

2011 Project SALAM Activities Report

2011 ACTIVITIES REPORT

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by Steve Downs

1. Muslim Solidarity Committee (MSC) (<http://nepajac.org/Aref&Hossain.htm>)

The MSC has sponsored a number of events, marches, forums, and demonstrations over the years. This year in March, the MSC organized a forum at Albany Law School about the practice of isolating prisoners in federal prisons (<http://www.projectsalam.org/events/03-30-11.html>), and in August the MSC organized a march to mark the 5th anniversary of Aref and Hossain's arrest, followed by a successful music and arts festival, Arts Against Repression, held to coincide with the end of Ramadan (<http://www.projectsalam.org/events/08-05-11.html>). On November 30, the MSC is sponsoring a speakers' forum at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Ave. in Albany, starting at 6:30 p.m. The forum will focus on the militarization of law enforcement *and the erosion of civil liberties in the United States*. Tom Burke, one of twenty-four activists being targeted by the FBI for peace activities, will be a featured speaker. We hope you will come; it's free and open to all.

Muslim Solidarity Committee members visit the Aref family once a week so that Yassin can call his family from prison. The family has refused to have a telephone, and so someone from the committee must bring a cell phone each week for the family call. Jeanne Finley, Lynne Jackson, and Claire Nolan have been especially diligent in this important weekly visit.

In 2010, Yassin was chosen by the Center for Constitutional Rights to be the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit (<http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/current-cases/aref%2C-et-al.-v.-holder%2C-et-al.>) challenging the legality of the Communication Management Units, or CMUs (two illegal prison monstrosities created to hold mostly Muslim prisoners in isolation). This year, when the government's motion to dismiss the lawsuit was rejected by the court and the government realized it would have to go to trial, it removed Yassin from the CMU in Marion, Illinois (previously he was at the CMU in Terre Haute, Indiana), apparently hoping that in doing so it would moot the lawsuit since the lead plaintiff would now have no complaint. The government's strategy did not work, and the lawsuit will continue.

In August, Kathy Manley and I took Yassin's family on a five-day visit to Marion (1,000 miles from Albany), after Yassin had been transferred back into the general prison

population and could now have physical contact with his family for the first time in years. What a touching sight it was to see how the children hung onto their father, and sat in his lap, and pulled white hairs out of his beard, and could not keep their hands off him. What a cruel prison system that insists that



The Aref family visiting at Marion.

Left to right: Alaa, Dilnia (front), Salah, Yassin, Azzam, Zuhur

the security of the nation depends on forcing young children visiting the CMU to talk to their father through a Plexiglas window on a telephone.

After Yassin (www.yassinaref.com) was placed into the general prison population, he became eligible to be transferred to a prison closer to home. We are happy to report that on November 15, we received notice that he has been transferred to the low-security Allenwood Penitentiary in Pennsylvania—still about five hours from Albany, but much better than the nearly twenty hours of driving necessary to get to Marion.

The MSC also helps provide information to journalists, writers, and the media about the Aref/Hossain case and many other cases of preemptive prosecution. The efforts of Jeanne Finley and Kathy Manley in particular resulted in three very important articles being written about Muslim cases this year:

- “Little Gitmo” by Christopher Stewart in *New York Magazine*, <http://nymag.com/news/features/yassin-aref-2011-7/>
- “To Catch a Terrorist” by Petra Bartosiewicz in *Harper’s Magazine*, <http://www.projectsalam.org/downloads/HarpersMagazine-terrorism-Bartosiewicz.pdf>
- “The Informants” by Trevor Aaronson in *Mother Jones*, <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/08/fbi-terrorist-informants>

The MSC, together with Project SALAM and the Albany chapter of the National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms (NCPFC—see below), meet monthly at the Masjid As-Salam at 276-278 Central Ave, Albany. All are welcome; please join us at one of our meetings and become part of the movement to reclaim of our country.

