



American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
1732 Wisconsin Ave., NW | Washington, DC 20007 | www.adc.org
Tel: 202-244-2990 | Fax: 202-244-7968 | Email: adc@adc.org

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In Memoriam

Hala Salaam Maksoud, PhD
(1943-2002)
Alex Odeh
(1944-1985)

June 18, 2008

Senator Barack Obama
Obama for America
PO Box 8120
Chicago, IL 60680

Dear Senator Obama:

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is the nation's largest civil rights organization working, since 1980, on behalf of the Arab-American community. Our headquarters is in Washington, DC, with offices in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Michigan, Texas, Ohio, and California in addition to 38 volunteer-based chapters around the country and members in every state of the Union. One of our most active chapters is the Greater Chicago chapter. ADC is an Executive Committee member of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR).

ADC is a non-sectarian, non-partisan grassroots organization representing an American community which consists of people of a variety of faiths, including Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Coptic, Jewish and others who don't identify as religious. As such, we are gravely disappointed with the two recent and separate incidents which occurred during your campaign rally yesterday in Detroit. Two Muslim women who elect to wear the *hijab* (religious scarf) were, on separate occasions, barred from sitting behind the podium by campaign volunteers who gave them two different reasons. We are fearful that this is an unfortunate outgrowth of your campaign's political efforts at disassociating from Islam.

According to multiple press reports and several witnesses, one of the campaign volunteers at the rally indicated to one of the women that due to the "political climate" it would not be a good idea for her to be "seen on TV or associated with Obama." In the second incident at the same rally, another campaign volunteer requested that the second Muslim woman either remove her *hijab* or move away from the area because the campaign did not allow any headwear in that area.

ADC is confident that you, as a former civil rights attorney and Constitutional Law professor, are especially sensitive to the barring of religious headwear in this fashion. Such intolerance is counter to your message of inclusion and positive change and an affront to our American traditions of freedom, liberty, and equality under the rule of law. As a civil rights organization, ADC is disappointed that this type of incident took place in an Obama Campaign setting. It is doubtful that two volunteers on two separate occasions would attempt to sideline two of your supporters due to their headscarves without some direction from campaign staff.

Although we welcome your campaign spokesperson's apology for both incidents, we hope that you will take the leadership in addressing this troubling issue. We trust that you will send the message to everyone associated with the Obama Campaign, and all Americans, that such incidents of intolerance and disrespect will not be tolerated in your campaign just as they would not be tolerated in an Obama Administration.

Should you need any additional information about this matter or the work of ADC, please contact us to president@adc.org and kshora@adc.org or call (202) 244-2990. Thank you for your time and consideration and we hope to hear back from you soon on this matter.

Sincerely,

Hon. Mary Rose Oakar
President

Kareem Shora, JD, LL.M.
National Executive Director