

Fadel A's Statement on the Flag Relocation Incident

Currently, there is a massive harassment campaign propagated primarily by Washington University College Republicans, as well as the national Young American's Foundation (YAF) regarding an incident that occurred at approximately 6 am on Saturday, September 11, 2021. There is a large amount of misinformation circulating, and I seek to explain both what occurred and why it happened.

The misinformation that is currently circulating on YAF's page states that I was "stealing" the flags. This is due to a WashU College Republicans member, taking a video of me collecting flags in plastic bags. However, I had no intention of removing the flags from the Mudd Field area, and my full protest did not have the chance to be actualized. My planned protest was to place the bags of flags on Mudd field, along with various statistics (including those below) explaining the human cost of 9/11 in the past 20 years. On the sides of the bags, some writing may be visible, but the full statement was not outlined at the time of the video. I **did not** deface, destroy, damage, nor steal any flags, nor did I interfere with any registered event time. I assert that I **did not violate** any University Code of Conduct policy, though the conduct process is undergoing. Additionally, I was verbally and physically harassed by numerous WashU students and WUPD officers, whom I plan to report through official channels.

Since 9/11, Islamophobic hate crimes have been higher than they ever were before. The United States invaded countries in the Middle East and Central Asia, and over 900,000 people have been killed because of the wars the United States has propagated. 37 million people have been displaced, with some reports stating that number reaches up to 59 million. Any memorial of 9/11 that does not contend with these facts is not only incomplete, but it also amplifies pro-imperialist sentiment and actively disrespects those who have died because of American Invasion. A memorial which uses US flags is especially insidious, as it does not recognize those who have fallen, but uses a symbol that was on the shoulders of those who are responsible for the deaths of 900,000 people, and uses the innocent lives lost during 9/11 as a political prop upholding American hegemony. Muslims such as I have faced fear, harassment, and Islamophobia from those who unjustly use the victims of 9/11 as a political cudgel. Those who died during 9/11 deserve better than to be used as a political tool by those who seek to excuse American imperialism and Islamophobia. They died for no reason, suddenly and traumatically, and they should be grieved, not by political symbols, but by their names and faces. I also want to extend my condolences to all those who have died and been injured, both American and not, since 9/11. Their deaths were preventable, and thus, extremely tragic.

For those of you who have been reaching out in concern of my safety, I would like to assure you that I am working with the university to ensure that I am safe during this time. This has garnered attention at a scale that I was not expecting, and my regret is that the information circulating consists primarily of a lie.

I encourage those who are angry about my protest to consider the reasons for this protest, and the reasons for their anger, very carefully. I would like to refer you to a speech by Frederick

Douglas, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (link: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>), and encourage you to research the statistics of Islamophobic hate crimes and civilian deaths caused during the post-9/11 American wars. I also wrote an article two years ago in the Washington University Political Review speaking about the issues surrounding 9/11 rhetoric (link: <https://www.wupr.org/2019/10/24/911-islamophobia-and-false-unity/>). I hope you all deeply reflect during this somber time.