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## The frightening rise of anti-Arab violence, hatred

by IMC Print Team

On September 11, after the terror attacks in New York and Washington DC, many eyes became glued to the television to try to understand the piece of history that was unfolding. Many asked "who?" and "why?" The television reports generally ignored the "why?" but were quick to try to provide their own answers for the "who?" and before a criminal investigation had identified the hijackers of the planes that crashed in New York and Washington, the reports coming from the corporate media were already accusing "Muslim extremists."

Soon reports of threats against people of Arabic origin begin to come through. In some schools, children wearing Islamic apparel are subjected to threats from fellow classmates. In New Hampshire, people are seen wearing t-shirts with slogans against Osama Bin Laden accompanied by the US flag. Messages seeping with unjustified hatred are left on the answering machines of various Muslim community centers and book stores. E-mail threats are then sent to groups representing Afghans, including to the anti-fundamentalist Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, whose members have been fighting against the Taliban for years. Quoting the hateful contents of the threats would simply

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## Asking Why: Americans confront their foreign policy

by IMC Print Team

The American public, shocked and horrified by the vicious September 11 terrorist attacks which appear to have killed thousands of ordinary people, is starting to ask why this happened. There are places to begin looking.

Some recent anti-U.S. sentiment, even among allies, is observable. Most recently, the U.S. was widely denounced for its withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol, its complete disregard for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, its attempts to control the agenda of the World Conference Against Racism, as well as its subsequent refusal to participate in the talks when it didn't get its way.

"Unconstrained by any superpower rival or system of global governance, the U.S. giant has rewritten the global financial and trading system in its own interest; ripped up a string of treaties it finds inconvenient; sent troops to every corner of the globe; bombed Afghanistan, Sudan, Yugoslavia and Iraq without troubling the United Nations; maintained a string of murderous embargoes against recalcitrant regimes; and recklessly thrown its weight behind Israel's 34-year illegal military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as the Palestinian intifada rages," wrote Seumas Milne in *The Guardian* (London).

Such behavior has contributed to a chronic global view of the United States as world bully. Mahatma Gandhi, when asked what he thought of western civilization, replied: "It would be a good idea."

No such behavior, however, can justify the terrible atrocity committed on September 11. With a few marginal exceptions, the outrage expressed over these attacks has been globally unanimous. The United States' former adversary Russia has been very supportive of US plans for a military retaliation within Afghanistan, to the point of possibly assisting militarily.

Russians have a unique understanding of the present situation in Afghanistan. In 1979 the then Soviet Union, backing a recently installed communist government



photograph by Peter Holderness/IMC-New York

Thousands gathered for a candlelight vigil in Union Square in New York City on September 14 to mourn the dead and resist the call to war.

(and also seeking to control potential Islamic rebellions within adjacent central Asian Soviet republics), fought the largest war in its history there with the obvious exception of the Second World War.

The Soviets were opposed by the mujahideen, a group of factions composed of Islamic fundamentalists, tribal leaders, and others who had opposed the Afghan communists. The Soviets were well experienced in this kind of warfare, but the thing that made this war different for them was very simple: the mujahideen were armed and supplied by the United States.

As the war progressed and became more horrible in terms of displaced and slaughtered civilians, the ranks of the mujahideen were swelled by Muslims from across the Arab world. Here is where we meet Osama bin Laden for the first time: the wealthy Saudi heir brought thousands of highly trained fighters from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and other Arab nations. They were referred to as the "Arab Afghans," and this core group has formed the backbone of bin Laden's operations subsequently.

Bin Laden and his Afghan war organization were armed and trained by the CIA to fight the Soviet army, beginning in the early 1980's. It was the US government which supported Pakistani intelli-

gence efforts against the Soviets, which in turn created the earliest organizations that would later emerge as the Taliban regime. Without this support, the successful guerilla campaign waged by the mujahideen against the Soviets would not have been possible: and it is the judgment of many historians that the Soviet army's humiliating defeat in Afghanistan contributed significantly to the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union. With 50,000 Soviet dead during the nearly decade-long war, it can correctly be referred to as the "Soviet Vietnam."

With the end of the Soviet war, American support to bin Laden also ended. But he and the "Arab Afghans" had little time to rest before finding a new call to arms — the American "occupation" of Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, which has subsequently become permanent. This, added to the obvious issues regarding Palestine, has provided bin Laden with the political backing within the Arab world to expand his network and activities greatly — with the US increasingly the single target of his terror attacks — in the last few years. And so this man who was once a fast ally of the United States against the mutually adversarial Soviet Union is now its determined enemy.

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# Differing opinions most important in times of crisis

*Adapted from an article  
by Rick Giombetti*

What good is a Bill of Rights in the USA when influential organizations are unwilling to stand up for their rights in a time of crisis and danger?

