

# American racial discriminations against middle easterners

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



“ Middle Easterns” is not just a race residing in several countries around the world; it has evolved to depict different semantic meanings as to the term of people born in the Middle Eastern culture and way of life. (Wikipedia) The Middle East is composed of countries in the territory of Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Palestine (now Israel), Jordan, Egypt, The Sudan, Libya, and several states belonging to the state of Arabia (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates).

Geographically characterizing Middle Eastern communities, it has enlarged over the years to include three other countries in the North Africa region which is Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco with associated foreign policies. The Middle East is a territory that is surrounded by the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, extending from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran. (Wikipedia) Middle Eastern is a modern term coined by Americans for Arabs and for people who reside in the region of the Middle East.

These are Semitic people speaking the Arabic language and are generally not specified to particular residency in the Middle East. The distinction of Arabs must be clearly defined as the common perception of Arabs is that they are Muslims. Not all Arabs are Muslims, and not all Muslims are Arabs. Arabs are considered by the short lived Arabian league to be those of Arabic descent and speaking the Arabic Language. They must have originated from an Arabic country and strictly follow the rules and tenets of Arabic culture. (" Poll: Majority of US Muslims suffered post September 11 bias", 2002)

The paper will discuss the implications of the perception on Middle Easterns and the changes after the September 11 attacks in the United States. In this exposition, discrimination against Middle eastern will be evaluated and the extent to which it happened after the 9/11 attacks. The study shows what life was for Middle Easterns before the attacks, and what they had to experience after. The study will not only focus on discrimination against Middle Easterns but also to discrimination per se on people belonging to different races.

Discrimination happens due to decisive factors which differentiates one person belonging to a race from another. It is a way to make clear distinctions and act towards another person based on prejudice. It can happen through in three different ways; either base on their appearance, language, and religion. The society will more likely discriminate an individual because of what he looks like. Visual discrimination is the easiest way to discriminate someone. This is because appearance is readily available for a person to judge on especially when people base their perception on skin pigmentation.

Even on how a person dresses constitutes formation of prejudices against them. Difference in religion also contributes to discrimination, not just the religion Islam, but also other religious orientations as well. Religious discrimination is a one rampant occurrence after the 9/11 attacks. This is acting of ones bigotry against persons' beliefs, rituals and customs in the particular religion he holds. Finally, the distinction between the different languages people speaks also accounts for discrimination to happen.

Differences in language or in accent can generate misunderstanding among people.

Discrimination is carried through many ways and forms. Middle Easterns are not just the ones affected by this act of prejudice, but all those other nationalities perceived as different. The stereotypes that greatly motivate discrimination can be attributed to how the American media portrays people. The media has adverse perpetuations in people who are different from the Americans. The American media affects how the people perceive Middle Easterns, whether physically, by religion or with language.

Discrimination takes on different forms and is carried out to unlimited extent, from hate crimes to employment discriminations. Discrimination against people with Middle East cultures is known even before the 9/11 event. But this had escalated dramatically over the years, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. They have been the subject of hate crimes, assaults and harassments due to their difference in color, race and religion.

The perception of Arabs as terrorist is believed to have started in 1973 with the Arab- Israeli war and oil-embargo. The Iran hostage crisis in 1979, the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985 and the beginning of the Persian Gulf crisis added to the hostility of the American society against the Middle East culture. Prior to 911, Middle eastern were already a subject of contempt and distrust. Their portrayal in mainstream media as either lying villains or evil warlords has vilified their image to the American public. Fictional books, particularly after 1973 exhort American and Israeli courage under the face of their Arab oppressors.

Middle Easterns were tagged as terrorists due to the perception that they are oppressors in their war against Israel. The American interest over Israel had contributed to the terrorist perception it generated. Even cartoons, like Aladdin imprint in American children the image of those coming from the middle east as liars and villains. (EEC, 2002) Before, little was known about the world that middle Easterns came from. The only feedback that the general public had was when the media reports that another terrorist attack has been perpetrated by Arab terrorists, or another take on the deemed inequalities in their culture and religion.

In particular, Anti Arab sentiments have already taken hold before 911, due to the perception that these middle easterns are the oppressors in their war against Israel. The American interests in Israel have led them to promote the state at the same time portraying Muslims and the Arab world as oppressors and terrorists. Each terrorist attack by the Muslim world was broadcasted with the effect of making them the new pariahs of the world. The media and the government were very instrumental in defacing the image of middle easterns. And these acts further intensified after the tragedy that occurred on September 11 2001.

