed to the courthouse in New Jersey. As Bobby was driving her, she called ahead to the

court clerk to alert her that an emergency stay of the deportation order was coming. Just as they were about to enter the Holland Tunnel, the New Jersey court clerk told her that Faisal's file was in Manhattan. They turned the car around and headed to 26 Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan. The original judge on Faisal's case was no longer there, so the case had to be reassigned to another immigration judge.

Meanwhile, the clock kept ticking. At 10:15 a.m., Judge Patricia Rohan approved the request for an emergency stay of deportation, agreeing to hold a hearing for Faisal at a later date. "Judge Rohan breathed life into our Constitution's principle of due process," said OuYang. "By the grace of God, we were able to get the judge to sign the emergency stay."

But the drama wasn't over. After Judge Rohan signed the stay, OuYang announced, "Your Honor, I have nowhere to fax the order to, they're already at the airport. He's boarding." OuYang pleaded with the judge to call the deportation officer's cell phone. Meanwhile she had to run downstairs to pay the \$110 fee for the legal motion. When OuYang returned, the court clerk said she wasn't able to reach the deportation officer on his phone.

OuYang went outside the courtroom to call the officer. It was busy. OuYang then realized it was probably Nadine pleading for a final time with the officer to release her husband. OuYang reached Nadine and told her to get off the phone. Then Bobby Khan's phone rang. It was the deportation officer, asking who was trying to reach him. OuYang grabbed the phone and started running to the courtroom. A court officer came out of nowhere and yelled, "No cell phones in the courtroom!" OuYang just kept running, shouting, "It's for the judge!" The officer followed in hot pursuit. OuYang burst into the courtroom. The judge had already begun a new hearing. Upon seeing OuYang, she came off the bench and

grabbed the phone. "This is Judge Rohan. Immigration judge, New York. I'm ordering you to take Faisal Ulvie off the plane."

Just before the plane doors slammed shut, agents took Faisal away. Dozens of other men were deported to Pakistan that day.

Faisal Ulvie was reunited with his family. He is now going through the normal immigration process to become a permanent resident of the United States.

Nadine's son Devon, a fourth grader, is still shaken by having seen Faisal, the man he calls Pappy, vanish with armed men.

He says, "I'm just scared."

5.

Smackdown

We can bomb the world to pieces. But we can't bomb it into peace.

—MICHAEL FRANTI, HIP-HOP ARTIST

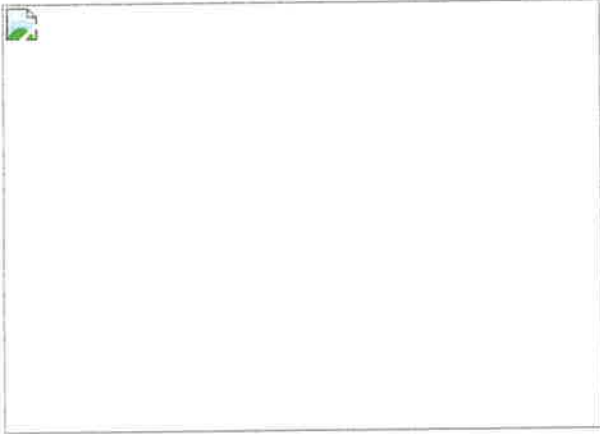
ON THE MORNING OF April 9, 2002, Lynne Stewart was in her apartment when she heard a commotion at the front door. She looked out the window and saw four or five unfamiliar people. She immediately assumed they were police. The veteran civil liberties attorney figured they were coming to hassle her husband, a well-known activist. He was outside talking heatedly with the visitors.

"Calm down, calm down, we'll take care of this," Stewart told her husband as she came out to intervene. It was a familiar role to Stewart.

An FBI agent looked at the rumpled attorney and said, "We're not here for him. We're here for you." With that, they put her in handcuffs and whisked her away to FBI headquarters in Manhattan. It had finally come to this: The Bush-Ashcroft juggernaut was

Frappuccino Firebombing Exposes Lingering Tensions Between NYPD and Muslims

By [Hunter Walker](#) 1/03 8:05pm



NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly and Imam Maan Al-Sahlani at this afternoon's press conference. (Getty)

A Starbucks Frappuccino may have been the catalyst for a crime that made waves from City Hall all the way to Iraq and exposed simmering tensions between the NYPD and New York's Muslim community. As of this writing, police are questioning a person of interest in a spree of Molotov cocktail attacks that occurred Sunday night at five locations in Queens and Long Island including the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation, a Muslim mosque, community center and school in Jamaica, and a bodega on nearby Hillside Avenue. NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly told reporters at a press conference at Al-Khoei this afternoon that police believe one person was responsible for the attacks and that the firebomber may have been angered after workers at the bodega stopped him from stealing a Frappuccino. At the same presser, Commissioner Kelly shot down a reporter who asked about police surveillance of Muslims and mosque officials quieted a man who interrupted the proceedings by angrily shouting about the NYPD's "attack" on Pakistanis.

"One of the witnesses who was at the first event that happened Sunday night—it was at a bodega, he states that the individual who did it on Sunday night was someone who was ejected from that location on December 27. That individual attempted to steal a container of milk and a bottle of Frappuccino. When they were pushing him out of the store, he said words to the effect of, 'We're going to get even,'" Commissioner Kelly said.

Starbucks Frappuccino bottles were used to make four of the five Molotovs. Commissioner Kelly said the person of interest was apprehended in Jamaica at approximately eight this morning after their car was linked to the attacks. Sources in the NYPD told *The Politicker* the suspect was taken into police custody after he returned to the area of the bodega blast. Though the thwarted Frappuccino theft would explain the bomber's anger toward the bodega, his rationale for targeting the other four locations remains a mystery.

