

October 27, 2010

Attorney General Eric Holder
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Re: Urgent concern about Syed Fahad Hashmi's conditions of confinement and severe Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), set to expire on October 29, 2010

Dear Attorney General Eric Holder,

As representatives of human and civil rights organizations, we are writing you on the eve of the expiration of Syed Fahad Hashmi's severe Special Administrative Measures (SAMs). We urge you to make sure that they are not renewed once they expire on October 29, 2010.

For nearly three years before his case was scheduled to go to trial in April 2010, Syed Fahad Hashmi was held in solitary confinement under "Special Administrative Measures" (SAMs), which added a severe additional layer of isolation to his confinement. Numerous civil liberties organizations, human rights groups and concerned citizens called attention to the severity and inhumanity of these pretrial conditions of confinement. These included a Statement of Concern signed by 550 academics and writers, an open letter signed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, Amnesty International USA, and the Council on American Islamic Relations-NY and weekly vigils outside the prison in lower Manhattan where Syed Hashmi was held.

Facing four counts and a possible 70-year sentence, Syed Hashmi accepted a plea bargain on the eve of trial and pleaded guilty to a single terrorism charge of "conspiracy to provide material support" for allowing an acquaintance to stay in his apartment with a suitcase of waterproof socks and rain ponchos which the acquaintance then took to Al Qaeda in Pakistan. For this, he was sentenced to 15 years. Over the summer he was moved to the high-security prison at the Florence Correctional Center in Florence, Colorado. He remains in solitary confinement and under SAMs.

Scholarly and medical research has overwhelmingly demonstrated the severe health effects of prolonged solitary confinement; military officials and Vietnam veterans including Senator John McCain have testified to its damaging results. The use of prolonged solitary confinement puts the United States increasingly out of step with world opinion and is an affront to American values of civil rights and humane treatment. Other people convicted of terrorism-related charges, including John Walker Lindh, Richard Reid, and Matt Hale have seen their SAMs not renewed. We ask the U.S. Department of Justice to not renew Syed Hashmi's SAMs and to end his solitary confinement.

Sincerely,

The Center for Constitutional Rights
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NY)
Educators for Civil Liberties
Muslim Justice Initiative