

Anti-Muslim hate crimes fell in 2008

STAFF REPORTER

New York

AN annual report released by a prominent national Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization shows an increase in the total number of bias-related incidents, but a decrease in anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2008.

The report by the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), titled *Seeking Full Inclusion*, offers a summary of incidents and experiences of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination and harassment reported to the group during 2008. It also examines the use of Islamophobic rhetoric in the 2008 presidential election and highlights a number of issues of concern to the American Muslim community, including watch lists, surveillance of mosques and new FBI guidelines that allow religious and ethnic profiling.

The introduction to CAIR's report, the only annual study of its kind, states: "In 2008, Muslims continued to face barriers to their full and equal participation in American society. Certain individuals and institutions persisted in profiting by smearing Islam. American Muslims continued to fear profiling, surveillance and undue scrutiny by law enforcement and other authorities."

CAIR and its affiliate chapters nationwide processed a total of 2,728 incidents in 2008. That figure represents a three percent increase in reported cases from 2007 (2,652 reports) and an 11 percent increase over cases reported in 2006 (2,467 reports). It is the highest number of civil rights cases ever

recorded in CAIR's annual report. (Note: The higher number of cases is due in part to inclusion of a new category of cases related to mailed, faxed and e-mailed threats and hate messages.)

According to CAIR's study:

- The occurrence of reported civil rights complaints increased at mosques and Muslim organizations, rising from 564 cases in 2007 to 721 cases in 2008. This represents a 28 percent increase from 2007 to 2008.

- There were 118 reported cases of discrimination in schools in 2007 and 153 in 2008 — a 31 percent increase.

- Anti-Muslim hate crime complaints fell by 14 percent in 2008, decreasing from 135 total complaints in 2007 to 116 in 2008.

"The decline in reported hate crimes leads to cautious optimism, while the reported increase in incidents at Muslim institutions and at schools reminds us that continued vigilance and stepped-up community outreach efforts are necessary," said CAIR legislative director Corey Saylor, one of the report's authors.

Saylor said the report also offers recommendations for action by the Obama administration, Congress and American Muslim institutions.

The Obama administration has been asked to

- review and revise guidelines issued by then Attorney General Mukasey in late 2008 that allow racial and religious profiling.

- to reduce the size of the watch lists.

- to implement effective means by which travelers who believe they have been profiled may seek redress. President Obama

has also been asked to visit an American mosque.

CAIR is recommending that Congress pass the End Racial Profiling Act (ERPA) and the Fair, Accurate, Secure, and Timely Redress Act of 2009 (FAST Redress Act of 2009), and not offer a "legitimizing platform" to anti-Muslim bigots.

Recommendations for the American Muslim community include timely reporting of anti-Muslim incidents, community empowerment through civic engagement and continued outreach to local and national law enforcement agencies.

Overall, nine states and the District of Columbia accounted for 79 percent of all incidents reported to CAIR in 2008. These locations include: the District of Columbia (27 percent), California (18 percent), Illinois (9 percent), New York (5 percent), Florida (5 percent), Virginia (4 percent), Ohio (3 percent), Texas (3 percent), Minnesota (3 percent) and Pennsylvania (3 percent).

CAIR began documenting anti-Muslim incidents following the 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, when some commentators initially blamed Muslims for the bombing. Before the real perpetrators were identified, Muslims nationwide were targeted in bias incidents.

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

Sleep disorder meet in Delhi on Dec 12-13

STAFF REPORTER

New York

AS India's economy has boomed in recent years, there has been an increase in sleep disorders. Sleep specialists from several countries are now collaborating to bring training in sleep medicine to India.

The National Sleep Medicine Course (NSMC) is organized in collaboration with academic faculty from the United States, Canada, Japan and India. The course was created in 2006.

Internists, family physicians, neurologists, pulmonologists, residents in neurology / pulmonology and sleep technicians from across India will gather December 12-13 at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi. Presentations will focus on basic sleep physiology, common sleep disorders, recording and interpretation of common tests used in sleep medicine (including polysomnography, multiple sleep latency test) and new developments.

"Research in the last several years has shown that Asian Indians have a high prevalence of sleep apnea," according to Dr. Anuj Chandra, chairman of the Advanced Center for Sleep Disorders in Chattanooga, who is one of several US physicians serving as NSMC faculty. "This ethnic group does not necessarily have to be obese to have sleep apnea, a potentially life threatening condition. In addition, the prevalence of shift work that synchronizes Indian workers with international schedules has led to an increase in shift work sleep disorder."

