

**February 9, 2001**

**Honorable George W. Bush**

President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of your inauguration as the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States of America, the American Muslim Council (AMC) and the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy (CSID), would like to congratulate you and wish you success in your presidency. America today is home to a growing number of Muslim Americans who are an integral part of American society. It is estimated that, by 2010, Islam will become the second largest religion in America. During the recent elections, 74% of American Muslims voted for you, after the American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC) endorsed your candidacy.

The American Muslim leadership is uniquely positioned, and stands ready, to support you in advancing the security of our nation, while building real alliances and friendships for the U.S. with the 1.2 billion Muslims in the World. As Muslim Americans, along with those who study Islam's role in the world, we want to work with you, and with your administration, to build a more diverse, united, and compassionate America, and to bridge the gap between the U.S. and the Muslim world.

On January 12, 2001, AMC and CSID convened a panel of 25 American experts (Muslim and non-Muslim) on the question of how relations between the U.S. and the Muslim World can be advanced. This letter and the attachment include some of the major recommendations resulting from this meeting. We hope that they can serve the important function of advancing your administration's foreign policy goals in the years ahead.

The Muslim World contains more than 55 countries, including such strategically important countries as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Islam is the second largest religion in the world, and third largest in Europe and the U.S. The 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, nearly half of whom are under the age of 30 with unemployment rates between 20 and 25 percent, are torn between the values of the modern secular West and their own Islamic values and traditions. While they want to benefit from the technological and scientific achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they also do not want to give up their own heritage and religion. Unfortunately, the Muslim peoples are increasingly alienated from their own governments, many of which are highly ineffective, corrupt, and authoritarian. If the

Muslim World is to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century with self-confidence, peace, and stability, governments in the Muslim World must find new modes of politics that operate on popular participation and consultation rather than coercion.

The problem is that in much of the Middle East, the U.S. is perceived as particularly close to and protective of some of the least democratic countries in the world. The U.S. should not allow authoritarian regimes to justify their repression of all opposition movements as a defense against “fundamentalism” or “extremism”. It is precisely dictatorship and authoritarianism that fuels extremism and radical change. Change is coming, and it is in our American interest as well as in the interest of peace and stability in the world that this change be gradual rather than abrupt, peaceful rather than violent. To achieve this, the U.S. needs to be a persistent advocate of political and economic liberalization, including a greater allowance for civil society. There is only one long-term solution: making governments more accountable to their citizens through the rule of law, guaranteed freedoms, and free and fair elections.

Building good relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world requires nurturing more respect toward Islam and Muslim civilization and cultures. U.S. policy-makers must be better informed on Islam, a religion and civilization that is, and will remain, a powerful force in the new century. The Middle East policy team needs to be reorganized in order to bring greater understanding, balance, and diversity of viewpoints in the policymaking process. We need to initiate and encourage a civilizational dialogue with the peoples of the Muslim world.

American Muslims, as represented by our two organizations, want more access and a voice in our foreign policy apparatus. We want improved relations between our country and the Muslim world. The specific policy recommendations in the attachment are designed to show the world that the U.S. is not the enemy of Islam or Muslims, and that we can indeed look forward to stronger ties between your administration and the Muslim countries.

Finally, we urge you to appoint more American Muslims in your administration at senior level positions and to continue to consult with us, as you do with leaders of other major religious groups, on these and related issues. In addition, we hope that you will soon appoint a White House liaison with the American Muslim Community, and work toward inclusion of more American Muslims in the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

We pray that God Almighty will bless you with further success, and guide you in leading our nation and the world to peace, stability, and justice for all.

Sincerely;

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**Dr. Yahya Basha**

President  
American Muslim Council (AMC)

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**Prof. Ali A. Mazrui**

Chair of the Board  
Center for the Study of Islam &  
Democracy (CSID)

# **Main Policy Recommendations**

## **I. U.S. Values and Muslim World:**

American foreign policy should be based not only on our own national interests but also on the fundamental values of the American people: freedom, justice, equality, and democracy. The American people want to treat other people with fairness and justice and strive to be a moral force for human dignity in the world.

## **II. Iraq and American Compassion:**

Our current policy of economic strangulation in Iraq has seriously damaged the U.S. image across the Arab and Muslim world. The economic sanctions have had a devastating impact upon innocent civilians, children in particular, whose only fault is that they are ruled by a dictator. According to UN sources, more than 1.3 million Iraqi children suffer from chronic malnutrition. It is time for a new U.S. policy in Iraq, which meets the U.S. security objectives without punishing the Iraqi people by economic sanctions.

## **III. The Arab-Israeli Impasse:**

The U.S. must be an honest broker in the Middle East conflict. American uncritical and unlimited support for Israel is hurting our interests in the Muslim World. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no people can be expected to live submissively under a military occupation that has lasted more than 30 years. Since 1988, all Israeli governments have continued aggressive settlement and road construction on confiscated Palestinian lands, and the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza has doubled since the 1993 Oslo Accords. These settlements are a roadblock to a long and lasting peace in the Middle East. Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and an end to the illegal practice of settlements will pave the way to a lasting peace. Such a peace must include a viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its Capital. Jerusalem must be shared between two people (Palestinian Muslims and Christians and Israeli Jews) and three religions. The resolution of the Jerusalem issue will advance cooperation and understanding between the three major monotheistic religions of the world: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

## **IV. The U.S., Iran, and Libya:**

A measure of rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran would not only help U.S. interests in the region, but also improve relations between the U.S. and the Muslim World. The Iran-

Libya Sanctions Act (the D'Amato Bill) has outlived its usefulness and should be repealed. We should also settle all outstanding U.S.-Iranian claims currently under adjudication at The Hague.

#### **V. Kashmir and Nuclear Proliferation:**

One of the major flash points of the world is in South Asia, especially relations between India and Pakistan. Now that both countries have nuclear weapons, it is more urgent than ever that the root cause of their dispute be resolved. That root cause is KASHMIR. U.S. policy towards making South Asia a nuclear-free zone is unlikely to succeed without first resolving the future of Kashmir. India, Pakistan, and Kashmiri leaders need to be induced to come to the negotiating table. The nuclear issue is inseparable from the Kashmir issue.

#### **VI. Indonesia: Democracy vs. National Integrity?**

In the history of the Soviet Union, democratization (glasnost and perestroika) resulted in territorial disintegration. Many Muslims worry lest democratization in Indonesia should also be leading towards territorial disintegration. We must stop the appearance that democracy is a threat to national integrity in Indonesia, Nigeria, or Pakistan. The United States should try harder to be a stabilizing force for the territorial integrity of Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.