2. Project SALAM

Soon after the founding of the MSC, it became apparent that there were many groups all over the U.S. that were facing similar injustices done to members of their Muslim communities. The first group we encountered was advocating on behalf of Dr. Rafil Dhafir (<http://www.dhafirtrial.net/>), an oncologist from Syracuse who had been running a Muslim charity to relieve the suffering of children in Iraq caused by the UN and the American embargo of Iraq in the 1990s. The government first claimed that Dr. Dhafir was using his charity to finance terror. Then, when the government discovered there were no designated terrorist organizations in Iraq (Saddam Hussein would not permit them), it switched theories, claiming that Dr. Dhafir had engaged in Medicaid fraud, even though prosecutors acknowledged that there were no fake patients or treatments. (The government claimed that on occasion Dr. Dhafir's office had used the wrong reimbursement formula.) After Dhafir was convicted and sentenced to twenty-two years for Medicaid fraud, the government switched theories again, claiming that he was a terrorist, and sent him to the CMU in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he remains.

The second group encountered by the MSC was advocating on behalf of Fahad Hashmi (<http://www.freefahad.com/>), a young Muslim graduate student from New York who had allowed an acquaintance to store a bag of waterproof socks and ponchos in his apartment in London for a week. The bag eventually ended up with terrorists, and the government was claiming that Hashmi's storage of the bag for one week constituted material support for terrorism. After being transferred back to New York City from London, Hashmi was immediately placed in solitary confinement under Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), which severely limited who could visit him and which legally gagged visitors from discussing what they had learned during their visit. After three years in solitary confinement, Hashmi was too mentally debilitated to cooperate in his defense, and he pleaded guilty because going to trial was no longer an option.

On the surface, these three cases had almost no similarity to each other. The Aref-Hossain case was an elaborate sting operation involving a dummy missile, code words, and massive secret surveillance. Dhafir's case wasn't even a terrorist case at all—in fact, during the trial, the prosecution had specifically obtained an order from the judge prohibiting the defense from referring to the case as “terrorist.” And Hashmi's case, involving the trivial storage of a bag of clothes for a week, never went to trial, and he eventually pleaded guilty. Yet we all felt that these cases were related. Eventually we worked out an analysis of preemptive prosecution—that, based on a target's “ideology,” the government would bring fake or pretext charges against targets to “preempt” them from possibly engaging in prohibited conduct in the future. The actual charges were essentially irrelevant; the point was that the government would decide that the target had to be “neutralized” (incarcerated), and then find a charge—any charge, whether valid or not—to accomplish that purpose. And of course, all the defendants were Muslims.

In August 2008, Katherine Hughes for the Dr. Dhafir Support Committee, Faisal Hashmi (Fahad's brother) for the Free Fahad Committee, and the MSC jointly sponsored a conference at Albany Law School to discuss preemptive prosecution. Project SALAM was born out of this conference, to document in a database all the cases nationwide that represented preemptive prosecutions and to advocate for the defendants' release. The beloved "peoples' lawyer," Lynne Stewart (<http://lynnestewart.org/>), was the keynote speaker for the conference. (She was later sentenced to ten years in jail on material support for terrorism charges for violating a SAMs gag order when she mentioned at a press conference something that her client had told her while he was in solitary confinement. At sentencing, Lynne was a seventy-year-old grandmother who was struggling with breast cancer and had lost her license to practice law as a result of her conviction. Her sentence was a chilling warning to lawyers to avoid diligently representing their clients, or they too could be charged with material support.) Eventually Project SALAM built up its database to over 400 cases (<http://www.projectsalam.org/database.html>); prepared descriptions of about 100 of the most publicized ones; and posted the database on its website, along with a history of repression in the U.S., entitled *Victims of America's Dirty Wars* (http://www.projectsalam.org/downloads/Victims_of_Americas_Dirty_Wars.pdf).

Project SALAM also discovered a little-noticed paragraph in a July 10, 2009 report by the Inspector General of the Justice Department (<http://www.justice.gov/oig/special/s0907.pdf>). This report found that in terrorism cases, the U.S. government was not searching its secret surveillance tapes for exculpatory evidence as required by law. The Inspector General recommended that the Justice Department review all of its terrorist convictions to determine if the government had failed to turn over any exculpatory evidence (i.e., evidence that indicated the defendants might be innocent, or that might help the defense). Since the position of Project SALAM was that *all* of the preemptive prosecution cases were based on contrived pretext charges, any honest review for exculpatory evidence should result in the dismissal of most of the cases. Project SALAM wrote to the Justice Department and to officials to ask that Congress adopt the recommendation of the Inspector General, but to date there has been no response.

Thus by 2009, Project SALAM had a database, detailed write-ups of over 100 cases, a substantial booklet on how preemptive prosecution repressed ideologies, and a government report that suggested how to get the defendants' cases reviewed and dismissed. But it had no money, influence, connections, or publicity to move its agenda forward. Then three things happened to change that situation.

