



## **Muslim, Arab, Sikh & South Asian American Community Leaders Welcome DHS Secretary Napolitano's Commitments in Meeting on Countering Violent Extremists**

(WASHINGTON, DC) **January 29, 2010**—In a meeting with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano yesterday to discuss joint efforts against domestic violent extremists, Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian American community leaders welcomed commitments by the Secretary to promote meaningful, positive and authentic dialogue. Leaders from national and local organizations representing these communities expressed concern about DHS policies, such as racial, ethnic, and religious profiling at airports and the border, that have eroded the government's trust and credibility with the communities.

### **The commitments Secretary Napolitano made to these community leaders include:**

- Community participation in an anti-violent extremism task force of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, which reports to the Secretary;
- Regular, quarterly meetings with the Secretary;
- Education and training for DHS leadership to promote understanding of the Muslim, Arab, Sikh & South Asian American communities and their concerns; and
- An honest and full discussion of legitimate grievances from members of these communities about DHS policies that are ineffective and have a deleterious, humiliating impact on Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian American communities.

Community leaders believe that fulfilling these commitments would be a step forward in establishing meaningful, open and authentic dialogue between DHS and the Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian American communities. In addition, these leaders have called for changes to DHS policies that are ineffective and discriminate based on race, ethnicity or religion, including:

- Rescinding a new Transportation Security Administration (TSA) directive targeting travelers from or through 13 predominantly Muslim nations, plus Cuba.
- Revising a TSA directive on religious headwear, such as turbans and headscarves.
- Setting limits on interrogations and searches by Customs and Border Protection agents that probe an American's faith, politics, finances or associations, as well as cell phones, laptops and electronic devices, without any evidence of wrongdoing.

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