The September 11, 2001 attacks often referred to as just 911 was composed of a series of terroristsuicideattacks against the United States of America. On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists whose were purportedly with the al-Qaeda terrorist organization hijacked four commercial passenger airplanes. The hijackers took control of the aircraft using small knives to scare and immobilize the passenger and crew. Two of

the planes (United Airlines Flight 175 and American Airlines Flight 11) were crashed in the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York.

In Arlington County, Virginia a third airplane (American Airlines Flight 77) was crashed into the United States Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense. The fourth airplane crashed into a field adjacent to the town of Shanksville in Pennsylvania. The plane did not reach its reported desired objective of crashing into the U. S. Capitol due to the attempt of some passengers and crew members to regain control of the plane. In addition to the 19 hijackers, 2,973 people died; another 24 are missing and presumed dead.

Nine days after the terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush declared to the nation that “ no one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith. ” His words were a little too late and apparently ineffective. After 9/11, there have been a large number of reported incidents of discrimination against Middle Eastern people in the United States. Security checks in airports were tightened and Middle Eastern persons as well as persons perceived to be Middle Eastern were unjustly subject to more stringent security measures.

In the three days that succeeded the 9/11 terrorist attacks, CNN reported that at least 300 reports of Middle Eastern being harassed and abused were received by the Council on American-Islamic relations. This number tripled the amount of received reports in the year before September 11. The most common complaints were people yelling verbal abuse like “ Get out of our

country! Go back to your own", as well as the calling of insulting names like Arab dogs, whores, and other vile monikers.

The FBI also reported an increase in Muslim crimes in the US in the year 2001. The US government is also said to have detained about 1200 Middle Eastern and South Asians with the assumptions that they are associated with the terrorists. A report on the study by the Council on American- Islamic Relations (CAIR) released in September 18 2005, showed an increase of more than 30% of discrimination, harassment and violations complaints against Muslim. The CAIR, the country's largest Muslim organization had evaluated the implications of the 9/11 attacks to the Muslim community.

Such incidents of discrimination, harassments and violation complaints were reported to be 1, 972 in 2005, more than what is reported in the previous year. The organization concluded the report as the highest statistic since it started doing reports on anti-Muslim activities in 1995. The organization began its yearly reporting of crime incidents towards Muslim in the year 1995 after the Oklahoma bombing. The bombing of the federal government building in Oklahoma, pointed by the mass media to have done by Arab radicals, triggered the anti-Muslim perception of the people and as a result tagged the Muslim community as villains of peace.

The year 2005 reported 153 cases of anti-Muslim hate crimes and marked a 10% increase of hate crimes over the year 2004, and a dramatic 50% increase from the year 2003. Hate crimes are acts of discrimination against persons belonging to a certain race, culture or religion. (cite source) These crimes involve murder, attacks on religious institutions, shootings, vehicular

assaults and verbal threats against the person. This became evident after the 9/11 attacks as the whole Muslim community were scrutinized for their involvement with the attacks.

There were several hate crimes reported after the 9/11 attacks. Balbir Singh Sodhi in Mesa Arizona, associated with a different religion from Islam, was killed with no reason at all. It has been reported that the reason for his death was just mere association with a terrorist, particularly the assumption that he looks the same as the terrorist therefore he too is a terrorist. There have been similar incidents like what happened to Sodhi after the 9/11 attacks. In Dallas Texas, Waqar Hassan was shot to death in his own convenience store.

The 46 year old Pakistani was apparently mistaken for an Arab following the 9/11 tragedy. His murderer, Mark Stroman, was also found guilty of killing another man, Vasudev Patel, with the same motive. Murders without regard to affiliation, actual race and citizenship were committed after the Sept 11 attack. The list includes Adel Caras a Coptic Christian who originated from Egypt, American citizens Amil Almansoor and Jawed Wassel and Abdo Ali Ahmed among others. It would seem that the pain of the tragedy of 9/11 was enough reason for the murderers to perform their act.

The aftermath showed that some people felt it was ok to target Middle Easterners and even people who look like them either as revenge or just as an object to vent their rage. Most murderers did not even attempt to camouflage their act. Mark Stroman was rumored to have bragged that he just did what every American wanted to do but didn't have the nerve. After 9/11, the amount of reports of employment discrimination against



Middle Easterns showed an increase. In a report of the US Equal Employment Commission in May 2002, they showed that 488 complaints were received regarding post 911 employment discrimination.