In March 2010, Lynne Jackson of Project SALAM and Albany City Councilmember Dominick Calsolaro organized a large group of both Muslims and non-Muslims to march to City Hall and request that the Common Council pass a resolution asking Congress to implement the recommendations of the Inspector General's report. Nearly thirty Muslim family members and others spoke to the council about the horrors they had experienced when the FBI arrested innocent loved ones for no apparent reason and had them locked

up for absurdly long prison sentences. After an emotional debate, the council voted 10-0 in favor of the resolution, with four abstentions (<http://www.projectsalam.org/rally.html>). The vote became known as the “Albany Resolution” and influenced many people across the country to learn more about Project SALAM and its work.

In August 2010, Joe Lombardo, a locally based activist, and other peace activists organized a national conference in Albany to form a new peace group, UNAC (United National Anti-War Committee) (<https://nationalpeaceconference.org/>). Earlier peace organizations had kept a distance from the Muslim community to avoid being labeled as affiliated with terrorism; UNAC, however, saw the connection between demonizing the Muslim community in America to justify wars abroad and the loss of civil liberties at home, and embraced the Muslim cause. At the end of the conference, hundreds of peace delegates from all over the country marched to the Masjid As-Salam on Central Avenue, where they were welcomed by mosque president Shamshad Ahmad and were introduced to the complexities of preemptive prosecution (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXVUgnufOi4>). It was a defining moment for many of the delegates, who came to know of Project SALAM’s work through the conference and the mosque visit.

Finally, in September 2010, the FBI decided to target twenty-four peace activists in the Midwest, allegedly for giving material support to terrorism by trying to bring peace to conflicted areas. The government’s theory followed the Supreme Court’s decision in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holder_v._Humanitarian_Law_Project), which was that any contact with a designated terrorist organization was illegal, even if the purpose was to bring peace, or to reduce terrorism, or to relieve suffering. Stripped down to its essentials, the government’s case against the peace activists was exactly the same as the government’s case against most of the Muslim preemptive prosecution victims. (I was at a meeting of Muslims who were discussing preemptive prosecution when a young man raised his hand and said he was one of the twenty-four peace activists who had been raided by the FBI, essentially for what the Muslims were being accused of. The whole room broke into applause—not because they wanted to see him indicted, but because the Muslim community now knew that it was no longer alone. White America could no longer pretend that material support for terrorism was reserved only for Muslims). The twenty-four peace activists immediately formed the STOP FBI Repression Committee (<http://www.stopfbi.net/>) and began to tour the country to publicize their cases while including Muslims and Project SALAM to make common cause.

As a result of these three events, Project SALAM’s work became well known in both the Muslim and the peace communities, which now embraced the Muslim cause with great enthusiasm. Project SALAM members gave numerous talks to both Muslim and peace groups in Boston, Connecticut, Philadelphia, New York, Rochester, Syracuse, Tampa, Atlanta, Detroit, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Cleveland, and other cities. For example, in October of this year, Jeff Mackler, one of the leaders of the peace movement, organized a one-week tour of twelve different cities in the San Francisco Bay area. The

tour included me speaking about preemptive prosecution, as well as Jess Sundin, one of the twenty-four targeted peace activists. Jess, in her late 30s, was raising her seven-year-old daughter with her partner, Steff Yorek, who was also one of the targeted activists. Jess is a funny, smart, and dedicated activist, and I came to really care about her. With her group, the Freedom Road Socialist Party, she had gone to Columbia to monitor elections there involving the FARC, and had also gone to Palestine to show solidarity with certain (non-terrorist) women's groups trying to cope with the Occupation and repression. For this, the FBI had raided her house; seized computers, books, and papers; and called her to testify before a grand jury. She and her group were being targeted for their dedication to peace. They all agreed not to testify before the grand jury, even if it meant going to jail. Jess and Steff have made arrangements to have their daughter raised by someone else if they are sentenced to prison, and are touring the country, speaking to as many groups as possible. They are determined not to hide anything or be intimidated in any way from their mission of bringing peace. I cannot believe that the U.S. government would want to target Jess and the others, but I have to acknowledge that if they treat her like a Muslim, she and Steff and the others could spend the rest of their lives in jail. The possibility of this sickens me every time I think of it.

