



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on March 14, 2011

First Day of Hearings on Radical Islam Falls Short on Substance

The first day of congressional hearings on the radicalization of the American Islamic community (being led by House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Rep. Peter T. King, R-N.Y.) proved to be one that was emotionally-charged and riddled with controversy, revealing the true attitudes and intentions of many liberal Democrats on Islamic radicalization in the United States.

The first round of [hearings](#), entitled “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community’s Response,” exposed sharp divisions within American politics, and also demonstrated that the American Muslim community is not as monolithic on the issue as liberal Democrats portray them to be. However, an analysis of the hearings shows that they were heavy on semantics and drama, but light on substance.



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The high point of the hearings occurred when [Rep. Keith Ellison](#) (D-Minn.), the first Muslim elected to Congress, testified before the Homeland Security Committee. Ellison’s testimony before the committee was marked by sheer emotionalism, tears (what some considered to be little more than “crocodile tears”), and references to patriotic Muslim-Americans — an apparent attempt to shame and discredit Rep. King, who has vociferously stated that he is not judging the Islamic faith, and has repudiated the claim that all Muslims are to blame for the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Ellison was an unusual witness in his own chamber, testifying about his religion in a committee hearing that examined radicalization among American Muslims. He recited the tragic story of 23-year-old Mohammed Salman Hamdani, a New York City police cadet and brave first responder who rushed to aid his fellow countrymen as the twin towers at the World Trade Center burned on September 11, 2001. Breaking into tears, Ellison [decried](#) “some people” who “tried to smear [Hamdani’s] character solely because of his Islamic faith”:

Some people spread false rumors and speculated that he was in league with the attackers only because he was Muslim. It was only when his remains were identified that these lies were fully exposed. Mohammed Salman Hamdani was a fellow American who gave his life for other Americans. His life should not be defined as a member of an ethnic group or a member of a religion, but as an American who gave everything for his fellow citizens.

However, Ellison’s citing the example of Hamdani’s heroism is irrelevant, given the broader context of



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what the hearings hope to accomplish and King's own statements indicating that he is not seeking to demonize Islam. Further, many people, including *National Review* columnist Matthew Shaffer, point to objective evidence debunking Ellison's claim that Hamdani was the victim of any religious or ethnic prejudice in the aftermath of 9/11 — demonstrating that Ellison is exploiting Hamdani's memory for the sake of advancing a political agenda. Shaffer observed:

In fact, six weeks after the September 11 attacks — before Hamdani's remains were identified, which Ellison implies to be the turning point of public perception — Congress signed the PATRIOT Act into law with this line included: "Many Arab Americans and Muslim Americans have acted heroically during the attacks on the United States, including Mohammed Salman Hamdani, a 23-year-old New Yorker of Pakistani descent, who is believed to have gone to the World Trade Center to offer rescue assistance and is now missing." That is, Hamdani was actually singled out for particular high honors among the thousands of victims of the September 11 attacks.

Hamdani was singled out for honors by the United States' executive and legislative branches with those lines in the PATRIOT Act that immortalized his story.

Then, he had scholarship funds named after him, was honored by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly (both of whom went barefoot to honor Muslim practice) at his funeral, and has been celebrated over and over again by the media.

The belief that Mohammed Salman Hamdani was a victim of anti-Muslim bigotry was never based in reality. It was manufactured by the Left as a rhetorical prop, exploited as a bludgeon against people who want to talk seriously about terrorism.

Ellison believes that King is wrongly implicating the broader Muslim community, and that his very coordination of the hearings is a misguided approach that will alienate the American Muslim community as a whole.

Ellison — who adheres to a collectivist mentality that falsely assumes that all individual members of a particular racial, ethnic, or religious community must sacrifice their individual personhood in favor of a collective set of talking points — makes one crucial error, however. He falsely assumes that all American Muslims are opposed to Rep. King's efforts to investigate radical Islamist elements, which advocate violence and terror in the pursuit of a politicized Islam, as they adhere to the dangers of [Salafism](#) and [Wahhabism](#).

