



Wednesday, July 27, 2022

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
United States Attorney General  
**U.S. Department of Justice**  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Garland:

The US Council of Muslim Organizations (**USCMO**) and the undersigned organizations kindly request a meeting with you on an *urgent basis* to discuss the situation of Mr. Asim Ghafoor, a respected American civil rights lawyer, who we believe has been wrongfully detained in the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Ghafoor was transiting through Dubai to join up with his wife and children in Turkey for a family wedding. When waiting at the gate in Dubai International Airport, Mr. Ghafoor was asked to take a COVID test before taking his flight to Istanbul on July 14, 2022. He was then arrested by UAE officials and taken in a van to Abu Dhabi, where he is currently being held by the Abu Dhabi police in a detention facility. Apparently because he contracted COVID while in detention, he is now in isolation, and has not been able to speak to his family or his UAE defense counsel. It has now been twelve days.

According to the best information we have received, on the basis of information provided by the U.S. Department of Justice in the previous administration in 2020 (Judicial Assistance Request No. 31/2020), unbeknownst to Mr. Ghafoor, the UAE Public Prosecution Office charged Mr. Ghafoor with money laundering and tax evasion. He was then tried and convicted *in absentia* and sentenced to three years in prison.

The judge in charge of Mr. Ghafoor's case has now ordered a retrial to take place on August 1, 2022, despite the fact that Mr. Ghafoor has not been able to prepare his defense, meet with his counsel, or gather the necessary documentation that establishes his innocence. Because his lawyers have not been provided with the full case file, Mr. Ghafoor does not even know what the alleged evidence is against him. In accordance with international human right law, and the values of our own legal system, Mr. Ghafoor is entitled to translations of all of the materials in his file; he does not speak or read Arabic. He is also entitled to an interpreter of his choice at trial. As far as we are aware, no arrangements have been made in this regard.

Mr. Ghafoor's basic human rights are in jeopardy. He has thus far been denied due process and all indications are that this will continue. It is imperative that the Department of Justice take



immediate action to ensure that an American citizen's legal rights are protected and that he receives due process in accordance with the highest standards. This is particularly crucial when a civil rights lawyer is being detained overseas.

Mr. Ghafoor was born in St. Louis, grew up in Texas, and has practiced law for the past twenty years in Virginia. As one of the first Muslim staffers on Capitol Hill, he started the Capitol Hill Jummah—the Friday congregational prayers that Muslims adhere to. After public service, he started a highly successful civil rights law practice. Over the course of his career, he has either advised or served as counsel to many of the undersigned organizations. He is a well-respected civil rights lawyer in our community.

We ask that you engage personally with this matter, which is of the utmost importance to our organizations. Thank you in advance for your attention. We look forward to meeting you soon.

Respectfully,

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Secretary General  
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**Endorsing Organizations:**

1. US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO)
2. American Muslim Bar Association (AMBA)
3. American Muslim Alliance (AMA)
4. American Muslims for Palestine (AMP)
5. Americans for Democratic Values
6. Arizona Muslim Alliance (AMA)
7. Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus
8. ASPAIRE
9. Burlington Masjid (North Carolina)
10. Burmese Rohingya Association of North America (BRANA)
11. Center for Egyptian-American Dialogue (CEAD)
12. CommonDefense.us
13. Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC)
14. Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
15. Dar Alhijrah Islamic Center (Virginia)
16. Downtown Islamic Center – Chicago (DIC)





17. ICNA Council for Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ)
18. Indian American Muslim Council
19. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)
20. International Museum of Muslim Cultures
21. Islamic Association of North America (IANA)
22. Islamic Center of Chicago Western Suburbs (ICW)
23. Islamic Center of Detroit (ICD)
24. Islamic Center of Irving (ICI – Dallas)
25. Islamic Center of Naperville (ICN-IL)
26. Islamic Center of Passaic County (ICPC-NJ)
27. Islamic Center of San Diego (ICSD)
28. Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)
29. Islamic Community Center of Illinois (ICCI)
30. Islamic Leadership Council of New York
31. Islamic Shura Council of Southern California (ISCSC)
32. Islamic Society of Central Jersey
33. Islamophobia Studies Center (Berkeley, California)
34. Justice For All
35. Libyan American Alliance (LAA)
36. Mosque Foundation (MF-Chicago)
37. MPower Change
38. Muslim American Society (MAS)
39. Muslim American Society Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (MAS-PACE)
40. Muslim Delegates and Allies
41. Muslim Forum of the Pacific Northwest (MFPNW)
42. Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)
43. Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
44. Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA)
45. National Association of Muslim Lawyers (NAML)
46. National Muslim Law Students Association
47. New York Muslim United for Civic Engagement (NYMUCE)
48. North America Imams Federation (NAIF)
49. North American Indian Muslim Association (NAIMA)
50. North American Somali Women's Association
51. Northern California Islamic Council (NCIC)
52. Risala Foundation
53. Secure Justice
54. South Florida Muslim Federation
55. The Mosque Cares (Ministry of Imam W. D. Mohammed)
56. Together We Serve (TWS)
57. Young Muslims Inc. (YMInc)