This crime may indeed have been an isolated act of caffeine addled anger, but the Frappuccino bombings took on a far greater significance because of the NYPD's troubled relationship with the Muslim community. In November, the Associated Press revealed the NYPD had a [vast post-9/11 program of surveillance on Muslim communities](#). On Friday, more than a dozen Muslim leaders [boycotted Mayor Michael Bloomberg's annual interfaith breakfast](#) due to their anger over the surveillance issue.

Because of the heightened political significance and the potential that the firebombings were a hate crime, the attacks provoked responses from law a stream of elected officials and religious leaders. Yesterday, the mayor, the governor and two of the likely candidates running for mayor in 2013— Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, [all released statements](#). This morning, Mayor Bloomberg spent about fifteen minutes meeting with the leadership of the Al-Khoei Foundation.

"The mayor came in to show solidarity. He wanted to reassure us and the students of the school that the city administration is behind us, that they're supporting us and they're doing everything they can," said Al-Khoei foundation member Syed Meesam Razvi of the meeting. "He wanted to come in, he wanted to be here with us."

At today's press conference, in addition to Commissioner Kelly, Al Khoei's assistant imam, Maan al-Sahlani was joined by Comptroller John Liu, State Senator Malcolm Smith, Queens District Attorney Richard Brown, Borough President Helen Marshall and representatives from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Anti Defamation League, and the Interfaith Center of New York, among others. Imam Al-Sahlani said the mosque also received support from Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, an influential iraqi cleric who is one of the [highest ranking figures in Shi'ite Islam](#).

"Even in Iraq, Ayatollah Al Uzma Seyyid Ali al-Sistani—he's a great scholar in Iraq, he heard. He's so sad and he prayed to Allah, to God, to protect all the people all the people in the world, especially here in America and in New York, and to save all people here," Imam al-Sahlani said.

Though the politicians and religious leaders who spoke at the press conference attempted to present a united front, some signs of tension between the police and the Muslim community showed through. When a reporter attempted to ask Commissioner Kelly about the NYPD's program of surveillance on the Muslim community, he was quickly shut down.

"Not appropriate," Commissioner Kelly said.

One of the mosque officials stepped in front of Mr. Kelly and cut off the question.

"Please refrain from that," he said.

Several minutes later, the press conference was interrupted when Bobby Khan, who founded the Coney Island Avenue Project, which works with Brooklyn's Muslim community began shouting from the front of the room about the NYPD's "attack" on Pakistani Muslims. Mosque officials managed to calm him down. Afterwards, *The Politicker* spoke with Mr. Khan.

"The system is racially profiling Muslims, South Asians, Pakistanis," Mr. Khan said. "They are not talking about it because, I know why, because of their fear and some people want to make relationships with city officials or elected officials. They are scared to talk from their hearts."

Despite the unique issues surrounding this case, Mayor Bloomberg made clear he has no doubt about how to respond in a brief statement after his meeting at Al Khoei.

"Whether it was senseless violence or a hate crime will be determined down the road, but in either case, we're just not going to tolerate it in this city," Mayor Bloomberg said.

—LOUISE ERKIN

STEPHAN SALISBURY

MOHAMED'S GHOSTS

AN AMERICAN STORY OF LOVE AND FEAR IN THE HOMELAND



door were always open. Children would come inside and play with the inflatable Elmo and the balls, and many people in the neighborhood were thankful that the mosque provided a place other than the street for children. Hashed, age eleven, loved to come in and play Ping-Pong. Youssel, age ten, whose family lived down the street and had converted to Islam, would bring his friends in for pick-up football games.

"When the mosque was open, you knew your kid could go there and be away from the cars in the street, you know what I'm saying?" said one woman who lived near Wakeling Street. "Oh yeah, they was there a lot."

"We don't have anything anymore," said another neighbor following the end of Ansaarullah. "They brought a big bag of rice to the door once, those Muslims. They didn't have to; it was just a nice thing to do. Not that we needed it." The woman asked me not to use her name because, like many others, she didn't want "any trouble." Trouble, she believed, follows saying anything decent about Muslims. Trouble from her neighbors who lived in the old, two-story row houses on her block. Maybe trouble from the cops. "You don't know," she said, growing increasingly anxious at having a strange person talking on her stoop. "You don't know what people are like around here. Some people just don't like nothing that they don't already know. Me? I say let a person speak for themselves. But just don't use my name."

Every Thursday, Ghorah arranged for community suppers, nothing fancy—rice, perhaps some chicken, bread. A few Yemenis liked to make a special flavorful chicken dish, which they would fix over for hours. Moroccans had a taste for couscous. Sometimes simple fruit and salads were offered. Idais began dining at the mosque, too, enjoying the fellowship and watching attendance steadily grow. Not only members of the mosque or even Muslims attended. Non-Muslim visitors were welcome, people from the neighborhood. "Everyone could come," Idais said. "It was a place to congregate, for people to come."

He remembers particularly Ramadan in 2002. "That was beautiful for me," said Idais. "Every night we had breakfast at the mosque. Life was intact." More than a hundred would come for the evening meals, Idais remembered. The food was plentiful, and so were the talk and laughter. Children played with the growing number of toys, throwing balls, laughing. "It was the most amazing thing ever. The most beautiful feast I ever celebrated in my life."

But all was not right in the world outside, the world beyond the chain-link fence surrounding the old body shop. And because things were not right it was perhaps inevitable that federal law enforcement authorities became interested in Ansaatullah. Throughout 2002, the PENTTBOM investigation churned across the country, rapidly becoming institutionalized. A permanent state of investigation, with highly publicized raids and arrests, emerged as the post-9/11 world fermented and matured. In New York, many Middle Eastern and South Asian residents of Brooklyn told me that nightly arrests swept across their communities.