In ignoring this reality, Ellison brands King as a bigot, while he himself adheres to a collectivizing condescension, which discounts the reality that many American Muslims also support the hearings. The Muslim World Congress, for example, wholeheartedly [endorses](#) the hearings, according to its president, Mike Ghouse:

As Muslim Americans, it becomes our individual and collective responsibility to participate in ensuring the safety of every American, and we welcome the hearings. We hope it will lead us to find the sources and causes of such erratic behavior, and perhaps point out areas of concerns to be addressed and find lasting solutions. We have to identify the criminals who are individually accountable for their actions, and need to punish them expediently according to the law.

In addition, M. Zuhdi Jasser, president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, [declared](#) that "paralysis" over the issue has seized the nation's leaders and urged the Muslim community to confront what he called an "exponential increase" in the number of Muslim radicals in the United States. "The U.S. has a significant problem with Muslim radicalization," affirmed Jasser, who is Muslim. "It is a



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problem that we can only solve.”

Rep. Ellison falsely claims that he is speaking on behalf of all American Muslims, despite the fact that many Muslims disagree with his posture against the hearings. It should also be [noted](#) that King himself has a record of positive interactions with Muslims in his Long Island district, especially throughout the 1990s. He often gave speeches at the Westbury Islamic Center, hired Muslim interns and congressional staffers, and supported military intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, a position supported by groups such as the Muslim American Policy Council.

Because King was one of the only Republicans who supported U.S. intervention in Kosovo, and because of his work in the Balkans, the mosque presented him with an award. Many of its leaders regularly contributed to King’s campaigns, often paying \$500 a person to attend his fundraisers. King was even the main guest of honor on the day of greatest pride for the community: the 1993 opening of its long-awaited \$3 million prayer hall, which many proudly note was built completely with locally-raised funds. For years, a picture of King cutting the ceremonial ribbon hung on the bulletin board by the mosque’s entrance.

According to Habeeb Ahmed, chairman of the mosque, King would even come to weddings in the mosque and eat in the homes of mosque members, and when King’s books were released, the mosque held book signings and invited King to give speeches.

In addition to Dr. Jasser, other Muslim supporters of the congressional hearings include those who have experienced the perils of radicalization on a first-hand basis, including Abdirizak Bihi, a Somali Muslim from Minnesota who testified regarding his nephew, who was recruited into a terrorist group, a phenomenon that Bihi [lamented](#) is all too common in his community. Bihi added:

The Somali community wants to be heard. My community wants to be heard. I would ask you to look and open investigations as to what is happening in my community. We are isolated by Islamic organizations and leaders who support them.”

Nonetheless, Democrats at the hearing assumed an obstructionist pose. Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), the ranking Democrat on the Homeland Security Committee, declared that Muslim extremists would exploit the hearings and spin them into propaganda, while Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) evoked a more hostile response.

Lee insisted that the hearings played into the hands of terrorists and were an offense against the Constitution and religious Americans (an irony, considering her liberal voting record that is often at odds with the Constitution and Judeo-Christian religious values, such as the right-to-life and traditional morality). She also quoted herself in the third person, to the delight of her political adversaries — merely a continuation in a string of [gaffes](#), including asserting that Vietnam is still divided, claiming that Algeria, Afghanistan, and China honor equal rights for women, and accusing constitutionalists of racism.

While Rep. King is no friend of constitutionalism (he is an advocate of gun control, labor unions, unmitigated military interventionism, Cash for Clunkers, CAFÉ standards, federal universal health coverage for children, an increased minimum wage, and was only one of four Republicans to vote against impeaching Bill Clinton), his hearings serve at least one legitimate purpose. They are an attempt to at least *understand* the threat of Islamist terrorism and develop a cohesive knowledge of the enemy and what motivates terrorists — an approach endorsed by experts such as Michael Scheuer and Rep. Ron Paul.



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Unfortunately, however, the hearings seem to fall short on substance and continue to ignore the true nature of anti-American terror, which entails the collusion of Islamists and the global left.

Photo: Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, listens during a hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, March 10, 2011: AP Images



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