

# DC Muslims charge communities with ignoring Jamil Al-Amin case

## ***Imprisonment of national leader a litmus test for broader crackdown says Masjid Al-Islam leader***

by Minhaj Hasan

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While the Department of Justice and ultra-conservative think tanks were mulling their next moves in their crackdown on the nation's Muslim community, blocks away at Masjid Al-Islam in Southeast Washington, D.C., a group of Muslims was putting current events in perspective. Tonight, they were talking about Imam Jamil Al-Amin.

More than 70 people, Muslims and non-Muslims—some from out of state—attended the October 11 fundraiser organized by Masjid Al-Islam. The three featured speakers—Ed Brown, a longtime civil rights activist and the brother of Jamil Al-Amin (formerly known as H. Rap Brown); Sister Karima Al-Amin, Jamil Al-Amin's wife; and Masjid Al-Islam's own Imam, Abdul Alim Musa.

Rather than spending the evening in an exhaustive review of every event, court motion, and legal document in the three-year-old case, all three speakers focused on Al-Amin's upright, unwavering stance against his accusers, and the meaning of Al-Amin's arrest and conviction for the Muslim community in America.

After dinner and 'Isha prayers, Brown opened the program by conveying Imam Jamil's *salaam* to the congregation. Brown then set the tone for the rest of the program by saying, in a slow, measured tone, that he had good news to report: "[Al-Amin's] faith has not been shaken." The statement drew cries of "*Allahu-Akbar*" from the audience. Brown said that Al-Amin, when asked how he was holding up under his oppressive, inhumane prison conditions, replied that "I'm still standing and still making five a day." Brown continued, "They are trying to break [Al-Amin's] spirits; he has not allowed that."

Imam Al-Amin, the leader of a national Islamic movement who built an Islamic neighborhood in Atlanta, Ga., is the highest profile Muslim American leader to be arrested thus far.

Al-Amin was arrested in March 2000 and convicted by a jury for the shooting murder of a police officer. Muslims and many non-Muslim civil rights personalities believe that strong evidence shows that he is not guilty. Currently, he is serving a life prison sentence in Georgia. Brown told the audience that when his brother was arrested, we [all] just prayed to keep him alive." Now, Brown said, his legal team is appealing the case and hoping for a new trial.

Following the description of Al-Amin's fortitude and high spirits, Sister Al-Amin brought her husband's arrest into historical perspective. Citing a memo written to the FBI on August 26, 1967, by then President J. Edgar Hoover, the sister explained the covert operation code-named 'COINTELPRO' which made reference to African-American civil rights leaders by name for imprisonment or extermination; her husband was on that list. Later Imam Musa would describe Imam Al-Amin as the "last man standing"—the only targeted civil rights leader still alive.

Sister Al-Amin, who is also an immigration lawyer, recounted how the government has been harassing Imam Jamil and her family for decades. Paid informants were constantly in their *masjid*. "When we think of Imam Al-Amin, we must think about what he and his family went through," she said. Describing the nature of her husband's life imprisonment, she said that the government is so fearful of the Imam that he is transferred between prisons only via helicopter or private jet; a convoy of cars follows the air transport. The Islamic Chaplain of the Reidsville facility where Al-Amin is currently housed told Sister Al-Amin that he spoke to the warden about why he put all the other Muslims in lockdown. The warden responded that he "didn't feel comfortable." When asked when the Muslims would be allowed to mix with other inmates, the warden replied, "when I feel comfortable."

Sister Al-Amin spoke from the perspective of the wives of incarcerated Muslim activists. Quoting verses written by an African-American Muslim poet, the Imam's wife likened women like herself to soldiers fighting the enemy without weapons and without a captain to lead them.

The last speaker at the dinner, Imam Musa of Masjid Al-Islam, is known to be outspoken and unapologetic. At this dinner, he not only took "Sam" (Musa's term for the U.S. government) to task, but he also criticized parts of the Muslim community for their notable lack of support for Imam Al-Amin.

Referring to Abdur-Rahman Alamoudi's recent arrest, Imam Musa told the congregation that he appealed to the founder of the American Muslim Council, who is currently imprisoned on dubious terror financing charges, to get involved in fighting for Imam Al-Amin's freedom. According to Imam Musa, Alamoudi was not responsive. "Now look what happened to him... where are his 'homies' with their Islam in their briefcases?" asked Musa.

Musa also criticized the major national Muslim organizations that form the 'National Shura'—the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), and others. At the time of his arrest, Imam Al-Amin was the *amir* of this national organization. "What did the National Shura do for their leader? They said 'make *du'a*,'" answered Musa sarcastically.

Some Muslims at the dinner also vented their anger at the well-known Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) for their treatment of Al-Amin's case. CAIR issued a nationwide press release calling on Imam Jamil to turn himself in the days after the shooting. Sources told the *Muslim Link* that CAIR executive director Nihad Awad has since apologized to Al-Amin in person for issuing that statement.

Imam Musa opened the fundraising portion of the evening with an appeal for \$1,000 donations. He reminded the congregation that even \$50 is a lot of money for many of them, but that their spending for Imam Jamil is a form of *jihad*. Quoting from the collection of *hadith* by Sahih Muslim, Imam Musa explained that whoever equips a

soldier fighting in the way of Allah, or whoever looks after a soldier's family is like someone who actually fought in the battle.

Imam Jamil Al-Amin, he said, is fighting the battle.

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