

They dared to knock on my door

From the still unpublished book "Prisoners of the Cave"

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[March 28, 2007: I wrote this essay in 2003 - almost exactly 4 years ago on the eve of "shock and awe" invasion and decimation of defenseless Iraq. It is now anticipated that once again, new pretexts will be found for invasion of yet another defenseless nation - Iran. Is it time for another knock on the door? More importantly, will the mighty 200 million American peoples continue to remain silent as another war of aggression and primacy is launched by a handful of hectoring hegemony from among them? How is the entire silently bespectating American nation not directly complicit in crimes against humanity? How can they continue to claim ignorance? How can they continue to buy into "imperial mobilizations" packaged in false pretexts? As the saying goes: 'Fool me once - shame on you, fool me a second time, shame on me!' I anxiously await a "[Robert Jackson](#)" while continually employing the distinguished Jewish moralist Elie Wiesel's immortal imprecation on behalf of the innocent victims: "**and I still curse the killers, their accomplices, the indifferent spectators who knew and kept silent**"]

Abstract

This essay describes my two encounters with the United States of

*America's Security Agencies as they came knocking on my door in March and April 2003 in the supposed hot pursuit of the boogie man du jour. The essay describes what transpired, how I felt, and my extemporaneous lecture to them on **how dare they come visit me** without any justification other than ethnic and religious profiling. Why should they want to interrogate me just because I am a Muslim from a foreign country? Is that now a crime in America?*

I was startled by that dreaded knock on the front door, and not a polite one at that, nor even ringing of the door bell, but what sounded like urgent pounding. Two men flashed their badges in my face for a few seconds when I rushed to the door, stated that they were from the FBI, and asked me if I was Mr. so and so. The badges disappeared just as quickly as they had appeared in the best rendering of life imitating art I had ever seen. When I replied in the affirmative, they asked to see my ID to verify it. After I had shown them my driver's license and they seemed satisfied that I was indeed the person they had asked for, they started asking me for my SSN (Social Security Number), my telephone number, whether I was citizen or permanent resident, and if the latter to show them the Green card, how long I had been in the country, when did I become permanent resident, when did I travel last?

Now being a reasonably intelligent person under normal conditions, it suddenly occurred to me to ask them why they were talking to me in the first place, and how my name was flagged to them. They indicated that my name had loosely matched a terrorist they were looking for and it was off by only a couple of letters in the name, but that fortunately for me the guy they were seeking was thin and short, while I am tall and big, so I should relax and simply answer their questions. I questioned them that if they were already convinced I wasn't the guy they wanted, why were they still here, and why I should answer any of their questions beyond having showed them my ID to prove my identity? And in my heart I was thanking God for the first time about my overweight, for I could have been in the docks based solely on my size according to them. They mumbled something about this "terrorism thing around us" being the reason they wanted to talk to me now that they were here anyway.

My head still in a daze but starting to function again slowly, I suggested to them that the number of possible names they would be searching based on their "partial string matching" criteria could potentially be in the thousands, and were they planning to visit them all at their homes? They said no. So now it seemed that they had picked me specifically. And if they could find out where I lived, they could just as easily find out answers to the questions they were asking me by simply looking them up on their super computers. So why this visit to my home in the first place? What did they really want to talk to me about? And what was the real criteria they used to finger me? And what was in that folder they were carrying in their hand that they kept referring to? So I asked them whether I could see what information they had on me in that folder, and I stretched my hand out to receive it from them: "Well, the FBI is not in the business of disclosing its information to anyone" was the curt reply as they moved the

folder closer to their chest.

I was getting more and more perturbed that perhaps they had come to me because I was a certain nationality and a brown skinned Muslim at that, and all of the preceding dialog could just be a pretext. To confirm this further, I asked them if they were also planning to interview any of the other folks in the neighborhood, and they said no, it was just me they wanted to talk to. Why me? The fact that their story line would have been so obviously unconvincing to anyone except the most naive, also disturbed me very much. Did they think I was stupid? Or perhaps they wanted me to feel that indeed their pretext was phony so that I might get afraid? Why didn't they just leave when they indicated they were satisfied I was not the person they were chasing. And if that was indeed only a pretext, why didn't they simply come right out and tell me honestly why they had come to my house? I might have been more agreeable had they demonstrated some legitimate cause. All of these things started to whirl in my fertile imagination and I began to see the Japanese internment camps of World War II looming at the horizon. My heart was beating rather quickly, but I mustered some presence of mind and decided not to submit to any of their questioning without a lawyer present, and I told them so.

