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Government and Politics Watch
 Tracking the intersection of government and charity

February 27, 2009

Nonprofit Coalition Argues Antiterrorism Efforts Hurt Charities

About a dozen advocacy groups and Muslim charities told a federal court today that the government’s seizure of a charity’s assets because of allegations it assisted terrorists hurts humanitarian work and America’s efforts to fight terrorism.

The groups raised the concern in a [friend-of-the-court brief](#) filed in support of KindHearts for Charitable Humanitarian Development, a Toledo charity. In 2006, [the Treasury Department froze](#) the group’s assets because it was under investigation for supporting terrorists in the Middle East.

The charity has denied the charges and along with the American Civil Liberties Union and others, last year [sued the government](#), saying the seizure of the financial assets was illegal.

An executive order signed by President Bush in 2001 allows the federal government to freeze the assets of charities, businesses, and individuals if they are being investigated for terrorist activities.

In the court brief, the nonprofit organizations argue that the Bush policy and Treasury’s efforts “have created a climate of fear and intimidation among nonprofit organizations, discouraging them from doing their

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critical humanitarian work — particularly in conflict-torn regions that are most in need — for fear of being arbitrarily subjected to these actions and policies themselves.”

“In effect, the government’s actions and policies are counterproductive to its efforts to counter terrorism because they discourage and undermine the vital work” of charities, they say.

The organizations that filed the brief are Grantmakers Without Borders, OMB Watch, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Appleton Foundation, the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, the Defending Dissent Foundation, the Fund for Nonviolence, Grassroots International, Kinder USA, Muslim Advocates, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

According to [The Toledo Blade](#), last month, a judge ruled that KindHearts’s lawyers could have access to documents and other materials seized during a raid on the charity’s offices law-enforcement agents. The newspaper said that the decision was a victory for the Muslim group.

Read [The Chronicle’s article](#) about a push by charity leaders to get President Obama to change contentious antiterrorism policies that affect the nonprofit world.

— [Ian Wilhelm](#)

Friday February 27, 2009 | [Permalink](#)

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