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### **Rights Groups: U.S. Government Targeting Muslims via U.S. Immigration System** *CHR&GJ and AALDEF Call for Immigration Reform, Transparency, Rights Protections*

(NEW YORK, May 4, 2011)—The U.S. government’s aggressive use of the immigration system in its counterterrorism efforts discriminates against Muslims and violates international human rights law, said the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHR&GJ) at NYU School of Law and the Asian American Legal and Education Defense Fund (AALDEF) as they released a Briefing Paper on the issue today. The Briefing Paper, [\*Under the Radar: Muslims Deported, Detained, and Denied on Unsubstantiated Terrorism Allegations\*](#), exposes the many ways in which U.S. officials take advantage of the lax standards and lack of transparency that mark the immigration system as particularly ripe for abuse.

“The U.S. government is deporting, detaining, and denying benefits to Muslim immigrants on the basis of innuendo, religious and cultural affiliations, or political beliefs,” said CHR&GJ Faculty Director, Smita Narula. “These practices violate fundamental human rights and American values and have had profoundly devastating impacts on Muslim families and communities in the United States.”

The Briefing Paper includes a number of case studies that suggest extremely problematic patterns of the U.S. government’s targeting of Muslims through the immigration system. The Briefing Paper details how the U.S. government is:

- Making unsubstantiated terrorism-related allegations against Muslim immigrants without bringing official charges in cases involving ordinary immigration violations.
- Subjecting Muslim immigrants to detention in cases involving minor violations that, ordinarily, do not entail detention.
- Imposing flimsy immigration charges—such as false statement charges for failure to disclose tenuous ties to Muslim charitable organizations—in a manner that targets Muslim immigrants for religious and political activities and affiliations.
- Applying overbroad statutory language of the terrorism bar provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to remove, bar, and detain Muslims.
- Relying on vulnerable immigration status to coerce Muslim immigrants to become informants for federal law enforcement officials.

“President Obama recently reiterated that the U.S. is not at war with Islam. However, we have a long way to go before Muslim immigrants are treated with the fairness and dignity that is owed to all immigrant communities in the United States,” said Sameer Ahmed, AALDEF Attorney/Skadden Fellow. “It is time for our government to live up to its rhetoric and make needed reforms to the immigration system in order to prevent these widespread abuses.”

### **About the CHRGI**

The Center for Human Rights and Global Justice ([CHRGI](#)) 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. Through its litigation, advocacy, and research work, CHRGI plays a critical role in identifying, denouncing, and fighting human rights abuses in several key areas of focus, including: Business and Human Rights; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Caste Discrimination; Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism; Extrajudicial Executions; and Transitional Justice. Philip Alston and Ryan Goodman are the Center’s Faculty Chairs; Smita Narula and Margaret Satterthwaite are Faculty Directors; Jayne Huckerby is Research Director; and Veerle Ogenhaffen is Senior Program Director.

The International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC)—a project of the Center—is directed by Professor Smita Narula. Amna Akbar is Senior Research Scholar and Advocacy Fellow. The Briefing Paper was jointly researched and authored by CHRGI and AALDEF, and by IHRC 2010-2011 members Caroline Burrell and Kibum Kim.

### **About AALDEF**

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund ([AALDEF](#)), founded in 1974, is a national organization that protects and promotes the civil rights of Asian Americans. By combining litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, AALDEF works with Asian American communities across the country to secure human rights for all. AALDEF focuses on critical issues affecting Asian Americans, including immigrant rights, civic participation and voting rights, economic justice for workers, language access to services, Census policy, affirmative action, youth rights and educational equity, housing and environmental justice, and the elimination of anti-Asian violence, police misconduct, and human trafficking. AALDEF has a 21-person staff, including 11 lawyers. We are assisted by over 300 volunteers, including pro bono attorneys, community workers, and students. AALDEF receives financial support from foundations, corporations, individual contributions and special fundraising events. AALDEF receives no government funds.