



Report: Muslims face fewer hate crimes

By Deirdre Cox Baker | Friday, October 10, 2008

While a prominent national Islamic civil rights group reports a jump in American Muslim complaints of workplace-based bias, the same cannot be said in the Quad-Cities.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR, reports 2,652 total civil rights complaints in 2007, including reports of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination and harassment.

But none of these reports originated from the Quad-City region, according to Khadija Athman, a researcher with CAIR in Washington, D.C.

"We are very fortunate in the community to enjoy very positive interfaith relations," said Lisa Killinger, a practicing Muslim from Davenport.

Workplace-based complaints are up nationally by 18 percent from 2006 to 2007. However, no such complaints were recorded by two of the Quad-Cities biggest employers, Deere & Company, Moline, and [Genesis Medical Center](#), Davenport, representatives of both companies said. Both places employ Muslims who live in the community.

The greater number of workplace-based issues, CAIR representatives explained, is due in part because the report now includes mailed, faxed and

e-mailed hate messages.

Fewer hate crimes

The CAIR organization reports a decrease of 19 percent in anti-Muslim hate crime complaints. Incidents involving police are down 42 percent, and those involving schools are down 31 percent.

Cyrus Ali Zargar, an assistant professor of religion at Augustana College, Rock Island, hopes the decreases are due to improved efforts to educate the public about the main messages of Islam: Peace and brotherhood.

"Many American Muslims have also made a more conscious effort to be in the public sphere, making it apparent to others that their contributions to American society are only positive," he wrote in an e-mail message.

Nine states, including Illinois, accounted for 80 percent of all complaints, the report says.

"This year's report is a somewhat positive indication that the growing anti-Muslim rhetoric in our society is being rejected by ordinary Americans of all faiths," said Corey Saylor, the report's author and CAIR's legislative director.

Wonderful experience

Zargar is new to this area but has enjoyed the experience so far.

"I have been very impressed by the kindness I have seen, both at Augustana College and in the Quad Cities," he said.

A number of problems for Muslims occur at airports during the security screening process. While Zargar has not noticed this at the Quad-City International Airport in Moline, he points out that it only takes one hateful person to undertake a hateful act to make headlines.

"If each of us makes it a personal responsibility to live in a tolerant and loving manner, then we can foster a culture that promotes diversity and human solidarity," he said.

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Wisconsin poultry plant issues

While there are no complaints of bias against American Muslims in the Quad-City region, an employment harassment complaint was lodged in Arcadia, Wis., located southeast of Eau Claire, Wis.

On April 2, 2007, two workers were fired and three others quit in protest at Arcadia's Gold'n Plump Poultry plant.

The workers' dispute centered on a "floating break," during which they prayed one of five daily Islamic prayers. The company had accommodated the prayers with a floating break for several months, but then issued a new policy that forced the workers to choose between their religious practices and jobs.

While the prayers took place, the Muslim workers had employees of other faiths fill in for them, and when those workers took their breaks, the Muslims kept working to keep the line moving.

— *Source: Council on American-Islamic Relations*

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