



# ABUSES AND MISUSES

## of the PATRIOT ACT

Government officials have long described the USA PATRIOT Act as an indispensable tool in the fight against terrorism. Yet nearly 400 communities and seven states have passed resolutions calling for reform of the Patriot Act, and two federal courts have ruled parts of the Patriot Act unconstitutional. The examples below demonstrate why opposition to the Patriot Act, as well as demands for greater oversight, continue to grow.

### **PATRIOT ACT ABUSES...**

Despite the secrecy that surrounds the government's use of the Patriot Act, a number of cases have been brought to light, and are emblematic of other abuses that have not yet become public. Since its passage in October 2001, the Patriot Act has been used to:

- Secretly search the home of and seize the DNA samples of Brandon Mayfield, a Muslim attorney whom the government wrongly accused and detained as a perpetrator of the Madrid train bombings. (Section 218)
- Charge, detain and prosecute Sami Omar al-Hussayen, an Idaho graduate student, for providing "material support" to terrorists because maintained a website with links to objectionable materials, even though such links were available on the websites of the government's own expert witness in the case and on the website of a major news outlet. (Section 805)
- Revoke the visa of Tariq Ramadan, a prominent Muslim scholar who was to assume a teaching position at Notre Dame, because of his political beliefs. (Section 411)

### **... AND MISUSES**

Although President Bush recently claimed that the Patriot Act has helped bring terrorism charges against more than 400 individuals, a more thorough analysis proves this claim to be highly misleading. A study by Syracuse University found that most of these cases were minor, non-terrorism offenses where the accused served no jail time. Rather, we have seen that the law touted as essential for protecting the nation from terrorism has also been used to:

- Prosecute the owner of two Las Vegas strip clubs and a number of local officials for bribery. (Section 314)
- Sentence to two years in federal prison a 20-year-old California woman who planted threatening notes on a cruise ship in an attempt to return home to her boyfriend.
- Charge a New Jersey man for shining a laser beam on an airplane using a hand held device, which the man says he was using to look at stars with his seven-year-old daughter. The man could face 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for the offense, which the FBI admits has no connection to terrorism.



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