

FBI Interrogates Islamic Student over Notebook Doodle

Written by Robert ID2203

Thursday, 15 December 2005 05:30 -

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR) and the Sacramento Valley office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-SV) today questioned why Elk Grove School District officials allegedly allowed FBI agents to interrogate a 16-year-old student without first notifying his parents.

The FBI interview concerned a doodle of the word "PLO" (referring to the Palestine Liberation Organization) that the student had scribbled on a binder two years earlier.

Administrators at Calvine High School apparently violated a school board policy that requires a student's parents be informed whenever a law enforcement officer requests an interview on school premises. The boy's family suspects that the teacher who had initially confronted the student about the drawing reported him to the FBI, chilling his right to freedom of speech at school.

On Sept. 27, the student was pulled out of class and taken to a room in which two men identifying themselves as FBI agents were waiting to speak with him. The agents asked the student to recount an incident that had occurred two years earlier in a math class. He told the agents that his teacher had reprimanded him for having scrawled the letters "PLO" on his binder. The teacher said that anyone who supported the PLO was a terrorist.

The FBI allegedly asked how the student knew about the PLO, whether he was familiar with the investigation of several Muslims in Lodi, whether he had ever traveled to Palestine, and whether he had pictures of terrorists on his cell phone. (In fact, the student had only a picture of a mosque as his phone's background display.) The entire experience left the student badly shaken, and he has since been hesitant about expressing his political views in any context.

"It's outrageous that the FBI dragged this student out of class to interrogate him about a two-year-old doodle on a notebook," said Shirin Sinnar, an attorney at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. "The FBI should not be interviewing kids about their political views, and schools should not be short-circuiting the involvement of parents in such a frightening situation."

"The practice of interrogating minors, without their parents present, is totally unacceptable and

FBI Interrogates Islamic Student over Notebook Doodle

Written by Robert ID2203

Thursday, 15 December 2005 05:30 -

stresses the importance of better training for agents," said CAIR-SV Executive Director Basim Elkarra. "Unfortunately, this disturbing incident will only serve to undermine efforts to build better relations between law enforcement agencies and the Muslim community."

Elkarra asked that those responsible for the incident be disciplined.

To obtain a copy of the letter that LCCR and CAIR sent to the Elk Grove School Board, contact Alexandra Gross, LCCR Communications Coordinator, at 415-543-9444. Contact Basim Elkarra at 916-441-6269, or e-mail: sacval@cair.com

CAIR, America's largest Muslim civil liberties group, has 31 offices and chapters nationwide and in Canada. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

For more information on CIAR, please visit <http://cair.com/>