

HOME PAGE	MY TIMES	TODAY'S PAPER	VIDEO	MOST POPULAR	TIMES TOPICS	TimesSelect Free 14-Day Trial		Log In	Register Now				
 Get Home Delivery					U.S.		<input type="text"/> <input type="radio"/> U.S. <input type="radio"/> All NYT						
WORLD	U.S.	N.Y. / REGION	BUSINESS	TECHNOLOGY	SCIENCE	HEALTH	SPORTS	OPINION	ARTS	STYLE	TRAVEL	JOBS	REAL ESTATE
AUTOS													
POLITICS WASHINGTON EDUCATION													
<a href="http://servedby.advertising.com/site=730268/size=728090/bnum=http://as.casalemedia.com/optn=1">http://servedby.advertising.com/site=730268/size=728090/bnum=http://as.casalemedia.com/optn=1</a>													

## Abandon Stereotypes, Muslims in America Say

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR  
Published: September 4, 2007

ROSEMONT, Ill., Sept 3 — It is time for the United States to stop treating every American Muslim as somehow suspect, leaders of the faith said at their largest annual convention, which ended here on Monday.



Joe Tabacca for The New York Times  
A vendor who goes by the name Hijabman at the convention, making light of some perceptions of Muslims.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Joe Tabacca for The New York Times  
Ann Marie Dentzer, center, and Stephanie Stoltzfus, both with the Department of Homeland Security, talking to a Muslim woman at the Islamic Society of North America convention.

Six years after the Sept. 11 attacks, Americans should distinguish between mainstream Muslims and the radical fringe, the leaders said.

“Muslim Americans feel an increasing level of tension and scrutiny in contemporary society,” said Ingrid Mattson, president of the Islamic Society of North America, the largest Muslim organization in the United States and the convention organizer.

The image problems were among the topics most discussed by many of the 30,000 attendees. A fresh example cited was an open letter from two Republican House members, Peter Hoekstra of Michigan and Sue Myrick of North Carolina, that attacked the Justice Department for sending envoys to the convention because, the lawmakers said, the Islamic Society of North America was a group of “radical jihadists.”

The lone Muslim in Congress, Representative Keith Ellison, Democrat of Minnesota, the keynote speaker here, dismissed the letter as ill informed and typical of bigoted attacks that other minorities have suffered.

Leaders of American Muslim organizations attribute the growing intolerance to three main factors: global terrorist attacks in the name of Islam, disappointing reports from the Iraq war and the agenda of some supporters of Israel

who try taint Islam to undermine the [Palestinians](#).

American Muslims say they expect the attacks to worsen in the presidential election and candidates to criticize Islam in an effort to prove that they are tough on terrorism.

Zaid Shakir, an African-American imam with rock star status among young Muslims, described how on a recent road trip from Michigan to Washington he heard comments on talk radio from people who were “making stuff up about Islam.”

Among the most egregious, he said, was from a person in Kentucky who denounced the

[More Articles in National »](#)

### Afternoon Update



Sign up for a recap of the day's top stories and business headlines, sent weekday afternoons.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

<http://servedby.advertising.com/site=730>  
<http://as.casalemedia.com/optn=1>

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL  
OR SAVE THIS

PRINT

REPRINTS

SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS  
SPONSORED BY

**JUNO**

### MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. [Bipolar Illness Soars as a Diagnosis for the Young](#)
2. [New Schizophrenia Drug Shows Promise in Trials](#)
3. [Op-Ed Contributor: America's Toe-Tapping Menace](#)
4. [Basics: A Supple Casing, Prone to Damage](#)
5. [In the Genome Race, the Sequel Is Personal](#)
6. [In New Prayer Book, Signs of Broad Change](#)
7. [Before Models Can Turn Around, Knockoffs Fly](#)
8. [As Support Lags, Colleges Tack on Student Fees](#)
9. [The Music Man](#)
10. [A Football Goliath Faced a Proud, Talented David](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

traditional short wood stick some Muslims use to clean their teeth, saying, "They are really sharpening up their teeth because they are planning to eat you, yes they are."

Representatives of at least eight federal departments and agencies attended the convention, their booths sandwiched among hundreds of others from bookstores, travel agencies, perfumeries, clothing designers and real estate developers.