"In this neighborhood, maybe fifteen, twenty blocks it is, there were hundreds of people who are disappeared," said Ansaatullah Khan, known universally as Bobby, the director of the Conce Island Avenue Project in the Midwood section of Brooklyn. "The law enforcement agencies were tracking down every building, going door to door, every night, day and night. They, like, attacked this neighborhood. They would be waiting for the shift to change at the restaurant, waiting for the workers to come out. Targeting people in the restaurant. In the night, they would go door to door, and they would take them. It was horrendous. It was collaboration of immigration, FBI, and NYPD intelligence division. They were all working together."

The neighborhood, home to maybe 120,000 Pakistanis, was stunned, Khan said. "It was such a sudden attack. So sudden. People were not expecting anything." The sweeps, he said, created a paralyzing fear. "And that created big chaos in the community. But

people wouldn't talk about it. When there was the huge crackdown and they were going door to door, people would not say, even if they have their loved ones, their friends and family members, they would not share what was happening, what happened last night—that their husband or loved one was taken away. They were so harassed—fear of informers spread.

In Philadelphia, authorities made a number of raids and sweeps through immigrant enclaves. The poor Pakistani community of South Philadelphia, like the Pakistani communities in Brooklyn and elsewhere, was a particular target. One incident describes the whole. In the early morning on July 2, 2002, dozens of federal agents burst through the kitchen door of Nadir Khan's apartment on a shabby row-house block of South Seventh Street.

Khan, a truck driver and legal immigrant from northwest Pakistan, was taken into custody on suspicion, it later turned out, of heroin trafficking. For good measure, authorities rounded up his half-dozen roommates, who weren't suspected of anything at all. At the time, an FBI spokeswoman denied that Khan or anyone else had been arrested.

Denial notwithstanding, Khan was in custody and spent the next seven months being shipped around the country from one prison to another, despite the fact that local and federal authorities were aware he was not the suspect they were searching for—Nadar Khan, a younger man with a different name and a different appearance. Nadir Khan was eventually pronounced cleared and released. In the meantime, his apartment, which remained open with a shattered door after the raid, had been stripped by thieves. His car had been towed and impounded. His job was gone. His roommates were deported. His son in Pakistan had been forced to leave school and find work to provide for the family. The whole episode was a personal disaster.

Authorities later admitted the arrest was an error. It appears that Khan's lawyers never argued in court that federal authorities had

picked up the wrong Khan. "Those points should have been brought up to the court," Michael Shelby, U.S. attorney in Houston, told my colleague Gaurita Bahadur. "Obviously the U.S. government has the obligation to arrest the individual who has been charged."

"This is a human process," he continued, "and obviously there are occasions where humans make errors."

The error, however, served to instill and fortify a rampant fear within the South Philadelphia Pakistani community, which includes a substantial proportion of (illegal) immigrants, like many poorer immigrant neighborhoods around the country. "Our people are in a lot of misery because of this," Sardar Khan, a local Pakistan community leader, told the *Philadelphia City Paper*. "People are scared to go out because of fear of capture." Why not complain to authorities? Khan was asked at the time. "Making a complaint will only make it worse," he replied.

"Any institution, and law enforcement is one of them, is going to go after the path of least resistance," Marwan Kreidie said when I asked him about the Pakistan situation. "Now the Philadelphia FBI and the Philadelphia police knew—I'm not patting myself on the back—but if they had picked up an Arab, I'd be on the phone. Tell me about what happened. Is there a reason? What's the reason? And we're going to get him an attorney and blah, blah, blah. There isn't such an organization that works with the Pakistanis. So what happened there is they wouldn't get any resistance. This is my own interpretation—they're easy game."

Pakistanis and Bangladeshis—often poor, often beset by immigration problems, often overlooked by rights organizations—began fleeing Philadelphia in waves that intensified exponentially when the federal government announced its "special registration" program—the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS—requiring resident males between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five from two dozen Muslim countries and North Korea to report to immigration authorities for photographing and fingerprinting.

could not remain and gave him the option: return to the United States, where he had no visa, or to his home country of Bangladesh. He returned to this country and was arrested in Buffalo and now faces deportation. He has children who were born here. His wife lives here. It is a very typical story.

By late 2008, the nightly sweeps in Brooklyn had passed into history, at least for the time being. But neighborhood activists told me informers were everywhere in the mosques and on the streets—as they had been for over four years. In one instance, documented in a court case, the New York Police Department alone had three paid informants and undercover agents attending services at a single mosque in December 2003. There is no indication that the extensive surveillance has moderated. That said, some Pakistani businesses have revived, but the number still appears down sharply from pre-9/11 levels. Boarded-up stores still lined parts of Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn's Midwood at the end of 2008. Russian and Jewish businesses were prominent on the street, where once Pakistani shopkeepers and groceries thrived.

With mosques now infiltrated with informers and arrests continuing throughout the past eight years, though at a declining rate, the atmosphere of attack that once defined Midwood in the wake of September 11 has been replaced by a dull sense of siege and a resolve to live, somehow. The fear, though, is still there beneath the surface, Bobby Khan told me. "But when it is too much, it exceeds the limit. People start living with it: 'Fuck. We've got to live.'"

Frappuccino Firebombing Exposes Lingering Tensions Between NYPD and Muslims

By Hunter Walker 1/03 8:05pm



NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly and Imam Maan Al-Sahlani at this afternoon's press conference. (Getty)

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milk and a bottle of Frappuccino. When they were pushing him out of the store, he said words to the effect of, ‘We’re going to get even,’ Commissioner Kelly said.

