

Consequences: The lasting effects of 9/11

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [October 16, 2007](#) issue

On the sixth anniversary of 9/11 I joined a spokesperson for the American Muslim community on a panel focusing on the lasting effects of 9/11 on “faith, media and society.” The presentation by Imam A. Malik Mujahid, chair of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, was illuminating—and discomfoting.

He began by saying that there is now a Sixth Pillar of Islam for American Muslims: “Thou shalt condemn terrorism five times a day.” Mujahid pointed out that Muslim leaders here and abroad have condemned the 9/11 attacks and other suicide bombings, but the press simply doesn’t pay attention.

He reported that life has become increasingly difficult for Muslims living in the U.S. A Pew Forum survey revealed that 70 percent of Americans say that Islam has little or nothing in common with their own religion, and 45 percent believe that Islam encourages violence. He said 500,000 Muslims were interviewed by the FBI after 9/11 (25 percent of all Muslim households); 28,000 Muslims were detained, many in special prisons built for the purpose; but only 39 Muslims have been charged or convicted.

Mujahid told about preaching in a mosque in Pakistan—he is a native Pakistani—shortly after the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl by extremists. He spoke about Pearl’s career, family and values. There were, he said, many tears and much sympathy among the Islamic congregants.

Muslims understand—better than we Christians do, I think—the tragic, deadly convergence between Islamic fundamentalism and a violent political ideology. They ask simply that we be fair and informed in our assessments. On the situation in Iraq, Mujahid suggested that Americans should remember that Iraq has often been invaded and occupied by Western military powers, and that Iraqi conventional wisdom holds that the goal is always Iraqi oil.

Mujahid and other Muslim leaders are under no illusions about what may happen if American and coalition forces withdraw from Iraq, but he thinks that the U.S. presence is making matters worse. That's a conclusion to which many Americans have come—including Melvin Laird, who was secretary of defense in the Nixon administration. Laird wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "Our presence is what feeds the insurgency."