Mark S. Ward, who runs programs in Asia and the Middle East for the [Agency for International Development](#), said Washington had to compete for influence abroad with militant groups that are expert at delivering humanitarian services.

Mr. Ward said he hoped more American Muslim organizations would apply to help distribute overseas aid.

A few people approached the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) booth to voice dismay at its presence, said a recruiter, David Valle, but most expressed pleasant surprise.

"A lot of folks think we want to hire them to spy on their community, spy on their families," he said. "We want to dispel any myths they might have about the F.B.I."

The Justice Department responded to Mr. Hoekstra and Ms. Myrick's letter by noting that broad community contact in areas like voting rights was an important part of its mission.

That theme was echoed by Daniel W. Sutherland, chief officer for civil rights and liberties at the [Homeland Security Department](#). Mr. Sutherland told a luncheon audience that the government needed to dispel prejudice and misconceptions to steer the public discussion about fighting terrorism to "a higher level."

Sometimes frustration with the government boiled over. At a seminar on charitable giving, Ihsan Haque of Akron, Ohio, asked a Treasury Department representative, Michael Rosen, how to avoid being prosecuted for donating to Muslim charities. When Mr. Rosen said the government did not have the resources to check the million or so charities in the United States, Mr. Haque shouted, "And I do?"

Muslim leaders described the government relationship toward Muslim organizations as contradictory. The government seeks to foster greater civic engagement, because a lack of engagement is widely considered a big cause of Muslim extremism in Europe. A Department of Homeland Security official moderated a panel on aiding engagement.

Muslim groups are often treated as suspect, speakers said. In a trial that started in July in Dallas, federal prosecutors named the Islamic Society of North America as part of an effort to raise money for groups the government considers terrorists, but did not charge it with wrongdoing.

The Justice Department has to decide on its law enforcement side what it considers a target, said Khurram Wahid, a prominent Muslim defense lawyer.

"Are they going to continue to say that the higher degree of religiosity you have the higher likelihood that you are a threat, because that's the message they've sent," Mr. Wahid said.

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, denounced by name Christian fundamentalists like [Pat Robertson](#) and Franklin Graham, as well as Dennis Prager, a well-known radio host who is Jewish.

"The time has come to stand up to the opportunists, the media figures, the religious leaders and politicians who demonize Muslims and bash Islam, exploiting the fears of their fellow citizens for their own purposes," Rabbi Yoffie told the opening session.

The Koran tells Muslims to abstain from drinking alcohol and to lower their gaze in modesty when meeting a member of the opposite sex, but some college-age Muslim men and women at the convention stayed up late into the night drinking, talking and getting to know one another.

---

ADVERTISEMENTS



“If you keep your gaze lowered all the time, you might just walk into a wall,” said Hazem Talha, a high school senior from Atlanta who said he was here for the religious lectures.

[More Articles in National »](#)

**Need to know more? 50% off home delivery of The Times.**

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

**[Coffee Exposed](#)**

A secret that coffee co's don't want you to know.  
[www.coffeefool.com](http://www.coffeefool.com)

**[Liaison Traveler](#)**

Emergency evacuation insurance Buy direct from Liaison Traveler  
[www.liaisontraveler.com](http://www.liaisontraveler.com)

**[Travel is about adventure](#)**

It shouldn't be about risk. Get a quote for travel insurance.  
[www.elvia.us](http://www.elvia.us)

**Tips**

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

**Related Searches**

- [Muslim-Americans](#)
- [Islamic Society of North America](#)
- [Islam](#)
- [Religion and Churches](#)

**INSIDE NYTIMES.COM**



**TimesSelect**

SCIENCE »

BUSINESS »

ARTS »

**TimesSelect**

BOOKS »



**Aratun: Hunger Is Lacking at the Top**



**Film Takes Us Back 38 Years, to That First Walk**

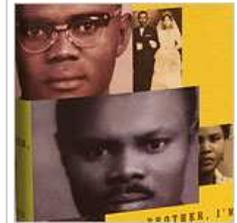


**Indian Firms Present an American Face**



**A Neighborhood's Big, Blue Newcomer**

**Readers Respond to Stanley Fish on Liberalism and Secularism**



**A Haitian Tragedy: Brothers Yearn in Vain**

- [Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#) | [Back to Top](#)
- [Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)