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Return To Little Pakistan: Bobby Khan v. The Police

An immigrant born to working-class activism stands up to an NYPD reborn in the CIA's image. Part 2 in a series



SPENCER ACKERMAN

SEP 14, 2021



Ahsanullah "Bobby" Khan. Via Spencer Ackerman.

Edited by Sam Thielman

SIX YOUNG MEN in their late teens and early twenties stopped eating and stood up when Bobby Khan passed their booth in a restaurant on Coney Island Avenue late on a July morning. I don't speak their language, but the daps and the grins they offered to the nearly 64-year old Khan said enough.

Khan is a soft-spoken man whose glasses take up much of his face. Yet he fought tenaciously for Little Pakistan—and Jackson Heights, Astoria, Bay Ridge and everywhere else comprising Muslim New York—when the post-9/11 roundups began. He channeled and embodied defiance for neighbors too intimidated to speak. When he entered the restaurant that day, he wore a t-shirt with **DEPORTEE** printed on the chest.

Khan and his Coney Island Avenue Project spent lonely days outside the [Metropolitan Detention](#)

Center in Sunset Park after 9/11, demanding the release of the frightened people threatened by the feds with deportation if they wouldn't turn informant. During a deposition in a civil-rights lawsuit, when he was asked what he thought of a movie that insulted the Prophet Muhammad, the secular progressive activist went into 700 years' worth of history of the Indus River Valley. Khan draws a straight line between fighting reactionaries in Pakistan in his youth to fighting the power structure in post-9/11 New York. Both fought back.

"I was a person of interest! *Osama bin Laden* was a person of interest!" he said over breakfast at the restaurant. "But I was the one who opposed them—not just here, but back there, too!"

Back there was no joke. Men he calls "religious extremists" put "three bullets in me." Khan was tortured in prison. But after 9/11, he said, "it was worse *here*."

Khan had two locks on his door. He and his wife "had plans for what to do if the police came. We had attorneys. We lived in fear."

It was a time when the NYPD remade itself in the image of its deputy commissioner for intelligence, David Cohen, who had matriculated from the CIA. As reporters Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman [would reveal](#), the police launched a breathtakingly broad initiative to spy on Muslim New York without suspicion of any crime, without *regard* for suspicion of any crime.

In 2002, Cohen placed [a serving CIA officer](#), Larry Sanchez, in charge of NYPD penetration of entire neighborhoods. Muslim academic associations were particular targets for surveillance and infiltration: the police, in one unforgettable instance, sent an undercover officer on a [2008 whitewater rafting trip](#) with Muslim students from CCNY. The cops uncovered shocking revelations like how they "prayed at least four times a day." In New Brunswick, New Jersey, where the NYPD has no jurisdiction, Cohen ran a surveillance operation on the campus of Rutgers University, where, as it happens, I went to college.

A mile east of Little Pakistan, Brooklyn College's Muslim students were described as a "tier one" danger. Included in the next tier down was LaGuardia Community College, where my mother taught for most of my life, and where the police claimed an organization aligned with al-Qaeda "wanted to revive the student group," according to Apuzzo and Goldman's pathbreaking 2013 book *Enemies Within*. Somehow my tiny Jewish mother was safe around her students.

"I feel like America lied to me about what it was," Khan observed. "After 9/11, it opened my eyes. I had been hearing back home, in prison, that America is an ideal—freedom of speech, real democracy. 9/11 opened my eyes that all that was fake."

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WHEN AHSANULLAH 'BOBBY' KHAN was young, his house in Lahore was filled with steel workers. They were people who opposed the military dictatorship – people his father was organizing, and on whose behalf his father did time in solitary confinement. "They were like my uncles," he remembered. When he was around ten years old, Khan's father organized a strike at the giant [Beco Steel](#). The result was "police torture." Cops surrounded their home for a melee.

Khan remembers grabbing the baton of an officer preparing to strike. “Don’t hit my uncle!”

Khan, born and raised in Pakistan, describes himself as an Afghan and a Pashtun. In the tenth grade, the school he attended exposed him to “religious extremists, religious crooks.” It gave him an understanding of a certain international coalition: “[The extremists] were harbored by the military regime, supported by the Saudis and the U.S.” Now it was Khan’s turn to organize his peers. “The youth was sick of it. They were looking for relief,” he remembered.

It was a repressive time in Pakistan. Khan spent eight of his next 15 years in and out of prison, where, he stated evenly, police tortured him. “A lot of my friends were killed.” Those three bullets remain in him from clashes with the [Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba](#). By 1995, it had been made clear to him that his life was in danger. Khan moved to Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, where his sister-in-law lived after arriving in New York in the 1970s.

“I would read about liberalism, freedom and democracy in America. There’s a country with freedom of speech,” Khan recalled, “even though the U.S. was supporting Zia.”

The Pakistani community in Brooklyn in the mid-1990s numbered over 100,000 people. “I looked for my people,” Khan remembered. He found them in Kensington, Midwood, Brighton Beach and Little Pakistan. Little Pakistan was a working-class neighborhood of cab drivers, restaurant workers, and construction workers, many from rural backgrounds. Khan remembered it as quiet, conservative, not particularly into politics, and centered around mosque attendance: “Not like today, with all the restaurants.”

Little Pakistan was also “a little ghetto,” segregated from middle class wealth, in a classically New York way, by mere avenues. “We never saw any white people in our neighborhood for several years,” Khan said.

