

Tariq Mehanna: Obama's Latest Muslim Target

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Post-9/11, Muslims have been victimized, vilified, and persecuted for their faith, ethnicity, prominence, activism, and charity. They've been targeted, hunted down, rounded up, held in detention, kept in isolation, denied bail, restricted in their right to counsel, tried on secret evidence, convicted on bogus charges, given long sentences, then incarcerated for extra harsh treatment as political prisoners in segregated Communication Management Units (CMUs) in violation of US Prison Bureau regulations and the Supreme Court's February 2005 *Johnson v. California* decision.

An October 21 [FBI press release](#) announced Tariq (misspelled Tarek) Mehanna as its most recent target saying:

"A Sudbury, Mass. man was charged today in federal court with conspiracy to provide support to terrorists."

The FBI alleged that from "about 2001 and continuing until (about) May 2008, Mehanna conspired with Ahmad Abousamra and others to provide material support and resources for use in carrying out a conspiracy to kill, kidnap, main or injure persons or damage property in a foreign country and extraterritorial homicide of a US national."

With no substantiating evidence, "Mehanna and coconspirators (were accused of having) discussed their desire to participate in violent jihad against American interests and that they would talk about fighting jihad and their desire to die on the battlefield. (They also) attempted to radicalize others and inspire each other by, among other things, watching and distributing jihadi videos. (In addition), Mehanna and two of his associates traveled to the Middle East in February 2004, seeking military-type training at a terrorist training camp (to) prepare them for armed jihad....including (against) US and allied forces in Iraq....(One) of Mehanna's coconspirators made two similar trips to Pakistan in 2002."

"....Mehanna and the coconspirators had multiple conversations about obtaining automatic weapons (from a Mr. Maldonado, now serving a 10-year sentence for training with Al Queda in Somalia) and randomly shooting people in a shopping mall, and that the conversations went so far as to discuss the logistics of a mall attack, including coordination, weapons needed and the possibility of attacking emergency responders."

Yet no attack occurred. None ever was likely planned, but according to the FBI, it was because no automatic weapons could be obtained even though legal semi-automatic ones are freely sold and illegal automatic ones easily gotten.

The web site eastcoastfirearms.com lists for sale numerous ones, including AK-47 (Kalashnikov) assault rifles, AR-15/M16 type rifles, Uzi assault weapons, LWRC M6A2s called the most modern carbine rifle in the world, and various others with considerable firepower.

“Mehanna was previously indicted in January 2009 for making false statements to members of the Joint Terrorism Task Force of the FBI in connection with a terrorism investigation. If convicted on the material support charge, (he) faces up to 15 years in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine.”

Federal Judge Leo Sorokin ordered Mehanna held without bail pending his next court hearing on October 30. After his ruling, his attorney, JW Carney, Jr. said:

“This is the type of case that challenges our commitment and faith in the United States Constitution. Our country is respected around the world because we presume people are innocent, and we require the government to prove its allegations in open court at trial.”

Mr. Carney will soon discover how prosecutors use secret evidence, paid informants, and will go to any lengths to intimidate juries to convict, regardless of a defendant’s guilt or innocence, especially targeted Muslims charged with intent to commit or provide material support for terrorism.

According to the Bureau, Mehanna and his “coconspirators” used code words like “peanut and jelly” to mean fighting in Somalia and “culinary school” for terrorist camps, but perhaps they said precisely what they meant, and what proof suggests otherwise.

The FBI also claimed when they weren’t able to join terror groups in Iraq, Yemen and Pakistan, the 2002 Washington-area sniper shootings inspired them to attack shopping malls instead as well as two (unnamed) former executive branch members.

Mehanna is a graduate of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy where his father, Ahmed, is a professor. They reside in Sudbury, MA, an affluent Boston suburb.

Neighbors expressed shock by the news. Chafic Maalouf called Mehanna “very sweet (and) soft-spoken. He seemed so harmless. He has a beard and a dark complexion, so to the average American he fits the terrorist profile. But if you look in his eyes, he seemed to be a very genuine, kind, loving person,” not a jihadist.

Paul McManus called him “everyday normal. When he was out walking, he was friendly (and) neighborly.” Another supporter said the FBI is “painting the wrong picture of the Muslim community” by targeting one of its up and coming members. Still others cited his work with youths as a teacher at the Islamic Center of Boston in Wayland, MA.

Abdul Cader Asmal, the Center’s former president, said he gave lectures at Friday services in Worcester, MA and translated poetic Arabic scriptures into English. Over time, he became dedicated to his beliefs as many people of all faiths do who plan no terrorist acts.

Ahmad AlFarsi defended Mehanna in a 2008 article following his previous arrest that’s pertinent to his current charges. At first, he hesitated “so as not to expose (his) privacy,”

then felt he had to support his friend “since the media has already made his case and name public” and practically convicted him in the court of public opinion.