3. National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms (NCPFC) (www.civilfreedoms.org)

Another important event occurred as a result of the 2010 Albany peace conference. The Al-Arian family contacted Project SALAM and asked to meet with us to discuss how we could use our ideas to make the organization a national one.

Sami Al-Arian (<http://freesamialarian.com/>), a brilliant and dynamic Palestinian, was a professor at the University of South Florida until 2003, when he was charged with material support for terrorism because his free speech advocacy on behalf of Palestinian rights supposedly sounded too much like ideas being advocated by Palestinian terrorist groups. (Under the *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* ruling, if free speech is “coordinated” with a terrorist group, it can be material support for terrorism. “Coordination” is not defined, but presumably it could include saying too many things similar to what a terrorist group is saying). After years in jail in solitary confinement and a nonsensical trial, Al-Arian was not convicted of a single charge, although the jury hung on several minor counts.

When the government insisted on keeping him in jail until he could be retried on the remaining counts, Al-Arian struck a deal with the Florida prosecutor: he would agree to be deported if he did not have to cooperate with the U.S. government. Before he could be deported, however, another prosecutor in Virginia called Al-Arian before a grand jury to answer questions about issues for which he had already been found not guilty. The Virginia prosecutor had a reputation for calling defendants who had been found not guilty to testify, and then charging them with perjury. Al-Arian refused to appear before the grand jury, and was charged with refusal to testify. After his “refusal” trial started in 2008, the judge received a statement from the Florida prosecutor stating his

understanding that the Florida agreement absolved Al-Arian from having to appear before a grand jury. The judge then entertained a motion to dismiss the charges, and in the meantime released Al-Arian from jail to house arrest at his daughter's Virginia apartment. As of this date, some three years later, the judge still has not ruled, and Al-Arian is still under house arrest in his daughter's apartment. It is widely believed that if the judge ever rules, the government will have the ruling reversed, or will bring another indictment before another judge to keep Al-Arian from ever being released. This is what has become of justice in America.

The Al-Arian family was clearly interested in the Albany Resolution and in seeing the government forced to produce exculpatory evidence, which would show the malice and hypocrisy in its pursuit of the political charges against Sami. Moreover, the family knew many influential people, and in a short time had assembled a coalition of eighteen civil rights organizations, including the Center for Constitutional Rights (<http://ccrjustice.org/>), the Bill of Rights Defense Committee (<http://www.bordc.org/>), the Muslim Legal Fund of America (<http://www.mlfa.org/>), and many other such organizations to form a new coalition, the National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms, or NCPCF.

NCPCF was officially established on October 3, 2010, with an impressive board of directors and five committees to start the work. I am co-chair of the Policy Committee, which has set an agenda of laws that we want to have adopted by Congress, starting with the "FAIR" Act— **F**acilitate **A**pplication of **I**nspector General's **R**ecommendation Act—to have all the domestic terrorism convictions reviewed to determine if the government complied with its obligation to disclose exculpatory information. The Policy Committee has also set as a priority passing bills to: 1) Restrict the right of the government to incarcerate defendants pre-trial in solitary confinement and hold them there for years, until they are so mentally debilitated that they cannot go to trial and have no alternative but to plead guilty; 2) Amend the material support for terrorism statutes to require that defendants must intend to support violence and terrorism, so that free speech, charitable acts, and peacemaking efforts do not become the basis for criminal prosecution, as repeatedly happens now; and 3) Provide for a robust entrapment defense to prevent the current FBI practice of sending *agents provocateur* to entrap people who had no intent to violate the law, based solely on the target's "ideology," religion, or ethnicity. We are also considering bringing lawsuits on these same issues, but both the legislative and judicial paths appear difficult.

Kathy Manley is chair of NCPCF's Legal Committee. She is responsible, with the help of others, for compiling the database of defendants who are being preemptively prosecuted and for establishing "brief banks" and other legal supports for defendants trying to defend themselves against government prosecutions. She also organizes "know your rights" presentations and recruits lawyers to work pro bono to represent defendants unfairly questioned and charged.

Mel Underbakke, from Tampa, Florida, is head of the Education Committee. She has been organizing events all over the country at which Kathy, Lynne Jackson, Marlene Jenkins (an Albany-based mother of a preemptively prosecuted Muslim), and I, and many others, have spoken. Mel has also compiled lists of DVDs, documentaries, publications, and other educational materials, which are posted on the NCPCF website.

