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Anti-Muslim Harassment Complaints Jump 30 Percent

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Complaints of anti-Muslim harassment, violence and discriminatory treatment registered with a national Muslim civil rights group jumped 30 percent in 2005 from the previous year, the group said today in releasing its [annual report](#) .

The 1,972 complaints made to the Council on American-Islamic Relations are the most the group has received since it began the annual reports following anti-Muslim incidents after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. The group said it actually received 2,300 reports but deemed some of them illegitimate.

The number of complaints has continually risen since 1995, but began spiking significantly in 2003, the report said. CAIR officials said the jump between 2004 and 2005 seems to be due to "a rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric fed by the Internet and also on talk radio," group spokesman Ibrahim Hooper said at a news conference. "You can't turn on the radio without hearing negative, bigoted comments about Islam."

The District and nine states, including Maryland and Virginia, accounted for 79 percent of complaints. These places also account for the highest population of Muslims, Hooper said.

The highest number of complaints fall into the "due process" category, said CAIR Legal Director Arsalan Iftikhar; those include complaints such as racial profiling and unreasonable arrest or interrogation. Second are complaints of religious accommodation being denied and third are complaints of employment discrimination, according to the report.

CAIR officials pushed at the conference for law enforcement authorities to investigate complaints thoroughly. Federal officials "do a very good job," at investigating whether crimes such as arson or assault have a religious bias, but "you get more resistance at the local level."

However, the group said some post-Sept. 11 policy initiatives -- including the "infamous" Patriot Act, as the group described the law in announcing the report on its Web site -- have unfairly focused on Muslims. "Muslims take the brunt of it," Hooper said.

In an effort to combat ignorance about the faith, CAIR began offering free copies of the Koran and copies of a PBS documentary about the prophet Muhammad earlier this year after deadly rioting about the Danish cartoon controversy. The group said that 30,000 copies of the Koran and 14,500 copies of the documentary have been requested.

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