I was quite relieved when they very politely agreed, even apologized several times for having disturbed and distressed me so much, reassured me that they had not come to arrest me nor was I a suspect in any way and they were simply chasing down terrorists, and left me with their calling card and the scary recollections from Elie Wiesel's book "Night" about how the Jewish community was gradually intimidated from similar knocks on the door into a full blown Holocaust. "They never demanded the impossible, made no unpleasant comments, and even smiled occasionally at the mistress of the house ... even brought a box of chocolates. The optimists rejoiced ... 'what did we tell you. You wouldn't believe us. They are your Germans ... where is their famous cruelty.' The Germans were already in the town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict had already been pronounced, yet the Jews of Sighet continued to smile."

I have no reason to smile. One of the disturbing consequences of being a thinking and educated person who is not ignorant of the lessons of history, and who is not unwary of the propaganda in the mainstream American media that dutifully toes the government's line, as if they were a state sponsored news agency of the Soviet Union of the yore, is the awesome realization that I am living in a nation that is fast declining into the worst form of Fascism ever to exist. For like the people in Plato's mythical cave, where all they can see and experience is the reality synthesized for them by the spinning controllers outside the cave, the majority of the kind people in this great nation are becoming enslaved and don't even realize it. It is worse than a gilded cage, because there is no need for a cage for the "Prisoners of the Cave" (see Part 2 of this book). Is it any coincidence that the United States is the only country in the world in which while there have been record antiwar protests in many of its cities, the vast majority of its mainstream public overwhelmingly supports the "war on terrorism" as evidenced by opinion polls and the rising popularity of its President? Does this perhaps have anything to do with the fact that the mainstream public is also incessantly being exposed to the government leaders

arguing the justifications for this "fictitious war" with "fictitious facts", necessitating all this curbing of civil liberties to hunt down the "fictitious fifth columnist" - and not to the opposing voices and reasoned critics who possess the tools and knowledge to dismantle and deconstruct this "fiction" that is perpetuated through mindless repetitions of "officials say" in the well oiled media machinery? The unnerving similarities between the rise of Fascism in Germany - the Third Reich, and what is happening now in this once great and hospitable nation for all immigrants - the making of a Fourth Reich, is making me reconsider whether I should pack my bags and catch that last boat out of this place before this impending "Red Yellow and Green" travel ticket labeling technology of the Total Information Awareness (TIA) system inadvertently closes even the doors of exit for its victims.

Then the door bell rang again three weeks later. After the FBI's first visit, I had immediately called the National Lawyers Guild for advice. Thanks to the fliers they had distributed everywhere, we had put up their phone number up on the wall and didn't have to hunt for it. They immediately gave me the name and contact for a wonderful attorney, who in turn met with me to explain to me what was really going on in the immigrant community with respect to this "war on terrorism". "What they were really after was compiling an extensive database of every detail of your life", my lawyer explained. I had been under the impression that perhaps the FBI had mistakenly visited me, and I should try to clear up the matter with them so that they wouldn't hassle me at airports when we traveled during the summer vacation with the kids.

My very distinguished and kindly attorney must have surely marveled at my naiveté when he suggested that the FBI is not in the business of clearing people, there was no such thing. All they are doing is compiling a database right now, and who knows how it could be used in the future, perhaps it would be one of the feeders into the TIA system. So why were they asking me all these questions whose answers they should already have in their own computers? Because that was just a pretext to get you to talk about your brother or sister or friend or people at the mosque or to peek at your passport to see where you have been or the content of the discussion you were seen to be having around the cooler in your office or with your neighbor or colleague from 10 years ago, etc. etc. explained my lawyer.

