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PROMINENT RIGHTS GROUPS CALL ON ATTORNEY GENERAL TO LIFT SEVERE DETENTION CONDITIONS IMPOSED ON QUEENS MAN

The Brennan Center for Justice, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Association of Muslim American Lawyers Say Current Conditions Pose a Threat to Detainee's Mental Health

New York, NY, October 21, 2008- Today, prominent civil liberties groups including, The Brennan Center for Justice, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Association for Muslim American Lawyers expressed grave concern about the conditions of detention for Syed Fahad Hashmi—a Queens man currently being held under Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) at Metropolitan Correctional Center.

In separate letters appealing to Attorney General Michael Mukasey, the groups say the conditions of Mr. Hashmi's confinement have, "...condemn[ed] Mr. Hashmi to a year of solitary confinement. The troubling consequence of the SAMs is thus extreme isolation with predictable psychological damage and inappropriately coercive effects."

The letters come in support of a request from Mr. Hashmi's lawyer to lift the SAMs.

Under the SAMs, Mr. Hashmi is in solitary confinement and allowed out of his cell only one hour a day for exercise. The SAMs preclude contact with any visitor except for his attorney and his immediate family—which he is only permitted to meet with for about an hour once every other week and is severely circumscribed and subject to constant surveillance. Mr. Hashmi is forbidden from communicating, sharing a cell, or worshipping with fellow inmates. Further, Mr. Hashmi's contact with the outside world is limited—he may not interact with the media directly or through a third party, nor is he allowed to listen to television or radio news programs. Even his newspapers are delivered on a 30-day delay when he is permitted to receive them at all.

"These measures imposed on Mr. Hashmi are draconian and present a significant danger to his mental health and therefore will have an effect on his right to a fair trial," said Sean Maher, his attorney. *"Mr. Hashmi is not charged with any acts of violence nor has he been since he was detained. He is not charged with providing any money or resources to a terrorist organization, yet he has been subjected to an unduly restrictive environment."*

Mr. Hashmi was arrested June 6, 2006, in the United Kingdom, under order from the United States government based on allegations of material support of terrorism. He was extradited to the

US on May 25, 2007, and has been in detention awaiting trial for 28 months with his trial tentatively scheduled for the spring of 2009.

According to court documents, the United States government charges Mr. Hashmi allowed an old acquaintance — Junaid Babar — to stay in his London apartment for about two weeks in 2004. During that two week period, Mr. Babar allegedly kept several raincoats, ponchos, and waterproof socks in luggage that he temporarily stored in Mr. Hashmi's apartment. The US government then alleges that at some point Mr. Babar gave the socks and ponchos to a high ranking member of al Qaeda.

Syed Hashmi, known to his family and friends as Fahad, was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1980. Mr. Hashmi immigrated with his family to America when he was three years old. The Hashmi family settled in Flushing, Queens and soon developed deep roots throughout the tri-state area. Mr. Hashmi graduated from Brooklyn College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science in 2003. A devout Muslim, Mr. Hashmi established a reputation as an activist and advocate. In 2003, Fahad enrolled in London Metropolitan University in England to pursue a master's degree in international relations, which he received in 2005.