AlFarsi called him “one of the most gracious, kind, caring, thoughtful, and respectable people I have ever known....I have seen him go above above and beyond what most others would do to help others in need. Those who know him personally know exactly what I am talking about. I am sure any of his peers, Muslim or non-Muslim, would testify to his excellent character.”

He’s also been “very involved in the Muslim community. I remember many times that he would be giving halaqaat (Islamic lectures) in the local masjid (Muslim place of worship) on an Islamic text he was studying. And he helped many many other Muslims in the community come to the straight path....I’d also like to emphasize that he does not and never has supported nor been involved with terrorism, in any way whatsoever.”

Consider “the implications of this incident: we have another (Muslim man, an American citizen) with no previous criminal record of any kind, being held without bail (for now) in his own country....Such a tactic serves only to smear Muslims, and brings pain and suffering to him, his family, and his future,” and leaves all Muslims “fearful, marginalized, and unable to trust the authorities.”

The FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) October 20 Affidavit

JTTF Special Agent Heidi L. Williams assisted in the investigation of Mehanna, Ahmad Abousamra, and others, and presented alleged evidence to establish probable cause, but said “classified national security information” would remain secret, unavailable to the defense, and therefore beyond its capability to disprove.

Williams claimed Mehanna’s “Computer and its contents constitute evidence of the commission of a criminal offense, contraband, fruits of crime and things otherwise criminally possessed as well as property designed and intended for use, and that has been used, as a means of committing....criminal offense(s under US law).”

She also said “information set forth herein comes from two cooperating witnesses (‘CW1’ and ‘CW2’ - aka commonly used FBI informants to entrap). Both CWs provided information that was based on personal knowledge, including actions and statements by MEHANNA and ABOUSAMRA.” Their trial testimony will show “corroborative evidence in the form of consensually recorded conversations” with defendants and others. “Further evidence is provided by Daniel Maldonado, who was a friend of MEHANNA and ABOUSAMRA, and is currently serving a 10 year prison sentence for Receiving Military-type Training from a Foreign Terrorist Organization (to wit: Al Qa’ ida....).”

“Additional information was obtained from a review of records of governmental agencies, such as Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) and Department of State, Passport Office, as well as records of private entities, such as banks, airlines, telephone companies and internet service providers, and interviews of friends, relatives and acquaintances (of defendants).”

Williams cited more evidence from:

- Mehanna’s bedroom;
- a computer hard drive;
- “false information” he provided the JTTF with regard to his 2004 Yemen trip and knowledge of “Maldonado’s circumstances at the time of the interview;”
- recorded conversations in which “Mehanna admitted to other individuals that he lied to the FBI” regarding Maldonado;
- the November 2008 charge of lying about Maldonado during JTTF interrogations;
- the December 2006 charge that Abousamra lied during JTTF interrogations in claiming his 2004 Yemen trip was to study Arabic and Islam;
- Williams’ assertion that both defendants went to Yemen in 2004 “to learn how to conduct, and to subsequently engage in, jihad;” to Pakistan twice in 2002 for the same purpose;
- that defendants “continued in their efforts to train for jihad (and) received information and assistance from an individual (referred to) as Individual A, about who to see and where to go to find terrorist training camps in Yemen;”
- in February 2004, Abousamra also entered Iraq, stayed for about “15 days” and two months later went to Syria and Jordan before returning to the US in August 2004; he subsequently visited Syria “multiple times;” he “made fictitious and fraudulent statements to the FBI” that he went to Jordan to “look for colleges,” to Iraq “to look for a job” and to Syria “to visit his wife.”

The lengthy 55-page affidavit, plus attachments, also claimed:

- CW 2 was a coconspirator;
- Abousamra had “extremist views by citing Islamic teachings;”
- “the three men engaged in serious conversations about jihad;”
- they discussed “going to terrorist training camps in Pakistan (and) conducted logistical research on the internet pertaining to terrorist training camp locations and how to travel there, but no concrete plans materialized;” and
- extensive further allegations that defendants sought but never received terrorist training; that they wished to engage in jihad, but never did; and they subsequently “discussed logistics of a mall attack, including the types of weapons needed, the number of people who would be involved, and how to coordinate the attack from different entrances (but) Because of the logistical problems of executing the operation (and their inability to obtain the type weapons they wanted), the plan was abandoned.”

From all this, an observer might conclude there was no plan, no weapons, and no crime in what appears to be clear entrapment using a paid informant, a coconspirator CW 2, offering testimony in return for leniency, and Maldonado (imprisoned for 10 years) promised it as well for his cooperation. Nonetheless, under US conspiracy law, if prosecutors can convince juries that defendants words implied actions they can get convictions, especially when they

cite terrorism and the urgency to prevent it at all costs, even if innocent victims are imprisoned for offenses they never committed or planned.

