

Victims of Racial Profiling

Written by Robert ID479

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Calling it a ""corrosive acid"" undermining national security, Amnesty International USA released a new report showing that the government's war on terror has resulted in racial profiling of American Indians and others, including Muslim boy scouts, in the United States.

Benjamin Todd Jealous, director of Amnesty International's Domestic Human Rights Program, said American Indians are being profiled attending ceremonies.

""During our research, we collected testimony from Native Americans who were profiled going to and from religious ceremonies, Hispanics who were profiled while in the sanctity of their homes, African Americans who were profiled walking down the street, and a boy scout, who happens to be Muslim, constantly being subjected to airport searches.

""Racial profiling is so pervasive and widely accepted that it has become a corrosive acid on this nation's spirit of unity,"" Jealous said.

Racial profiling affects an estimated 32 million victims in the United States - approximately the population of Canada - and occurs while people are walking, driving, shopping, flying, sitting at home or worshipping.

""Prior to 9/11, racial profiling was frequently referred to as "driving while black." Now, the practice can be more accurately characterized as driving, flying, walking, worshipping, shopping or staying at home while black, brown, red, yellow, Muslim or of Middle-Eastern appearance,"" Amnesty said.

Amnesty released the report on Sept. 13 showing racial profiling practices by law enforcement have expanded during the government's war on terror and have affected an estimated one of nine Americans.

The 50-page report, ""Threat and Humiliation: Racial Profiling, Domestic Security, and Human Rights in the United States"" , said ""law enforcement's use of race, religion, country of origin, or ethnic and religious appearance as a proxy for criminal suspicion undermines national security.""

An estimated 87 million Americans are at risk of being subjected to racial profiling.

Further, racial profiling means real criminals are not being apprehended by law enforcement.

The report supports testimony before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in Farmington, N.M., and Nogales, Ariz., this year. American Indians said they are constantly targeted by law enforcement because of the color of their skin, especially in border towns near Indian lands.

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Curt Goering, senior deputy executive director of Amnesty International USA said, ""Racial profiling blinds law enforcement to real criminal threats and creates a hole in the national security net large enough to drive a truck through.

""Unless the federal and state governments end this pernicious practice, the frightening reality is that with terrorist acts on the rise, that truck may be loaded with explosives and the driver anyone but a Muslim or person of Middle Eastern descent. We are all at risk.""

Amnesty pointed out that the recent cases of alleged ""American Taliban"" John Walker Lindh and British ""shoe bomber"" Richard Reid reveal that Al Qaeda has an ability to recruit a diverse range of sympathizers.

Lindh, a white U.S. citizen, and Reid, a British citizen, would not have necessarily been identified by programs like the National Security Entry Exit Registration System (NSEERS) and US-VISIT that target Arab, Muslim and South Asian men and boys, Amnesty said.

Additionally, Timothy McVeigh eluded arrest while law enforcement searched for Arab suspects. In Washington, D.C., snipers John Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo continued on a killing spree while officials looked for ""a white man in a white van.

The report is based on a series of hearings across the nation and a year-long analysis of profiling practices by law enforcement and of statistical data.

Amnesty pointed out that another poll, conducted in August by Bendixon & Associates, supported Amnesty's findings. It was commissioned by New California Media and cosponsored by Amnesty.

Despite assurances from the Bush administration to the contrary, the data also showed that 45 and 46 percent of Arab and Muslim Americans respectively said they believe the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Justice are using racial profiling to screen individuals for security purposes.

Judge Timothy K. Lewis is counsel at Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis and the chair of Amnesty's Congressional-style hearings in San Francisco; Oakland, Calif.; New York City; Chicago; Tulsa, Okla. and Dallas. He hears constantly from people who say they are being judged based on color.

""As a former federal judge and prosecutor, I took an oath to uphold the Constitution and to apply its principles equally and fairly. But how do you convince a person who for decades has suffered the humiliating and dehumanizing effects of profiling that those venerable ideals also apply to him?

""Over and over again, we heard testimony from people who said, "I am not judged on my contributions and my good intentions. I am constantly judged based on the color of my skin, the place I was born, and the way I worship God." That is wrong.""

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Amnesty said in 2001, President Bush pledged to end racial profiling. On July 23 he said that he is ""the first President of the United States to ban racial profiling in federal law enforcement.""

Amnesty, however, pointed out that the ban is deficient in a number of areas. It is not a law, but a policy that has no enforcement mechanisms. The ban does not require data collection, does not apply to state and local police, and does not prohibit profiling based on religion. Further, the Bush administration's ban can be suspended at anytime for ""national security"" purposes.

Amnesty's report further documents the shortcomings of the current ban in a state-by-state analysis showing that 27 states - more than half - do not ban racial profiling at all.

Further, 46 states have failed to ban religious profiling; 35 states continue to allow pedestrian ""stop and frisk"" searches, and only six of the 15 that ban these searches use a definition of racial profiling that can actually be enforced.

Jealous said, ""There is no scenario under which the Bush administration can say that this ban fulfills the President's 2001 promise to end racial profiling in the U.S.

[Source](#)