The AFL-CIO, International Rivers Network, Rainforest Action Network, the Sierra Club, the Ruckus Society and Friends of the Earth are some of the organizations that have announced that, because of the September 11 terror attacks, they are suspending entire campaigns and in some cases withdrawing from protests, including the massive protest against the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) in Washington DC planned for September 29.

Some media outlets are already leading the drum beat for war and guiding the public towards a deadly embrace of nationalism in the wake of the tragic attacks. Now many organizations are engaging in what amounts to a unilateral disarmament

at a time when our rights need as many defenders as possible. There is justified fear of a suspension of constitutional rights and martial law. But what government needs to ban demonstrations if nobody is willing to hold them?

Perhaps the most disturbing example of this is an internal memo circulated among the staff of the environmental organization, the Sierra Club, which was secured by the political newsletter Counter Punch. The memo explains that "in response to the attacks on America we are shifting our communications strategy for the immediate future. We have taken all of our ads off the air; halted our phone banks; removed any material from the web that people could perceive as anti-Bush, and we are taking other steps to prevent the Sierra Club from being perceived as controversial during the crisis. For now we are going to stop aggressively pursuing our agenda and will cease bashing Bush."

Imagine if Martin Luther King had used similar tripe in his "Beyond Vietnam" speech. In that great speech, King denounced the US war against Vietnam and called the US government the greatest purveyor of violence in the world. How forgetful that speech would have been had King urged advocates for social justice to avoid being "too controversial" about the Vietnam War and to avoid speech that could be perceived as "anti-Johnson," the US president at the time. King's sentiments diverted from mainstream thought but he wouldn't be remembered as a great activist had he not had the courage to express his convictions.

In contrast, the International Action Center are calling for an anti-racism and anti-war rally at the White House on September 29 at the time of the anti-IMF/WB rally. Holding an anti-war and anti-racism rally will hopefully awaken the organizations who have decided to sleep when their

opinions are most needed.

There is no better time to stand up for principles than when they are deeply unpopular. If activists against the Vietnam war had postponed demonstrations until it was convenient and safe to hold them, then that movement would have affected very few lives.

Let's not allow the September 11 terror attacks to be remembered as the US equivalent of the Reichstag Fire in Germany in the 1930s, where a tragedy was used to suppress the rights of citizens. An attempted arson against a Seattle mosque has already been reported and people are organizing to protect mosques from violent attacks. Meanwhile, activists are organizing demonstrations and teach-ins to avoid more terror. They should follow through with their plans. Staying silent at home will not prevent fascism. We should not honor the September 11 victims by giving up our rights and by unquestioningly joining the war makers.

## HATRED

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spread more unnecessary terror.

In too many cases the threats were accompanied by violent acts. Mosques were the targets of vandalism in the states of Washington and Texas. Underscoring the blind stupidity of this racism, the attacks often fell upon those who weren't even of arabic descent: as the violence grew it poured out of the USA, and a Hindu temple was burnt in Ontario, Canada, in what is believed to be a backlash.

This thoughtless anti-Arab racism has already claimed victims. Balbir Singh Sodhi, an Arizona resident of Indian descent, was killed by gunshots Saturday in what is believed to be a serial shooting at three gas stations owned by those believed to be Arabic individuals.

Later that day in Texas, a Muslim storeowner was killed in another suspected hate crime. Reports of acts such as these are increasing in frequency and intensity each day.

If you want to see reports of these hate crimes on the corporate media, don't look for mentions of "hate crimes"; look rather for the euphemism "bias crimes" which seems to have been adopted by most corporate media outlets. One is reminded of the euphemism "collateral damage" to define the murder of civilians.

What can we do to stop this spread of racial hatred? Many people have already started to organize and hold demonstrations and teach-ins to call for the respect of innocents and to decry racism. A hotline to report hate crimes against Arab Americans and South Asian Americans was set up by the US Commission on Civil

Rights: 1-800-552-6843. But what more can be done in a more practical manner? We must fight racism wherever it is. Whether it's in someone's speech requesting that more innocent people be slaughtered or in the streets where children are harassed simply because their religion is portrayed as the oppressor. Exact-ing blind revenge will not assuage anyone's pain or loss, it will only assure the continuation of the cycle of violence that has been going in circles for decades.

Remember the saying: They came for the Muslims but I said nothing because I am not a Muslim. Then they came for the Arabs but I did not speak out because I am not an Arab. They came for the anti-revenge activists but I said nothing because I am not an anti-revenge activist. Then they came for me, and no one was left to defend me.

## ASKING WHY

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Evergreen State College professor of political economy Larry Mosqueda adds, "The same is true of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who was a CIA asset in Iraq during the 1980s. Hussein could gas his own people, repress the population, and invade his neighbor (Iran) as long as he did it with US approval. The same was true of Manuel Noriega of Panama, who was a contemporary and CIA partner of George H. Bush in the 1980s."

As Americans seek answers to their questions about this terrible atrocity which has been committed against them, some of their inquiry will need to focus on the nature of allies they have chosen (and in some cases created) for their own foreign policy objectives.

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