Some of the first whites to enter Little Pakistan had guns, badges, handcuffs, and impunity granted by the fallen towers. “We started seeing them go into people’s houses,” Khan remembered. “The people arrested, we would never know where they were keeping them, what were the charges.”

THE NYPD RESPONDED TO 9/11 by becoming an intelligence agency.

The department’s argument, reflecting the influence of an ex-CIA official—Cohen—and then a slew of successors, was that stopping terrorism required it to acquire total awareness of Muslim New York. In 2003, Cohen and allies [convinced](#) a federal judge, [Charles S. Haight, Jr.](#), that, as Cohen wrote, “in the case of terrorism, to wait for an indication of crime is to wait too long.” Haight agreed to gut a [1985 consent decree](#) in a case he had presided over, known as [the Handschu agreement](#)—a crucial check on the surveillance the NYPD had performed on nonwhite, immigrant and left-wing New Yorkers again and again during the 20th century.

Unconstitutional surveillance is embedded in the NYPD like muscle memory. But the NYPD

reaction to 9/11 mirrored the reactions of the CIA and the NSA: divesting themselves of the legal or procedural restrictions that inhibited mass surveillance (the NSA) and physical abuse (the CIA). According to Apuzzo and Goldman, the CIA officer inside the NYPD, Larry Sanchez, wanted the department to surveil Muslim New York like Israel surveils the Palestinian West Bank—operations that serve what is now [increasingly recognized](#) as Israel's apartheid.

Whether you want to consider it a shift or a restoration, the NYPD's Intelligence Division created the Demographics Unit, something that functioned like a secret police. Haight's revised Handschu guidance permitted NYPD investigations anywhere there existed a "possibility of unlawful activity."

As an Intelligence Division [document](#) recounts, among its methods were the insertion of what it called "Rakers" into Muslim communities. The term, according to Apuzzo and Goldman, originated from Cohen's metaphors about raking an extinguished fire pit on the expectation of finding "a smoldering ember—a hot spot waiting to catch fire." In practice, this meant, as the document states, "deploy[ing] officers in civilian clothes throughout the ethnic communities" of Muslim New York.

The Rakers looked for [pre-crime](#). They were to "gauge sentiment" within Muslim businesses—after "identify[ing] the ethnicity of the owner" – through "interacting, observing and conversing with owners and patrons." The document instructs undercovers to "participate in social activities (i.e., Cricket matches, cafes & clubs.)" At a time when the FBI was engaging in its own [widespread surveillance of Muslim communities](#), Apuzzo and Goldman wrote, the bureau found the NYPD to be out of control. Just not enough to ever think of arresting any of their partners in uniform.

Under an approach it called "Zone Defense"—an analogy tacitly justifying the abandonment of probable cause – the NYPD used what the Rakers dug up as leverage to coerce people into becoming informants. Cohen told colleagues, according to Apuzzo and Goldman, that his goal was to have an informant "inside every mosque within a 250-mile radius of the city." Even that undersells the scope of the surveillance. Spying on Bed-Stuy's Masjid at-Taqwa included spying on nearby storefronts like the Zam Zam Stop & Shop Store. The department put undercover officers in a [Park Slope grade school](#).

Still, the point was to get the NYPD inside New York's mosques -- as explicit a violation of religious freedom as could possibly be.

In the city and beyond, from Long Island to Westchester County to New Jersey, the NYPD and its informants noted who sat on the boards of the mosques; aimed lamppost-mounted cameras at the mosques; photographed license plates of cars in the parking lot of the mosques. Ten city mosques became NYPD targets in the eight months after Haight's portentous 2003 evisceration of Handschu. By 2004, the NYPD catalogued 40 "mosques of concern." Two years later, an NYPD document boasted a catalogue of "more than 250 mosques as to their ethnic makeup, leadership, and group affiliations in the metro area," Apuzzo and Goldman write.

There was no "Good Muslim" exception. Sheikh Reda Shata, the imam of the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge, invited the FBI to speak to his congregants, threw parties for cops when they

transferred out of the 68th Precinct and dined with Mayor Mike Bloomberg. The NYPD [spied on him](#) anyway. When Shata returned from the hajj, Apuzzo and Goldman revealed, an NYPD informant picked him up at the airport and drove him home.

This was intelligence collection, not law enforcement. A relationship to crime was irrelevant for NYPD surveillance. So was any consideration that New York's Muslims are *people*, people with rights, people who deserve freedom and basic dignity. Assistant Chief Thomas Galati, who took over the Intelligence Division in 2006, stated in a 2012 deposition that the Demographics Unit, later renamed the Zone Assessment Unit in a preemptive PR maneuver, [yielded no terrorism cases](#).

The following year, Galati attempted to argue that this wasn't as damning as it sounded, and that complaining about it misunderstood the purpose of the unit. "The Zone Assessment Unit was not created to trigger investigations or otherwise generate 'leads,'" he [declared](#) in court papers. "[T]he Zone Assessment Unit's mission was to further identify concentrations of certain ethnicities and nationalities in New York City beyond what was available in the U.S. Government 2000 Census so that the NYPD would be in a better position to respond to terrorist threats or potential violence." Apuzzo and Goldman reported a "running joke" inside the Intelligence Division: "This is Intel. We don't make cases. We make overtime."

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ON SATURDAYS AFTER 9/11, Bobby Khan was outside the Metropolitan Detention Center, protesting and drawing attention to roundups that lasted for months in some cases, demanding names of the detained and charges against them. Prison authorities painted over the windows of the cells, preventing those in cages from seeing their supporters outside, and justified it as a "security measure." Some were released, Khan recalled, to "distant locations, to Texas... Their family wouldn't know where their loved ones are."