Laila Al-Arian heads the Media Committee, which responds to events and publicizes our programs.

Faisal Hashmi heads the Prisoners and Families Committee, which is collecting information about the victims of preemptive prosecution and assessing how best these individuals can be helped. Each case is different. But there is so much fear and repression that the job is almost impossible. Yet we cannot leave the victims behind, and indeed once empowered to speak out, the victims often become our most eloquent spokespersons, putting a human face on the suffering that the government callously ignores or covers up with Islamophobic rhetoric.

It now appears that NCPCF will become fully funded and will be able to hire a staff of professionals to start the work of reclaiming the Constitution. We are looking to start chapters in many different states. Albany has the honor of being the first chapter established, perhaps in recognition of its pivotal role in the founding of NCPCF. Only the desperate nature of these times could have moved so large and ambitious a civil rights project along so fast.

As to our prospects for success, unfortunately right now they appear grim. Over the last few years, major civil rights organizations like the Center for Constitutional Rights and the ACLU have challenged various unconstitutional policies of the government (although oddly they have not directly challenged the persecution of Muslims, which is the gap that NCPCF hopes to fill), and their experience has been summed up in the statement, “Congress and the courts are closed to us—so we have only three things we can do: organize, organize, organize,” i.e., reach out to allied groups, find common ground, and start a political movement.

4. Allied Groups in the Effort to Organize

There are a number of closely allied groups with which we can make common cause. Already NCPCF and Project SALAM are so closely allied with the STOP FBI Repression peace activists that we are virtually twins. The Muslims remind the public of how completely our government is willing to abandon the Constitution in order to repress ideologies it does not like, and the peace activists remind the public that political repression is not limited to Muslims. “Terrorism” is a meaningless word that is now indiscriminately applied to any ideology or group that the government wants to repress.

Another allied group is immigrants/refugees. While documented immigrants and naturalized American citizens face preemptive prosecution, undocumented immigrants

often face preemptive deportation, a process so cruel, despicable, and secret that its depths may never be known, and its consequences will reverberate for generations. Undocumented workers can be snatched off the street at any time, incarcerated at private prisons for months or years without charges and without ever seeing a lawyer, and then summarily deported after secret court appearances that have barely any pretext of a legal proceeding. In some areas, teams of volunteers have been formed to investigate when people disappear, to collect their possessions, and to try to then locate them in the gulag of American deportation centers that usually keep the location of their prisoners secret. When parents are snatched off the street, they often leave young children behind. In some cases, these children are not reunited with their parents and are simply put up for adoption. Because of fear, language problems, secret proceedings, and other abuses, it has been hard to organize immigrants into a political force, but the parallels are there and they are being increasingly included in progressive political discussions.

Many of the abuses associated with preemptive prosecution originated in an earlier government campaign of repression in the 1960 called by its FBI code name COINTELPRO (COunter INTELligence PROgram). In white America, COINTELPRO is chiefly remembered for its efforts to discredit and smear anti-Vietnam War protesters, but among people of color COINTELPRO is remembered for its outrageous attacks on Black Power and Native, Puerto Rican, and other national organizers. The government launched a terror campaign against these groups that included disruption, false charges, and even planned assassinations (Fred Hampton and Mark Clark being the most famous). There are many victims of COINTELPRO still in jail who were apparently framed by the government—Mumia Abu-Jamal, Jamil Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown), the MOVE 9, and Leonard Peltier are some of the more familiar examples. In the 1970s, the Church Committee exposed this FBI lawlessness and spearheaded restrictions on the FBI's ability to engage in this kind of outrageous conduct again (restrictions which were removed after 9/11), but the government never went back to review the prior cases, most of which were state prosecutions, to possibly release those defendants who were unjustly incarcerated. If we as an organization are asking that the government review all of the terrorism convictions, do we not have a moral obligation to ask the government to also review the convictions of those COINTELPRO victims? People of color who advocate for COINTELPRO victims are also allies in the struggle against the rebirth of COINTELPRO after 9/11. Whenever I speak across the country I mention COINTELPRO, and often older African Americans nod in agreement. They have not forgotten what happened to their community, and neither should we.