Oh boy! I wasn't keen on participating in this Gestapo interrogation, sugar coated though it might have been, but I was still anxious to know what had really triggered the FBI to come to my house like that. Being a law abiding and tax paying engineer by profession, with more than quarter century patents, having contributed to the computer industry that fueled the silicon valley technological revolution even if only as a cog in the capitalist machinery, and having lived more than half my life in this country pursuing the proverbial American dream, of making an honest living and raising a family in the pursuit of life liberty and happiness for all, it was quite distressing to me that I should be visited by the FBI at my home. They had caught me in my pajamas enjoying a sunny afternoon, without any intimation of their visit. Not the best way to seek cooperation - only foster intimidation. So my lawyer decided to write them a letter seeking further clarification on the real reasons for their visit to my house, whether I was some

sort of suspect or not, and declining to being interviewed by them or anyone else until we got some clarification.

Furthermore, the two men who had identified themselves as FBI agents left me their business card that stated they were from the local Sheriff's office, "Special Operations Division - Criminal Intelligence/Vice Unit", and not the FBI. After they had left, while waiting to get in touch with my assigned attorney, I had called the number of the Sheriff's office by first getting it from 411 (information) just to verify that it wasn't some kind of con game for getting me to divulge my social security number, and I was told that the officer was indeed working there but was on special deputation, and they could not say any more. When I told my attorney about my sleuthing, he seemed quite surprised that the local county Sheriff's office was cooperating in conducting intrusive interviews of the immigrant community when several local cities had passed resolutions not to cooperate with the FBI in their enactment of the draconian Patriot Act.

So now three weeks later when I greeted two new strangers at the door flashing their Homeland Security badges at me, I was initially stunned. They again asked for me by my name, and questioned me whether I was a citizen or permanent resident, and wanted to see my green card when I answered them. But this time, for some reason, I felt myself getting mad. I asked them what kind of information system they had that they know my name and address but cannot look up my immigration status on their computers, that they physically had to drive up here to question me when they could have simply sent me a letter requesting my presence at their immigration office to verify my status. They muttered something about their databases or computers from the 70s and 80s not working properly with modern systems, I did not quite understand their explanation. And my mind was doing a logical analysis of why couldn't they have simply written to me if that was indeed the case, to come down to their office with my green card? And if I was a flight risk or something, then why wait 3 weeks after the first FBI visit. And especially after I had specifically indicated through my lawyer to the FBI that I did not want to be disturbed like this? Or was this a brand new visit, unrelated to the previous one? And then I also got a little afraid, because two plus two was adding up to five.

So I asked them to wait until I contacted my lawyer to see what my options were, that I was only going to cooperate with them to the extent that they were lawfully entitled to, and that I was going to assert every single right that this country's Constitution afforded me. And I let them know in no uncertain terms that I was upset at their visit to my home. They warned me that unless I produced my green card right there and then, they will arrest me. I responded that I wanted to verify whether they indeed had this right to ask for my green card by making this cold call visit to my home, when they were not making similar visits to any of my neighbors nor seeking this information from anyone else other than brown skinned people. After a bit of loud argument in which they wanted to know whether I was calling them racist, and that they themselves were of Hispanic origin and were not racist, I said no I was not calling them racist and would they kindly allow me to make this phone call to my lawyer, they graciously agreed. But they also requested that I return them the courtesy by leaving the front door open, to which

I agreed by saying that normally we are very hospitable people and under any other circumstance I would have invited them in and offered them tea, but that in this case they were kindly not to come inside my house without a warrant. Now that I look back on that moment, I am very surprised that I had the chutzpah to stand up to the Homeland Security people like that, and also quite relieved that they turned out to be tolerant enough to not arrest me for it. I must admit that it also gives me hope that all is not lost yet, that old laws are still being upheld and the basic decencies of their executors still does shine through their facades.

So I called my lawyer while the G men waited at the open door. The poor attorney who despite being quite sick very kindly answered his cell phone, and confirmed to me that the immigration and homeland security folks could ask me for my immigration status by making a cold call visit to my home. It appeared that the FBI had sent in bigger guns. So I dug out my green card from the secure passport container that I keep it in for safe keeping along with rest of our travel documents and showed it to them. Now a new drama ensued. First one of the officers examined it carefully and said something that sounded like "this is not valid". And I freaked out. What do you mean it's not valid? Me, the meticulous person all of my life in every such detail, how can my green card not be valid? The officer said I should get a new one, that it was a lot nicer. And now I am even more confused. What has nice got anything to do with it?

