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FBI raid sparks protest at MU

By Lindsay Toler, Reporter

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In protest of the recent FBI raid on the Columbia home of Shakir Abdul-Kaf Hamoodi, a prominent Islamic community member, the Muslim Students Organization and Students for Progressive Action demonstrated at Speaker's Circle on Wednesday.

"Our purpose was to raise awareness of the raid that happened Sept. 18 and also to bring that in light of how that can affect any MU student and any U.S. citizen," MSO spokeswoman Faeza Khan said. "This is not a Muslim versus non-Muslim issue."

Students and community members held up signs and pamphlets as they spoke to students passing by Speaker's Circle about the raids and their context within the holy month of Ramadan.

MSO member Farah Ali, who held a sign that read "1984 is not a how-to book," admitted that the raids made her feel pessimistic.

"We're a country that preaches innocent until proven guilty, but we're being treated like we're criminals," she said. "Innocent people don't deserve that experience."

Ali went on to read "Let America Be America Again" by Langston Hughes in the middle of the circle.

Last Monday, FBI agents removed boxes and computer equipment from the home of Hamoodi, a former MU professor and current owner and operator of World Harvest International & Gourmet Foods, and his wife Lamya Mukhleef Najem, a teacher at the Islamic School of Columbia. Federal agents also raided the Southfield, Mich. offices of Life for Relief and Development, a Muslim charity organization for which Hamoodi acted as a spokesperson and raised money. The warrants for the searches remain sealed.

When SPA member Ryan Amundson heard Monday that the FBI had cleared all charges against the charity he knew that a student-based protest was needed.

"People at MU are not going to tolerate the FBI being used as a tool of politics when it should be used for public interest," Amundson said.

He said he hoped that this and similar demonstrations would force the FBI to return Hamoodi's belongings, just as he believes previous demonstrations forced the FBI to admit the link between the raid at Shakir Abdul-Kaf Hamoodi's home and the raid of the charity's offices.

"If there had not been such an uproar, I don't think the FBI would have ever stated or explained why they raided the Hamoodi home," he said. "The FBI owes Hamoodi an apology and needs to give his property back as soon as possible."

For Muslim community members like 25-year-old Katie Hurst, news of raids by the FBI makes it "scariest and scariest to be a good, practicing Muslim, to be someone who stands up for good."

Hurst said she fears that fundamental American rights are being stripped from American citizens.

"It's not an anger," said Hurst. "It's a fear that you can't do good in the world anymore. We're concerned, and we love our country. That's the point."

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