

Tammam Adi speaks in a press conference Saturday morning after a meeting with Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) (left), Rep. Peter Defazio (D-Springfield) (right), and Muslim citizens. The meeting was an opportunity for residents to discuss concerns and fears following Sept. 11.

# Legislators, citizens meet to discuss anti-Arab sentiment

■ The meeting and press conference allow people to express their fears in the aftermath of the attacks

By Brook Reinhard  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Eugene, and Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., met with Arab-Americans in the community Saturday to discuss their concerns about discrimination resulting from the Sept. 11 tragedy.

Leaders of the Arab and Muslim communities met with DeFazio and Wyden in the Rogue room at the EMU to condemn the attacks of Sept. 11. The group spoke of the events of the last several weeks, shared personal stories and planned ways to stop profiling and discrimination from occurring.

A press conference was organized by Wyden's office and held in the Umpqua room after the meeting. The meeting, which drew nearly 30 participants, was closed to the press, but some participants joined DeFazio and Wyden to make statements after the conference.

"Many of these people are afraid to go out at night, reluctant to even wear a scarf," Wyden said.

Arab business leaders and community members — Muslim and non-Muslim — shared their con-

cerns and experiences of the past few weeks. They joined together to let their voices be heard and serve as advocates for the fellow members of their community, Wyden said.

"(Community members) are fearful of exercising the very freedoms that make our democracy so successful," he said.

DeFazio discussed current legislation that is designed to thwart terrorism while protecting the rights of Arab-Americans.

"There is tremendous non-partisan support (for the legislation) in congress right now," said DeFazio. He also emphasized the importance of uniting against terrorism and discrimination.

"If we allow ourselves to be divided, they win," he said.

Attendees were quick to differentiate themselves from the terrorists.

"These people who committed these crimes are not Muslims, they burn Muslim symbols like the KKK burns the cross," said Arab business leader Tammam Adi. "There is no basis in the Koran for anyone to kill themselves or someone else ... They will go straight to hell."

Attendees represented a range of political, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

"There have been great instances of support in the community," said Munir Katul, a retired physician and Arab-American who does not

identify with the Muslim religion. "Our goal is to eliminate the profiling of all Arab-Americans and not just Muslims. We will overcome the acts of these terrorists."

In fact, Claude Offenbacher, reporter for radio station KLCC, said community support has been overwhelming.

"There were more people protecting Muslims (at a mosque service Friday) than there were Muslims," Offenbacher said.

Those who attended the meeting agreed people of all religions and nationalities have banded together to stop the discrimination.

"I get up every morning and say I'm an American. But I also get up every morning and say I'm a Jew. One of my core values is opposing discrimination ... We must root out discrimination," Wyden said.

University students can help in efforts to end the discrimination, said Sam Kamkar, bias crime detective for the Eugene Police Department.

"We know that harassment occurs (both on and off-campus) — it would help as an agency if people contacted us and let us know what's going on," Kamkar said.

"We are in opposition to this destructive stereotyping of what this religion is all about," Adi said.

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