The Occupy movement in many ways embodies the wisdom contained in the phrase “Congress and the courts are closed to us,” or what might be simplified as “The government is closed to us.” Under this theory, there is no point in making legislative demands or seeking redress in the courts, because a small group of corporations and the wealthy controls the government, the courts, and the political parties. There is no real government regardless of which political party is in control; it is just political theater,

with the results determined by the interests of the 1%. Certainly this analysis is not fundamentally different from what we have experienced recently in trying to achieve justice through the present government and court system. Instead, the Occupy movement concentrates on process: learning to make decisions by consensus, without leaders who can be co-opted and bought off; learning to listen to those who have been victimized by the system; learning to live without the corporate luxuries that fund the repression of the 99%; learning to live peacefully while waiting for the violence of the 1%, who cannot tolerate any challenge to their power. Simply by occupying public space in solidarity, the Occupy movement testifies to the moral and legal bankruptcy of our government. Like Toto pulling the curtain aside to reveal the Wizard of Oz as a humbug, the Occupy movement reveals the secret machinations that keep the 1% in power and wealth. As more people come to understand this essential truth, the contrived governmental crises and the phony solutions to non-existent problems which have so far passed for governing will increasingly be seen for what they are—lies and manipulations to benefit the rich—and the power structure to maintain these lies and manipulations will collapse.

Kathy Manley is very involved as a lawyer and participant in the Occupy Albany movement. Members of the MSC and Project SALAM have done teach-ins at Occupy sites about the criminalization of free speech, charitable activities, peacemaking, and ideology. The people at the Occupy site for the most part are smart, disciplined, focused, and determined. Don't believe the nonsense that is regularly distributed by the media about the Occupy movement—remember who is paying the media's salaries. Go to an Occupy site, especially to a General Assembly, and see for yourself. These folks are going to change the political landscape. They are our natural allies in changing how justice is perceived in America.

It seems likely that in the near future the FBI will begin a campaign of intimidation against labor. After all, there is not much money to be made from bashing Muslims and peace activists, but there is an enormous amount of corporate money to be made from bashing the unions. Expect to see phrases such as “labor terrorist” appearing soon, as a way to demonize labor in the same way that the label “Communist” was used to demonize and break unions in the 1950s. The process has already started. Carlos Montes, a respected Chicano (American of Mexican descent) activist and labor leader, was one of the twenty-four peace activists targeted by the FBI for material support for terrorism. However, the FBI was so eager to discredit Carlos that it arranged for a six-count indictment to be brought against him for weapons violations. Carlos recently passed a background check and legally bought a gun for his personal use. The FBI then investigated him and discovered that forty-two years ago, when he was in his early 20s, he was present when the police tried to break up a labor march, and Carlos was accused of throwing an empty soda can that bounced off a policeman's arm. Nobody was injured, but the charge, involving a police officer, was a felony. Carlos was arrested, pleaded guilty to a reduced misdemeanor charge, and was released. Unfortunately, the forty-two-year-old records do not clearly indicate whether the charge was reduced to a

misdemeanor, although Carlos would obviously not have pleaded guilty to a felony for so minor an incident. Using the ambiguity of the records, the FBI proceeded on the assumption that Carlos had been convicted of a felony, which would have made him ineligible to buy a gun in California—thus his recent gun purchase would be illegal. (I relate this to you only to show how desperate the FBI is to find something with which to attack Carlos) (<http://www.stopfbi.net/2012/6/5/victory-against-repression-carlos-montes-court-case-ends-victory>). This vicious ideological attack, which fits the definition of preemptive prosecution, is especially significant because it is directed at a labor leader. I met Carlos last week at a Chicago conference, and his big smile and confident openness indicated to me that the government has no idea whom they have picked on. He will clearly be an ally of ours in the years to come, and I believe he and others will bring the labor movement with them also.

These are some of the events that have illuminated this last tumultuous year. I am often reminded of the statement by Pastor Martin Niemöller after he barely survived the Nazi repression in Germany. He stated:

First they came for the Jews (Muslims), and I did not say anything because I was not a Jew (Muslim).

Then they came for the Communists (peace activists), and I did not say anything because I was not a Communist (peace activist).

Then they came for the trade unionists (labor), and I did not say anything because I was not a trade unionist (worker).

Then they came for me, and there was nobody left to speak for me.

This statement is not only a profound commentary on the need for solidarity with all groups that are being targeted unjustly, but it is also a clear road map for how we can lose our government to fear if we are not prepared to become involved. It is time for all of us to stand up and be heard.