Rachel Meeropol, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights, joined Khan at the MDC demonstrations. She would work with his Coney Island Avenue Project as they challenged the roundups. Twenty years on, they are still fighting in court for transparency and redress.

Meeropol remembered that one of her clients was so horrified to be taken in shackles by an armed guard down closed-off streets to MDC that he began wondering if he actually *had* done something. "He started to think, 'Could I have been involved? Am I crazy?' just because of the cognitive dissonance of being arrested like this in your hometown," Meeropol said. Because things like this don't happen in the U.S. People don't get disappeared. But they did."

In Little Pakistan, Khan said, "people two, three times shot into restaurants" on Coney Island Avenue between Avenue H and Foster. No one was arrested. "I don't think no one even *complained*," out of fear of arrest, deportation or worse, Khan said. On October 23, Muhammad Rafiq Butt, a 55-year old man with an ailing heart living in Jackson Heights, died inside a New Jersey jail after complaining of chest pains, which I discovered in Tram Nguyen's excellent [We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11](#).

Official intimidation and its consequences were both familiar to Khan from his youth. He fixated on the NYPD placement of informants, “collaborators—*criminals*” inside the community. In one well-known case, an informant wanted 21-year old Shahawar Matin Siraj to take what he represented as a backpack stuffed with explosives into the Herald Square subway. Though, as Rozina Ali reported, Siraj refused, he was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Apuzzo and Goldman reported that the informant, Osama Eldawoody, made “about \$100,000 keeping tabs on people and mosques for Cohen.”

“The guy would bring [Siraj] lunch, provoke him by showing him propaganda, rile him up. He considers him an uncle,” Khan said. “Thirty years. An innocent kid!” After Siraj’s sentencing, the federal prosecutor in Brooklyn applauded the police. “Thanks to the extraordinary work of law enforcement, the defendants’ plot did not advance beyond the planning stage, and the public was never at risk,” said Roslynn Mausekopf, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York. She neglected to specify whose planning it was. Mausekopf is now, thanks to George W. Bush, a judge in the Eastern District. Like the Southern District across the river, and like the D.C. and Eastern Virginia districts further south, the Eastern District of New York is one of the premiere venues for prosecuting many such cases that did not advance beyond the planning stage.

In winter 2005, Khan drove his family through scenic New York state on a vacation to Canada. Immigration stopped them at the Niagara Falls Rainbow Bridge around 11 a.m. For hours they waited on the second floor of an immigration office. He and his wife record in contemporaneous notes they preserved that their five-year old daughter remarked, “Why are they not calling us, are we not people?” Their daughter’s anxiety would spike soon after, when they took Khan into a separate room.

The questions were “silly,” Khan said: “*Where are you keeping the weapons?*” But they had Khan put his palms on the wall while they physically searched him. He was photographed, fingerprinted, and then informed that he had the “same name” as a “person of interest.” Around 5:30 p.m., they let the Khans go.

“National security is such a big joke,” Khan said.

Not everyone in Little Pakistan is comfortable saying that. Not everyone there believes it. Khan goes out of his way to speak generically, but he underscores that he considers working with the police to be profoundly mistaken. In Little Pakistan today, he said, “ignorance is still being exploited by law enforcement. ... Some people prefer—leaders, merchants’ associations—to promote the NYPD, DHS, the FBI, ‘for our protection.’ I think that isn’t true.”

20 years later, Khan still considers Little Pakistan very much at risk. Whatever the NYPD might have done by [disbanding the Demographics Unit](#) and settling civil-rights lawsuits against it, New York did not, noted Colin Moynihan in the *New Yorker*, “[acknowledge any previous wrongdoing](#).” Today, Khan said, police informants remain in the community.

What *wasn’t* in the community was the strength that could have come from non-Muslim neighbors across the city standing beside them. “We expected some voice to support us,” Khan said. “We did not see solidarity here. That impacted the community.”

On Thursday, a different federal judge in Brooklyn, Mauskopf's fellow Bush appointee [Dora Irizarry](#), ruled against [Meeropol's MDC clients](#) seeking redress for their detention. It was a reminder of something Meeropol said in our interview weeks earlier: "When there's no acknowledgement, that sends a very clear message this will happen again."

