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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Home > Archives > Jan_Feb_2007 > Muslim-American Activism: CAIR Holds 12th Annual Fund-raising Banquet

Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, January/February 2007, page 56

Muslim-American Activism

CAIR Holds 12th Annual Fund-raising Banquet

THE COUNCIL on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) held its 12th annual fund-raising banquet, entitled "American Muslims: Connecting and Sharing," on Nov. 18 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA. The sold-out event, with more than 1,000 people in attendance, featured numerous speakers, including Reps. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Mike Honda (D-CA), CAIR National Board chairman Parvez Ahmed, and executive director Nihad Awad. All praised CAIR for its dozen years of working to endorse, lobby and educate the American public and the country's leaders on the positive aspects of Islam and Muslims in America.



Dr. Parvez Ahmed listens to Amy Goodman discuss government control of the media (Staff photo J. Najjab).

Highlights of the evening included the appearance of Amy Goodman, host of Pacifica Radio's "Democracy Now," and a video presentation by Keith Ellison, the first Muslim American elected to Congress.

Goodman focused her talk on her new book, *Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders, and the People Who Fight Back*, which she has co-authored with her brother, David Goodman. The book gives evidence that "the Bush administration is obsessed with controlling the flow of information" that reaches the American public, as well as the world, she said. "American media should be the Fourth Estate and not for the state," she stated, emphasizing that the media must hold those in power accountable.

The actions of the Bush administration after 9/11 and the subsequent war on terrorism have made America an outlaw nation, Goodman continued, adding that this administration has made this country less safe. However, she said, the situation is changing as a result of the 2006 elections, in which the landslide Democratic Party victory represented a complete rejection of the administration's policy. Quoting Frederick Douglass' statement that "power concedes nothing without a demand," she said Americans must demand change and make sure the U.S. media covers what is actually happening here and in the rest of the world.

Goodman said she was shocked that the press was not allowed to film the bodies of Iraqis. "Can you imagine seeing those sights from Iraq?" she asked. "If we saw these images for just one week things would be very different. America is a compassionate country."

Turning to domestic issues, she questioned whether America needs to resort to racial profiling. Arguing against it, she warned that with our attention focused on certain minorities, "we're going to miss the next Timothy McVeigh."

She concluded her remarks by vowing "we will not be silenced"—bringing the crowd to its feet. And banquet guests applauded with their money as well, as CAIR raised more than \$620,000 that night to fund its civil rights and advocacy work for the American-Muslim community.

—*Jamal Najjab*

[Home](#) > [Archives](#) > [Jan_Feb_2007](#) > Muslim-American Activism: CAIR Holds 12th Annual Fund-raising Banquet