I asked him to explicitly state to me in clear language what was wrong with my green card which I had carried with me faithfully for almost 19 years now. No one at the port of entries during our summer travels previously had ever said a word about it not being valid. In fact, they would simply scan it and presumably all my history would show up on their computers and they would happily waive me on, never even asking me any of the questions they usually asked other brown people with green cards. So what was up here?

The officer called someone on his cell phone, read out my green card number, got some kind of confirmation, and made me feel quite relieved when he stated to me that there was nothing wrong with the green card and that it was still very valid, but that I should get the new one because it was a lot nicer! Now, my green card is the permanent type that does not need to be renewed during one's lifetime, whereas the new ones, I understand, need renewal every so many years. I was not about to trade in my precious permanent credential for something that might look a lot nicer. Who cares how it looks? And besides, who knows, perhaps it has a microchip embedded in it that tracks all your movements, as part of the TIA. In any case, after the Homeland security officer had cleared my green card and advised me to always carry it on my person instead of keeping it in a safety box, and panic had subsided, a strange thing occurred.

By this time it must have been at least 20 or more minutes and we seemed to have developed a rapport of some strange Orwellian sort through it all. The weeks and months of unvoiced frustration that had been building up inside me about the harassment and intimidation that the Muslim community was suffering unjustly, all due to the adventureism of the few in the White House, suddenly came to the surface. Strangely, now I became their interlocutor. I called them back as they started to leave, and started lecturing them on how unhappy I was about this

whole thing, how civil liberties were being eroded in the name of security. They remarked that they were only following an order from up above and did not know why they were sent to my house, to which I reminded them of what Eichmann said in his Jerusalem trial, that he was just following orders. Then they argued that they were just doing this to keep their streets secure, and I reminded them of what their own founding father the great Benjamin Franklin had said about the preciousness of freedom, that those who trade their essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserved neither.

Then my wife showed up from work, and being even more outspoken than me, and being a US citizen, she got very upset at their visiting our home like this, attempting to terrorize and intimidate us with their Gestapo tactics and she said so. And then she said, "perhaps when I return home one day I will not find my husband because he would have been hauled off to Guantanamo Bay". So what does one of the officer respond with? Instead of reassuring us that something like that wouldn't happen, that we weren't suspects or anything, like the FBI agents had done previously, he goes: "Well I have been there, it's not such a bad place". And I remarked "were you on the inside or the outside?", quite incredulous at this insane justification for hauling someone innocent off to the prison camp in Guantanamo Bay where according to all reports, the conditions of the interred even in the most optimistic manner can be best described as inhuman. And he responded by saying something even more bizarre "well aren't we are, all inside of something!" I could feel a Kafkaesque moment coming on. Were they playing with me or was it just that they couldn't think fast enough at their own interlocution at our hands?

I felt that just the fact that they had knocked on my door and no one else's in the neighborhood, was racial profiling and a presumption of guilt on their part, and a very intimidating moment for me because now I was going to have psychological problems about door knocks and door bells. And I also worried that my questioning them about their right to do so might lead them to think that I was trying to hide something. So I explained out loud to them that while I had nothing to hide, there was no reason for them to be suspicious at my wanting to assert my rights. I was living in a country which did accord me such rights, which is why I was living here and not elsewhere in the first place. I lectured them that it was unfair that they had their periscopes drawn on the Muslim community, that despite this "war on terrorism", innocent until proven guilty was a fundamental edict of this nation and cannot be wiped away by the Patriot Act 1, intrusive and obnoxious though it may be. And I even cautioned them, just in case they were not aware - few people are, of the looming Patriot Act 2 which is far more insidious and dangerous proposal for all US citizens and would impact them and their children and grandchildren far more than it would impact me, since I am not a citizen. I told them the story of the proverbial frog which can easily jump out of instant hot water and escape, but not from the reassuring warmth of gradually heated luke-warm water whose temperature is raised slowly to a boiling point, one civil liberty at a time, until there is no escape, only Fascism. They just stared at me, perhaps confounded by my spontaneous burst of outspokenness. Perhaps they had not expected such a reception, perhaps they were usually accustomed to the acquiescence of people they had been visiting up to that time, and had not thought about any

of these issues as they carried out their normal course of duties. Like it used to be in Germany!