Mehanna Friends, Supporters, and Family Express Doubts about the Charges

With no previous criminal record, his friends and family call him a maturing Muslim community leader, a passionate writer, and a young man wanting a career in Saudi Arabia as a pharmacist, not a jihadist, even though he supports the right of oppressed peoples to resist as international law allows. In the Kingdom, he was promised good pay, generous benefits, and free trips home. He was boarding a plane in Boston en route when he was arrested.

In a summer 2009 interview with the Boston Globe and subsequent statements through his lawyer, he denied FBI allegations and accused federal investigators of targeting him with bogus charges because they wanted him as a government informant, pressured him to accede, but he refused and wouldn't cooperate. That made him suspect, an enemy, and got him targeted.

The Dominant Media's Jihad against Muslims

Whenever Muslims are charged, the dominant media provides support without ever questioning the legitimacy of accusations. As a result, innocent victims are vilified. They're presumed guilty unless proved innocent. Fear is instilled in the public, while law enforcement officials are portrayed as public defenders, working to keep us safe from bad guys. Below are some samples of media bias:

— The New York Times headlined, "Mass. Man Arrested in Terrorism Case....The authorities said he had conspired to attack civilians at a shopping mall, American soldiers abroad and two members of the executive branch of the federal government."

— AP called Mehanna "an Incompetent Wannabe" and practically accused him of "plotting to shoot up a mall, kill US troops fighting overseas, and assassinate US officials" here at home;

— Fox News highlighted the alleged plot, called Mehanna "Defiant in Court," and said he was only foiled by being "unable to get into terror camps for training and failed to get access to automatic weapons;"

— the Wall Street Journal headlined the "Plots to Shoot Up Mall, Kill Federal Officials" by a man "out on bail (from an earlier unsubstantiated charge and) awaiting trial;"

— the Washington Post reported about the: "Massachusetts man arrested on terror charges" (for) conspiring to support terrorists by seeking training from Islamic extremist fighters overseas...."

— Time magazine offered a "two-minute bio" about an "Alleged US Terrorist....plann(ing) to carry out a 'violent jihad' by killing US politicians, (and) attack(ing) US shopping malls;"

— the Christian Science Monitor headlined how the "FBI traced Tarek Mehanna in his quest to become a jihadi" and practically accused him of "try(ing) to become a terrorist for eight years following the 9/11 attacks....;" and

— Jihad Watch, an Islamophobic web site, called Mehanna “a Misunderstander of Islam,” then accused him of “plotting ‘violent jihad.’ ”

Nowhere do major media or hate group reports suggest possible bogus charges, ulterior motives behind them, innocent people being targeted, secret evidence withheld to compromise a proper defense, intimidation of juries, or that everyone is presumed innocent unless proved guilty in fair and open proceedings with defendants having competent counsel.

According to muslimmatters.org after Mehanna’s 2008 arrest, the FBI was “Desperate for Results (so they) Arrest(ed a) US Citizen on Two-Year-Old (unsubstantiated) Charges” and got their usual scare headlines for support.

These comments followed his October 21 arrest:

“All of us here at MM believe, based on the facts that we know, that Tareq is innocent of the crimes that he has been accused of....MM is often on the front lines against disinformation about Islam, and actively seeks to counter the radicalization of Muslims.”

MM’s goal “is to educate readers about the fallacies and dangers of all types of extremism by promoting Orthodox Islam....we believe that Islamophobes are indirectly aiding and abetting terrorists’ recruiting efforts by fitting into their agenda and supporting their stereotypes.”

Many Muslims were shocked about the news on Mehanna. “It was generally thought (his 2008 charges were bogus) and that (he) had been falsely accused. After all, (post-9/11), the civil liberties of the Muslim American community had been slowly withered away by the Patriot Act, warrantless wiretapping, the denial of the basic American right of habeas corpus, and unsavory tactics that targeted (Muslims) in general....we at MM” know his “reputation as a family man and a peaceful citizen” and presume he’s innocent “unless proven otherwise.... (We) remain highly skeptical that he was actually a ‘terrorist in disguise.’ ”

A Final Comment

More than any other ethnic-religious group, Western discourse has long portrayed Muslim/Arabs stereotypically as culturally inferior, dirty, lecherous, untrustworthy, religiously fanatical, and violent.

According to Jack Shaheen’s book, “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,” defaming them has been fair game throughout decades of cinematic history (from silent films to today’s blockbusters) as a way to foster prejudicial attitudes and reinforce notions of Western values, high-mindedness, and moral superiority.

Worse still are slanderous media characterizations of dangerous gun-toting terrorists who must rounded up and put away, never mind the rule of law, right or wrong, or whether those accused are guilty or innocent.

It’s no surprise why it’s dangerous to be Muslim in America at a time when we’re all as vulnerable as Tariq Mehanna.

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