

Case 12

On November 7, 2001, 22-year-old Samar Kaukab was headed back home to Columbus, Ohio after attending a conference in Chicago hosted by the Volunteers in Service to America. Set to depart from O'Hare airport, Samar and some of the other conference attendees proceeded to the security checkpoint in Terminal 1. Wearing a hijab, traditional headdress for Muslim women, Samar walked through the metal detector without setting it off. However, at that point, a member of the Illinois National Guard directed the security staff to search Samar further. After passing the handheld metal detector around her body several times, the National Guardsman instructed her to remove her hijab. Samar objected, explaining that, for religious reasons, she could not remove the jibab in public, especially in the presence of men. She did, however, indicate a willingness to remove it in a private location in the company of women. Despite her pleas, security continued to insist that she remove her hijab. She finally persuaded the National Guardsman and the security personnel to allow her to be searched in a private room with female security employees. There the female officers felt around her sweater and bra, unbuttoned and unzipped her pants, and patted her down over her underwear. "I felt as though the security personnel had singled me out because I didn't belong, wasn't trusted, and wouldn't be welcomed in my own country," said Samar. American Civil Liberties Union lawyer, Lorie Chaiten, stated that "Ms Kaukab was identified and subjected to a humiliating search not because she posed any security threat, but only because her wearing of a hijab identified her as Muslim. . . . Security personnel surrounded her, detained her and subjected her to an embarrassing and degrading search simply based on her ethnicity and religion."

Although many Americans would likely disapprove of the way Samar Kaukab and other Arab Americans have been singled out in airports after the September 11, 2001, some believe that greater scrutiny of Arabs, including Arab-Americans, is warranted, at least in airports. While many view racial profiling as ordinarily impermissible, they believe, nonetheless, that targeting Arabs in security checks at airports is morally justifiable. One such person is *National Journal* columnist, Stuart Taylor. Taylor points out that he is not advocating a general practice of the racial profiling of Arabs. Indeed, he holds that most racial profiling is impermissible, even when there is a statistical justification. Detaining a young African-American male, Taylor explains, may help catch drug dealers, but is not worth the harm it causes or the racism it may suggest. However, for Taylor, racial profiling of Arabs is morally permissible in airports. Among other reasons, Taylor notes that "100% of the people who have hijacked airliners for the purpose of mass-murdering Americans have been Arab men." If we consider this in conjunction with the fact that "a virulent perversion of Islam is the only movement in the world bent on mass-murdering Americans," it should become clear that such profiling is warranted in this specific case, says Taylor.

Many, however, object to profiling Arabs in airports and elsewhere. According to Frank Wu, Professor at Howard University School of Law and author of *Yellow: Race in America: Beyond Black and White*, the U.S. must not "purchase national unity by

ostracizing one group.” Just the opposite, says Professor Wu, “we should be taking steps to protect Arab American and other minorities from such discriminatory practices.”

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