Additionally, 301 of those reports were about Middle Easterns being forced out of employment. Numerous reports also abound of people ostracizing Middle Eastern co workers in the office. The United States government also aided in portraying the Middle Easterns as having direct links to terrorists. After the September 11 tragedy, the United States detained 1200 people. These were of Middle East and South Asian descent, further fueling the perception that the Arabs and the Muslims had something to do with the September 11 attacks. What's more troubling is that in Sept. 17, 2001, interim regulation issued by the U. S.

Department of Justice allowing detention without charge for at least 48 hours in emergency situations. This regulation was used in great effect in detaining those of Middle Eastern origin. The rule was invoked in the immigration of Middle Easterns following the attack. About 763 individuals were detained and about half of them were deported. Jorge Martinez of the United States Department of Justice explains that they did not single out Arabs, they were simply following up on leads and clues. However, the proceedings regarding these immigration cases are shrouded in a veil of secrecy. Identities and charges were not officially released.

According to the Justice Department, this is simply to protect the privacy of the proceedings as well as the persons involved. Most of the information that were obtained showed that those detained were held on minor visa

violations and on other terrorist unrelated criminal charges. The immigration judges presiding in the trials were allowed to hold their court proceedings in secret. The release of some detainees accompanied the news that rough treatment and solitary confinement were being used in these persons. (HRW, 2003) The effect of the attacks on Middle eastern communities across the country is even more troubling.

Fear and paranoia has changed the way of life that these people were accustomed to. The numerous reports of physical injury and verbal abuse against Middle Easterns have induced some to refrain from showing signs of their ethnicity. The wearing of scarves and other telltale signs of their culture has made them visible targets to public contempt and most were not willing to undergo the risk that that entails. Withdrawal from civic life also came as a result of the 911 attacks. Middle Easterns stayed at their homes, and went out only when necessary due to fear of being a recipient of abuse.

Muslim communities avoid congregating in order not to be subject to suspicion by others. Middle eastern children were ostracized in their schools, most were bullied, called names and physically assaulted. (HRW, 2003) Prior to the 911 attacks, Muslim Middle Eastern families gave generously to charities and fundraisers. This is in accordance to the practice of zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam. However, the U. S government had a crack down on Muslim charities and charity benefactors, saying that they were a front for fundraising by terrorist organizations.

In Chicago, two local Muslim charities, the Global Relief Foundation and Benevolence International Foundation, were investigated and shut down due

to alleged terrorist links. A wave of paranoia has been sweeping Middle Eastern communities since the 911 attacks. Reports of the government's methods in obtaining intelligence information from these communities have resulted in a feeling of fear and dread among individuals. Many has reported having been followed, eavesdropped upon, and watched. Federal agents have been known to search Middle Eastern residence without due notification or even the necessary warrants.

Questioning by these agents without regards to the rights of the individual has made Middle Easterns wary and afraid. Reports of new faces in Mosques and in internal gatherings have made many wary. Islam is a religion based on tolerance and love. Because of this, Middle Easterns which have grown in this culture silently suffer the indignities and abuse being shown to them. However, a new generation of middle easterns, those who have grown in American soil, are rising up and asserting their rights as individuals and as Americans. Communities have begun to band together and combat the discrimination against them.

Groups like The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the Alliance of Iranian Americans (AIA), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), and the National Council of Pakistani Americans (NCPA) have provided a voice to those victim to racial discrimination. They have acted by providing data, reports, denouncing claims and by filing suits against the perpetrators. But to some this is not enough. Many young middle easterns who have experienced this discrimination have talked about

fighting back. CONCLUSION Discrimination against a particular people, religion or culture is a widespread occurrence even in these times.

Discrimination comes in many forms. The Middle Eastern people have suffered discrimination on American soil before and after the September 11 attacks. Prior to 911 they have endured verbal abuse, harassment, racial profiling and even hate crimes. And after the tragedy, they suffered and are still suffering much more of these. They have been treated with distrust, unearned hate and contempt. Their rights have been trampled on and their liberties taken away from them. They have known fear and paranoia. And most have resolved to be victims no longer and fight back. The September 11 attacks struck a painful blow to the American nation. The wounds of the victims and survivors are now healing. But the wound that its effects have wrought on the Middle Easterners in America still bleeds.