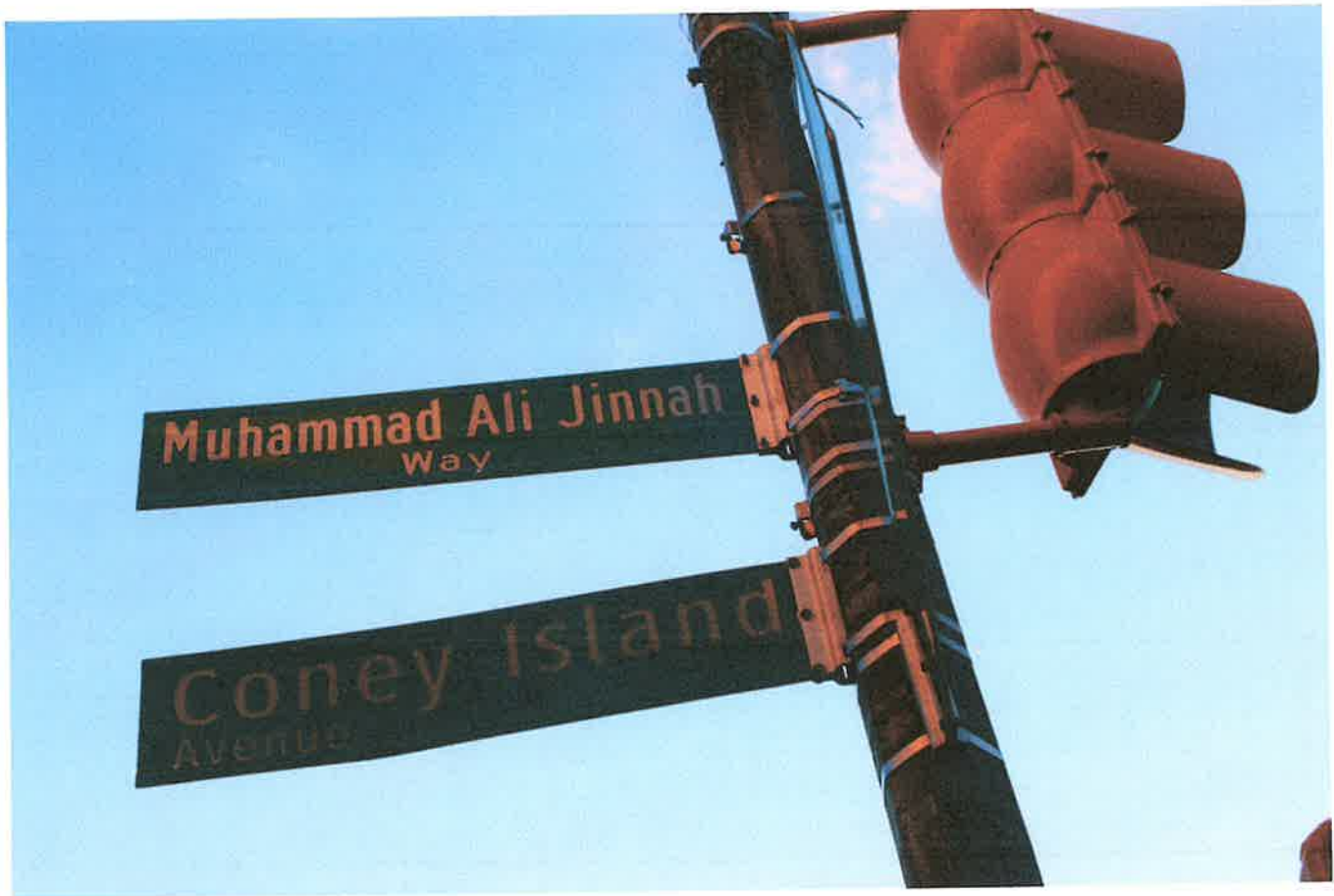
For 19 years, Meeropol, who has been a New Yorker since 1997, fought for them, all the way up to the Supreme Court. "They were New Yorkers, too," she said.

There has been "no acknowledgement, no compensation or reparation for the individuals and communities whose lives have been destroyed," Meeropol continued. "No acknowledgement of them as New Yorkers. So many of them *loved* New York. and talked about how they were living

9/11 attacks: Twenty years later, fear still lingers in Brooklyn's Little Pakistan

middleeasteye.net/news/9-11-attacks-twenty-years-later-fear-still-lingers-brooklyn-little-pakistan

Discriminatory policies, government raids, and mass detentions following the 11 September attacks left a toll on New York's Pakistani community



Little Pakistan, officially named Muhammad Ali Jinnah Way after the founder of Pakistan, is located on Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn, New York (MEE/Zainab Iqbal)

Like everyone old enough to remember, Zakarya Khan, 47, can recall exactly where he was on 11 September, 2001.

He was at home and one of his roommates had turned on the TV. He remembers asking: "What is going on?" and then recalls seeing the second plane hit the south tower.

The World Trade Center was on fire, and smoke and burning debris could be felt in the air some 11.7km (seven miles) away, in the neighbourhood of Little Pakistan.

Life as he'd known it in his community would change. And twenty years later, things have never been the same.

The small strip that is referred to as Little Pakistan - now officially named Muhammad Ali Jinnah Way after the founder of Pakistan - is located on Coney Island Avenue in Brooklyn, New York, and is just 2.4km (1.5 miles) long.

Despite its size, it's packed with immigrants, many of whom migrated from South Asia in the early 1990s; a new generation of children, stories, and sorrow.

Women in shalwar kameez - traditional Pakistani clothing - roam the streets, and men wear thobes and kufis. Every night during the summer, a shop owner hosts a barbecue for his friends and anyone passing by.

There are shops selling gold jewelry and a man can be seen selling sugarcane juice from a truck, squeezing the sugarcane right in front of your eyes - just like in Pakistan. But it wasn't always like this.

Shortly after 9/11, law enforcement raided the neighbourhood and hundreds of men were detained.

Fear gripped the once vibrant community and, of the 120,000 Pakistanis who lived here, about 20,000 left the neighbourhood - either returning home to Pakistan or moving to Canada, a survey conducted by the Council of People's Organization (COPO) showed.

Storefronts were left empty and businesses shattered.

"Help Wanted" signs were posted on lampposts, and streets at night felt eerie. Panic had taken over.

"We used to go out in shalwar kameez and Islamic dress anytime on Coney Island Avenue. Before 9/11, we thought America was a free country for everyone and there was no fear at all for us," Khan told Middle East Eye.

"Even though people were not documented, there was no fear of arrests, there was no US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); there was just immigration and they didn't bother anyone. But post-9/11 is when everything changed."

Fight against NSEERS

About a week after the attacks on the World Trade Center, Mohammed Rafiq Butt, a 55-year-old Pakistani New Yorker, was arrested for overstaying his visa. He was detained for a month and eventually taken to a detention centre in New Jersey, where, a month later, he died.

The case prompted Ahsanullah "Bobby" Khan to begin his activism in the United States, just six years after he arrived in America. He is the founder of the Coney Island Avenue Project, an organisation created in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Bobby Khan had spent the majority of his life standing against oppressive forces in Pakistan. He was a student organiser and would stand against Pakistan's military regime and religious extremists in the 1970s. He has been tortured, and served eight years in a Pakistani prison.