"The overwhelming response and clinical success of the first course encouraged us to continue the program annually on a regional basis," said Dr. Deepak Shrivastava, professor at the University of California Davis School of Medicine. Subsequent courses were held in Bangalore and Bhubaneswar.

Robin Raina Foundation declares endowment worth \$ 2mn

STAFF REPORTER

New York

THE Robin Raina Foundation (RRF) has announced that it carries a total endowment of around \$2 million in terms of assets available to fund the cause of underprivileged children and homeless slum dwellers around the world.

The foundation, a 501(c)(3) charity in the United States, declared that its net assets as of December 31, 2008 were \$1,560,795 with these assets having grown to \$2 million as on date. In a statement, the foundation said it decided to declare its assets in the true spirit of transparency, as also to convey to its donors the increased need to fund the shortfall required to finish some of the foundation's commitments to the slum dwellers. These funds exclude any funds that the Foundation's sister charities might have in India.

The foundation also disclosed that its founder Robin Raina was the largest donor to the foundation in 2008, with a total donation of \$1,301,780. This donation included a cash donation of \$ 282,085 and a stock donation in the form of 26,610 shares of Ebix stock valued at \$1,019,695 at the time of donation in 2008. The stock donation made by Raina in 2008 is currently valued at \$1,442,528.

The foundation also thanked all its donors across the world who have donated directly to the charities it supports in India including the Raina Prayas, Raina Shine, Disha, Blind Aid and the RRF Slum projects managed by the Robin Raina Charitable Trust. The foundation also thanked its joint venture partners Prayas for funding 30% of some of its slum school ventures in Bawana, Shine for funding 50% of its slum school venture in Raina Shine and other government organizations in India and abroad who have contributed to its RRF slum housing project and the various RRF slum schools.

The Foundation uses its assets to help underprivileged children and develop housing for slum dwellers around the world

The foundation spokesperson also emphasized the foundation's earnest commitment to providing housing to each and every slum dweller in the slums of Bawana, Delhi. Reiterating that commitment, the foundation summarized the status of some of its work in Bawana:

- The foundation has now built 622 concrete homes for the slum dwellers of Bawana free of cost. That funding has come directly from the foundation and its other donors across the world, who have contributed directly to the charity in India for the effort.

- The RRF Slum project is now estimated to cost \$20 million — if the foundation is to fulfill its dream of building 6,000 concrete homes for the slum dwellers of Bawana.

- The foundation's slum housing project is seen today as the largest slum charity project undertaken by any non-governmental organization in India, without any primary government help.

- A school that has provided education, breakfast, lunch, clothes, healthcare, picnics, toys, extra-curricular activities to the children of more than 2,000 families in Bawana.

- A vocational training institute for women in Bawana.

- A Self Help Group of women that has empowered thousands of women in the area.

- Wheel chairs for handicapped kids in the area.

- Financial help and medical care on an 'as needed' basis.

- Emergency relief in times of fires that happen rather regularly.

These are in addition to the foundation's other charity activities across the Indian subcontinent. The foundation also conveyed its desire to adopt new initiatives in Africa and

the third world in the form of funding education projects for the slum dwellers.

The foundation also declared that it supports the education of 102 underprivileged blind kids. Sixty two of these blind kids are now in the Masters program while 40 of them are doing graduation in top schools in Delhi and surrounding areas.

At the occasion, it also released an appeal to all well-meaning people around the world to donate to the cause of building these homes at a cost of \$1,650 per home.

RRF founder Robin Raina said, "While the government of India can spend billions of dollars to organize the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010, to showcase the prowess of India, it cannot find any budgets to

provide basic housing or healthcare for its own poor citizens."

He added, "Our resolve of building a home for each slum dweller in Bawana, Delhi is stronger than ever. Towards that I encourage each one of you to help the foundation build these homes, either through your donations of money or time. Giving is something nobody can take away from you. There is nothing more rewarding than giving in life."

Many observers allege that in their bid to cleanse Delhi before the Commonwealth Games in 2010, the Delhi Government moved thousands of slum dwelling families from the banks of river Yamuna to the barren land of Bawana district on the outskirts of Delhi in 2003. The area has little means of employment, education and healthcare. In the year 2004, the Robin Raina Foundation decided to set up base inside the slums of Bawana, the Foundation's statement said.