Why was I so garrulously lecturing the two officers from Homeland Security on the erosion of civil rights? As I am sure they must have wondered while they seemed to have all the time in the world listening to my rant. I don't know whether they were recording my speech surreptitiously or were simply trying to placate me, perhaps they felt badly, I don't know. But I answered their unstated question quite clearly that I wanted them to go home and reflect on these persecutory orders that they were following blindly. I told them quite frankly, that well intentioned though they might be in diligently trying to do their jobs to earn a living, the unintended consequences of their actions was having a drastic effect. It was not only creating fear and terror in the immigrant community and causing discussions in families about whether it was indeed time to leave this country - their home for the past so many years, but also providing legitimacy to these draconian measures by the government. In time, it will come to bite their own families - weren't they of Hispanic origin? At some point during my tirade, they wondered why I had not become a citizen all this time, I had sure been here long enough - as if one's native nationality is of no value. I felt a bit offended at that question and blurted out that in this unfortunate climate of oppression with G men knocking at my door, I saw no compelling reason to become a citizen of this United States.

I was making these comments to them perhaps at the risk of being labeled "uncooperative" and "non-submissive", and what if that is fed into the TIA system which in turn may deny me boarding my flight when I want to visit my mother in an emergency? Being a computer science person myself, I well understand the pitfalls of false positives of systems like the TIA, where an elephant can easily squeak by but a mouse is netted. And what of my transcribing these events and going public with it? Having been a private person all my life, not much caring for limelight or publicity, as my wife and I endeavor to raise our family with the freedom and opportunity that this country was providing us, will I now pay for exercising my free speech rights, the most prized edict of this nation? But is anyone listening? **Free speech only means something when there is someone listening. I can have all the free speech in vacuum and still die from asphyxiation.**

Thus ended my saga with the two G men from Homeland Security at my door. I doubt if I made much of an impression on them besides that of a very agitated person. But I do hope I was articulate enough to make them at least think twice before they go knocking on other immigrants home like this, when they can just as easily send them a courteous letter requesting them to bring their paper work to the immigration office for verification. Similarly, there is no need for the FBI to come knocking with such urgency that they even don't see the door bell, they can do likewise and request an audience at a police station along with an attorney. There is absolutely no justification for causing intimidation and fear by knocks on the door at homes in front of family members and children. Unless of course there is a more insidious purpose behind it, that the intent is indeed to intimidate the Muslim and immigrant community and create fear on purpose, so that many of them would simply pack up and leave. This rings too familiar with what transpired with the Jews in xenophobic Nazi Germany, and I

sure hope that this is not true in this country. Thus to demonstrate it is not true, why don't they just stop the harassment with the door knocks? I would have been quite willing to comply with a written request to show up at an immigration office with my green card, albeit I have grave concerns answering unjustified private questions that are just feeders into a database for the TIA. I would probably not answer them. Or would I? Two plus two can ultimately still make five!

Before they departed, the two officers did advise me that if we did not like the new laws being framed in this country, my wife being a US citizen, should write to our congress person and be an active participant in the democratic process. The conversation with them overall was quite cordial, albeit their responses at times didn't always make much sense to me - perhaps they were an invitation to keep talking, and there was indeed an Orwellian touch to the whole thing. I did not feel threatened by them except at the beginning when they wanted to see my Green card or else, and under any other 'normal' circumstance, these guys could very well have been my respected colleagues at work. And that is indeed one of my biggest fears, that ordinary well intentioned people, may end up becoming complicit in perpetuating the most heinous crimes of the future through their silence or unquestioning inadvertence of their jobs - yet again.

