

# In Perspective

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*Monitoring and exposing the Chicago Connection to International Terrorism has been a signature JCRC activity for a decade. This priority project however is not conducted within a vacuum - we are sensitive to broader societal dynamics involved with these issues. Hence, JCRC public lectures on this topic always begin with following points:*

1. Though the organizations in this report all describe themselves as Muslim and/or Arab, the vast majority of Arab and Muslim Americans and their organizations are not connected to or supportive of international terrorism.
2. U.S. law enforcement asserts that even in the cases of the four Chicago-area organizations whose assets have been frozen for alleged support of international terrorism, donors were deceived as to the ultimate uses of their charitable donations. Indeed, one of the charges that Enaam Arnaout, the jailed executive director of Benevolence International Foundation, pled guilty to was defrauding donors into believing that all contributions were to be used for humanitarian purposes when in fact many were being diverted to "jihad fighters" in Chechnya and Bosnia.
3. Ideally there would be non-Jewish, nongovernmental organizations monitoring and exposing the Chicago Connection to Terrorism. JCRC realizes that, as a Jewish organization, what we say, even when it is what is widely publicized in the mainstream media, is prone to be heard by many through a "filter" that absorbs the information in the context of a perceived public relations debate about the Middle East conflict between American Jews and Arabs/Muslims.
4. Nonetheless, that concern does not deter JCRC from speaking out even while waiting for other voices to be raised on this urgent issue of the Chicago Connection to International Terrorism. JCRC launched its Terrorism Awareness Project in the early 1990's shortly after the first Chicago connections to international terrorism were revealed (the arrest of Mohammad Salah in Israel for supporting Hamas). That timeframe also coincided with the first World Trade Center bombing, prompting JCRC in 1996 to draft and successfully advocate for passage of the nation's first state antiterrorism legislation, sponsor an academic conference on terrorism, and other activities.
5. As always, JCRC fights bigotry as if there is no terrorism, and fights terrorism as if there is no bigotry. Unfortunately there are occasionally those who will respond to acts of terror by committing hate crimes against innocent individuals or groups perceived as "associated" with terrorists. While unequivocally denouncing such instances and working in many ways to prevent hate crimes and to aggressively punish their perpetrators, JCRC cannot allow the despicable reality of hate crimes from preventing us to aggressively combating terrorism and exposing its local connections, regardless of the demographics of those involved.



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The umbrella body for 47 Jewish organizations in Metropolitan Chicago and the community relations arm of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

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