

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2018

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### **STATEMENT BY MUSLIM SUPPORT GROUPS ON TRAGEDY IN SCHOHARIE**

We are members of the Albany-based Muslim Solidarity Committee, the national Project SALAM (Support And Legal Advocacy for Muslims), and the national Coalition for Civil Freedoms. We grieve with the families and friends of the 20 victims of the horrendous limousine crash in Schoharie on October 6, and hold them in our hearts. We grieve also for the communities who have lost these beloved members.

Our grief for the victims of the tragedy is mixed with our grief for the many victims of FBI stings involving the owner of the limousine company, Shahed Hussain. We know Shahed Hussain well from his role as an FBI informant in three persecutions of Muslim citizens: the Aref-Hossain sting case in Albany in 2004–2006 (subject of the documentary *Waiting for Mercy*); the Newburgh Four sting case in Newburgh in 2009–2010 (subject of the documentary *The Newburgh Sting*); and as the “closer” in the Khalifa Al-Akili sting case in Pittsburgh, PA in 2012–2013 (subject of the Emmy-winning documentary *(T)error*). The FBI rewarded Hussain for his efforts by paying him handsomely, money he then used to start several businesses, including a motel and Prestige Limousine in Wilton, whose limousine crashed in Schoharie.

This much is known so far: the limousine failed multiple recent New York State safety inspections, including problems with its brakes; the driver was not licensed to drive such a vehicle; and the company has had four other vehicles removed from the road in the last two years. The responsibility for these failures initially rests with the company’s owner, Shahed Hussain, who currently resides in either Pakistan or Dubai. But what about the responsibility of the FBI, for their support of a con man and liar who seemed to destroy everything he touched?

Hussain was arrested in December 2001 on 80 counts of fraud involving the procurement of phony driver’s licenses when he worked as a translator for the state Department of Motor Vehicles in Albany. He had routinely accepted bribes of several hundred dollars each to help immigrants pass written exams they couldn’t understand. He faced the prospect of a long prison term and eventual deportation to his native Pakistan, which he’d fled in 1993 after he was charged there with murder. To avoid the consequences of his criminal acts, Hussain agreed to become an informant for the FBI to entrap people and destroy their communities. After he pleaded guilty in April 2003 to a single felony count to settle those 80 charges against him, Hussain was then paid by the FBI with taxpayer money to organize, engineer, and execute the three stings mentioned above, over a period of nine years. Records show he has also been involved in dozens of lawsuits in Albany County since 1997. His businesses regularly failed. He declared bankruptcy. A federal judge in the Newburgh case referred his testimony in the bankruptcy case for possible perjury. Yet the FBI still appeared to support him, an unguided missile of mass destruction aimed at the American public. The limousine company is the latest hit on this road of calamity.

Shahed Hussain’s debt to justice has not been paid. The years spent in prison (and the years still to serve) for the phony crimes that Hussain engineered for the FBI cannot be recovered for the men he put away. And the terrible irony of a felon convicted as part of a DMV scam, who is now responsible for the faulty operation of a vehicle that killed 20 innocent people, is not lost on us. Nor should it be lost on the FBI, which did not see fit to imprison and ultimately deport Hussain but instead put him on their payroll in the post-9/11 Muslim “terrorist” hysteria in Albany, in Newburgh, and in Pittsburgh.

We request Shahed Hussain’s immediate extradition to the U.S. to face questions about his ownership of Prestige Limousine. The FBI also needs to acknowledge its culpability, through these long years of Hussain’s “service” to them, in the tragedy in Schoharie. We demand justice for all the victims, dead and living, of the carnage wrought by both.

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