My attorney later told me that the first FBI agent called him up in response to his letter, and much after this second visit by Homeland security, identified himself as an FBI agent, and told him that it was a purely "voluntary" questioning they wanted to do of me. When my attorney informed him that I was quite keen on clearing up any misunderstandings they might have but that I would like my attorney to be present, the FBI agent said he did not see any point in interviewing me if an attorney was to be present, and just hung up!

In other words, if I have legal representation, they leave me alone! They only want to interrogate me if I don't have legal representation! And they don't even inform me that it is voluntary when they first come to visit and instead tell me that my name had loosely matched some terrorist they were hunting down! So much for the State's Security apparatus upholding the public's civil rights in good faith! My knowing and insisting on my rights because of the brochure that NLG had handed out was instrumental in defeating their design of interrogating me without legal representation - or so it appears for the moment. Only for the moment however, as they can always interrogate one at airports, especially on arrival from overseas. In the guise of making immigration checks, they are regularly putting Muslims through a barrage of unjustified questioning and there are no lawyers present then.

It is also somewhat confusing what precisely are their rights under the new Patriot Act 1. Contradicting my attorney's advice to show them my credentials, several other civil rights lawyers including from NLG subsequently told me that even Homeland Security does not have the right and could not have legally arrested me for not showing them my green card on demand inside my own home. This is why I had taken the stand in the first place. But those federal agents just wouldn't back off necessitating that call to my attorney. And while my attorney saved me from further unnecessary aggravation for he quickly realized that I should not become the test case for this, I am somewhat confused about where the new boundaries are between Rights of the people vs. Rights of the new laws, which are themselves

unconstitutional. This has become so bizarre that we are debating the legality of unconstitutional laws, but not with respect to the Constitution as it should be, but with respect to what extent they are applicable! I thank my attorney for thinking of my personal well being over and above those of the civil rights cause for which he has devoted his entire life (he even refused to take monetary compensation from me despite my telling him that I could afford to pay him and he instead directed me to donate it when I insisted that he accept payment for representing me). For had he said no instead of yes, I was fully determined to not show them my green card and who knows what might have happened. I was not living in America to experience their State Fascism. I could certainly experience plenty of it elsewhere in much of the developing world replete with American client-states.

I do not know when there will be another knock on my door. But I dread it very much. Not because I have something to be guilty for, but because it is indeed not a question of innocence or guilt. I am no more guilty than the poor Jew was in the 1930s as he was marched to unspeakable horrors, and it had also started for him with an innocuous knock on the door, only to be apologized for later by the rest of the world vowing never to forget. Or the poor Japanese was in the 1940s as he was unceremoniously scooped into the internment camps at the orders of a US President, again beginning with a knock on the door, only to be apologized for decades later by another US President. Or the alleged communist sympathizer was in the 1950s, when a US Senator used the FBI to run a campaign of fear and terror in the pursuit of a fictitious enemy, culminating in the FBI abusing their powers of surveillance on the respected civil rights leaders in the 1960s, leading to the eventual recognition that security agencies cannot be trusted to uphold the rights of ordinary citizens and a curtailment of their powers in the 1970s, which have now been re-unleashed in the 2000s on the Muslims by yet another overzealous US President.

Is this nation so "memory challenged" that it needs refreshing every decade or so at the expense of witch hunting another minority community? The only thing Muslims are guilty of, is perhaps the hijab they wear, the mosque they visit, the country they hail from, or their skin tone. Why should that elicit a visit from the FBI, when blond haired, church going, white Christian folks are exempt from such visits? Weren't Timothy McVeigh and Terry McNichols Christian terrorists who blew up the Oklahoma state building? While it has not been proven that 9-11 was the work of Muslims, only unsubstantiated blanket assertions made by the American government that it indeed was the handiwork of a handful of Arab "Muslim terrorists" (their bodies were never found, 5 of the 19 names attributed to the dead hijackers were later discovered to belong to innocent people quite alive and healthy), why is it suddenly okay to hold culpable an entire people because of the sins of individual criminals, even if they were "Muslims"? Such standards if applied to the Jews would lead to an uproar in the American society with charges of Anti-Semitism. And of course never applied to the Christians themselves. Double standards can ultimately, never win - but a price has to be paid for it - again and again.

