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**CHRGJ Launches Documentary *Americans on Hold*, Exposing Discrimination**

*Calls on U.S. Government to Stop Racial Profiling in the Name of National Security*

**(NEW YORK, April 27, 2010)**—The U.S. government’s use of discriminatory profiling in the name of national security violates human rights and has a profound and wide-reaching impact on South Asian, Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim community members, says a new documentary being released tomorrow by the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ) at NYU School of Law. The release of the film, [\*Americans on Hold: Profiling, Prejudice, and National Security\*](#), comes on the heels of the enactment of SB 1070 in Arizona, which mandates state law enforcement authorities to demand immigration papers from anyone based on the mere suspicion that they may be undocumented. Advocates are concerned that this is yet another policy that legitimizes and institutionalizes racial profiling.

“Targeting on the basis of stereotypes about race, national origin, and religion violates fundamental human rights and American values,” said Professor Smita Narula, CHRGJ Faculty Director and project director of the film. “These policies make entire communities more vulnerable without making any of us more safe.”

Through the personal stories of Zuhair Mahd and Anila Ali, the film exposes how discriminatory profiling lies at the heart of both citizenship delays and border-crossing detentions and delays. Ali, a teacher, mother, and community organizer originally from Pakistan, received her American citizenship in 2002, but continues to experience humiliating and invasive treatment by Customs and Border Protection officials as a consequence of her national origin. Mahd, a blind information technologies specialist from Jordan, waged and won a five-year legal battle against the Department of Homeland Security in his effort to become a U.S. citizen. In the process, he was repeatedly interrogated and pressured by the FBI to become an informant.

As conveyed by experts in the film, members of South Asian, Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim communities are regularly profiled, questioned, harassed, delayed, and detained, all in the name of national security. At the root of this abusive treatment is a patchwork of discriminatory and ineffective immigration and counter-terrorism policies that turn individuals into suspects often based on little more than their name or where they were born.

The government targets individuals using mismanaged, bloated databases and watch lists that include countless individuals who have never been suspected of any wrongdoing. The government’s own audits have found these lists inaccurate and outdated, concluding that there is no meaningful means of redress for people wrongfully included or linked to such databases.

These databases have become notorious over the years for continually generating false matches and diverting precious law enforcement resources. The consequences of generating a false match can be great. It can tear families apart, subject individuals to prolonged detention without charge, or prevent people from freely entering and exiting their own country. The release of the film coincides with Congressional debates on lowering the criteria for inclusion on the Terrorist Watchlist and preparations for a major debate on immigration reform.

“Now more than ever we need a federal law prohibiting profiling on all grounds,” said Narula. “There is no trade-off between rights and security. Protecting rights is what keeps all of us—and our values—safe.”

### **About CHRGJ**

The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law was established in 2002 to bring together the law school’s teaching, research, clinical, internship, and publishing activities around issues of international human rights law. As part of its work on racial profiling and counter-terrorism, CHRGJ has published two widely-cited reports—*[Americans on Hold: Profiling, Citizenship, and the “War on Terror”](#)* and *[Irreversible Consequences: Racial Profiling and Lethal Force in the “War on Terror”](#)*—which, respectively, highlight the problematic use of name checks in U.S. naturalization applications and of so-called behavioral profiling in the context of dangerous “shoot-to-kill” policies. For more on our work on racial profiling and counter-terrorism, please visit: <http://chrgj.org/projects/profiling.html>