He came to the US to escape persecution, but instead, there was a new fight waiting for him. In 2005, Bobby Khan was named a "person of interest" by the Department of Homeland Security, a status that would last until 2013 and take a definite toll on his mental health.

"I was called a 'person of interest'. A person of interest is someone like Osama bin Laden. It is not me. The Department of Homeland Security started collecting information from back home, since there was nothing they could find that I was doing wrong here," he said.



New name, same game: American Muslims vow to fight new 'counter-terror' initiative

"I was an organiser against the military regime in Pakistan. So what? That is my pride. I was scared for my kids and my family. I came all the way from Pakistan here to live a peaceful life and enjoy democracy and freedom of speech and expression, and that dream was smashed after 9/11."

Bobby Khan would spend the next twenty years fighting the racist policies of the US government. With the Coney Island Avenue Project, he would go on to help thousands of people from being deported, raising funds for the families of those who were detained.

They would fight against policies such as the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS), a programme created a year after 9/11 which targeted foreign nationals from 25 Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan.

It would require foreign nationals to register with the government each time they left or entered the country, and resulted in more than 80,000 men undergoing registration with thousands subjected to interrogation during the decade-long programme, which was finally disbanded during the administration of President Barack Obama.

According to Ahmed Mohamed, CAIR-NY legal director, NSEERS was a shameful moment in American history.

"After 9/11, this country really abandoned its basic principles of due process and equal justice under the law when it came to Muslims or individuals who were perceived to be Muslim, out of fear, out of Islamophobia," he told MEE.

"This impacted American Muslims in every way, especially in their daily lives, their ability to feel safe within their communities here in the US, their ability to practice their faith without being subjected to unwarranted surveillance or unfair and unequal treatment, and the NSEERS program was just one example of it.

"The evolution of multiple programs and things that took place simultaneously - such as the Muslim ban, Muslim surveillance, Joint Terrorism Taskforces - created a stigmatising affect on the Muslim community that 'otherised' us in ways we had never seen prior to 9/11."

'We have the same rights any American has'

Zakarya Khan described the situation in Little Pakistan at that time as pure chaos. He recalled the home raids and the arrest of men in front of their children in the middle of the night.

He recalled how people would be stopped in the middle of the street as the police conducted body searches.

"We are Muslims and we are immigrants. And especially during those days, we didn't have much [power] in the system," he said.

"Right now we have our own Muslim community in different departments; like we have Muslims in law enforcement and political access to leadership. But in those days, we had nothing whatsoever. In those days, people were really scared. It felt like we had been attacked."



9/11 attacks: Why the 'war on terror' will not end

Zakarya Khan was a food vendor 20 years ago. His cart was on Broadway in Manhattan, and, for a year, he ran at a loss. He eventually got back on his feet and a few years later, he opened his first bricks-and-mortar business - Gyro King in Little Pakistan.

The small restaurant is now often crowded with people standing outside the shop to give their order. But the majority of his work is not catering, but in community activism.

He helped found the Peace Community Center of NY, known as Masjid Quba, and he founded Peace Children Academy, an Islamic school in the heart of Little Pakistan.

Last year, at the height of the pandemic, he began a non-profit organisation named Brooklyn Emerge, where he runs a youth programme, along with a halal meals project in which they give out hot cooked meals every single day.

"We think that somehow we are aliens. That we are not Americans. And that Americans are some other people who have these agencies and this system in their hands and they can use it anytime against us," Zakarya Khan said.

"But this is our country and this is our land. And we have the same rights any American has. This is why I became an activist after 9/11 and why so many people became activists after 9/11. We thought that if we don't stand up for our community, then who is going to stand up for us?"

Fear quietly lingers on

Anwarul Huque came to the US from India in 1981. His friend lived here and told him to stay for six months, and if he didn't like it he could go back. After six months, Huque was in love.

He lived in Manhattan for two months, where he worked as an accountant for a hotel. He then moved to Brooklyn and would often find himself driving to the Little Pakistan area to buy groceries and halal meat. He soon decided to move there permanently.

In 1998, he opened his own business, an office in Manhattan where he would do taxes and accounting. Life was going well; he was helping members of his community, and his business was growing. Then came September 11.

Though he didn't face any problems from law enforcement, many in his community did. And they would often entrust him with their problems. At one point, he told people to stay with him in his home because they were so afraid.

Anwarul Huque told people in the community to stay at his house because they were so afraid (MEE/Zainab Iqbal)

He ended up having about twenty people in his home and remembers urging them to stay indoors and not stand outside. A lot of them didn't have legal status in the country and he didn't want them to be detained or deported.

He was once carrying his briefcase, bringing files to his office with his two children.

"One white guy asked me 'What do you have in this? Is that a bomb?'" he recalled. But despite everything, he never left his neighbourhood.

"I didn't want to leave my culture and my religious values. I have three sons and one son is a Hafidh [a person who has memorised the Quran] because of this community," he said.

Though people now crowd outside Gyro King and walk around the stalls with their families during Pakistan's independence day street festivals, and stand together after jummah outside Makki Masjid conversing with one another, seemingly without a care in the world, the fear that came after 9/11 still quietly lingers twenty years later.

And according to Zakarya Khan, it may never go away.

"Even people who are citizens and have been here a long time are scared," he said. "They worry a time will come when the American government will take everything from us. It's unfounded, but still it's real. In order to remove these fears, I think it will take at least one generation to have that sense of security; to say that 'No, this is our country and we are not afraid'."

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