Wake up sleeping and complacent America!

It may have started with the Muslims, but it will not end there. You might be next. Fascism usually starts against a minority group, because it is easier to tolerate since it is only happening to those "damn arabs", not to us - how did our oil get under their sand anyway? But the laws that are getting on the books in the persecution of the minority, tend to stay there for a long time. If not you, then your children will surely pay the price. Are the Bill of Rights so trivial that you can stay silent? If not for reasons of compassion for another, then at least for the logic of self preservation, do not let this injustice prevail.

It will be of no compensation when several Ph.D. theses will be written by the succeeding generations about why and how their parents' generation could remain so silent, as a once democratic country with such lofty ideals, slowly descended into a Fascist state within, and the world's most barbaric imperial power outside. All the warning signs are plain to see, their designs even documented by the imperial perpetrators themselves, if only one can read. The images of reality pleadingly tell the truth - if only one is allowed to see them.

If we, all of us, do not arm ourselves with knowledge and critical thinking now, and don't exercise our Constitutional rights in publicly challenging the injustices done in our name, it might indeed be too late by the time we do finally wake up, when they would dare knock on anyone's front door, not just the Muslims. And no rights left to legally protest! Countless would have paid the price for our privilege of writing remorseful theses, soul searching books, sorrowful poetry, and sheepish apologies, in the future - yet again.

Epilogue

Taking a leaf out of my own book, I gave my first interview to the American news media in a joint press conference with the ADC (American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee), the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and the NLG (National Lawyers Guild) on May 28, 2003, attempting to tell the whole world what they were trying to do to the Muslims. I called up all the organizations I could think off, from Washington DC to San Francisco, including CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations), and told them my story if they had 5 minutes to spare. I was quite certain that my phone was tapped, and I made it a point to speak very openly about my views in the hope that any eavesdroppers might actually learn something from me that would make them ponder. The authorities have mercifully left me alone since their last visit. I traveled overseas during the summer 2003 despite apprehensions of getting a grilling at the airports, and was pleasantly surprised to face no questioning of any sort, either upon departure, or upon re-entering the United States several months later, using the same Green Card that I have had for 20 years now. Perhaps some guardian angel has been watching (over) me.

Endnote

The two visits by the FBI and Homeland Security occurred in mid March and early April 2003, respectively. For days after the second visit by the Federal agents, I was very stressed out. I just could not figure out what they wanted from me, and why they had chosen me. I kept bugging my attorney with questions about how they could get hold of my name, until he suggested I take a look at the local newspaper of that day in which there was an article about the success of the FBI interviews with the local immigrant Iraqi community just as the bombing of Iraq was underway. He suggested that if their visits were bothering me so much that I couldn't sleep, that perhaps I should consider talking to the reporter who had written that story and enlighten them on the tactics the FBI was using that was being called "success", and that perhaps this would bring further attention to the Patriot Acts and how they were being used intrusively against innocent people. The idea of going public with my story took instant root, but instead of talking to the media as I was apprehensive that they will not tell the entire story or butcher it up as they normally tend to do, I sat down the same day, on Tuesday April 6, 2003, and wrote the bulk of this essay. The next day I surprised my attorney with a copy as a record of these events for his file. I also gave a copy to the NLG. They showed it to a TV documentary crew from Germany, who in turn called me up and asked to make a documentary on my family as part of their coverage of the emerging police state atmosphere in America showing how the Patriot Act had affected the lives of ordinary people in America, to be aired on public TV in France and Germany. I offered them an interview in my lawyers office, but they didn't think that would make good television viewing, and instead wished to film my family in our daily routine and open up the privacy of our home to the world. I wasn't ready for that yet, and declined.

The author, an ordinary researcher and writer on contemporary geopolitics, a minor justice activist, grew up in Pakistan, studied EECS at MIT, engineered for a while in high-tech Silicon Valley (patents [here](#)), and retired early to pursue other responsible interests. His maiden 2003 book was rejected by six publishers and can be read on the web at <http://PrisonersoftheCave.org>. He may be reached at <http://Humanbeingsfirst.org>.

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