

Survey: Half of Americans willing to curtail rights of Muslims_12405

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WASHINGTON (ABP)—Nearly half of all Americans would curtail the civil rights of Muslim-Americans in some way, a new survey reveals.

In the name of combating potential terrorism, 44 percent of respondents to a Cornell University survey said they agreed with one or more potential curtailments of Muslims' civil liberties. Conversely, 48 percent of respondents did not agree with any of those curtailments.

The survey also found:

29 percent of respondents believe "Muslim civic and volunteer organizations should be infiltrated by undercover law enforcement agents to keep watch on their activities and fundraising."

 27 percent believe "all Muslim-Americans should be required to register their whereabouts with the federal government."

✖ 26 percent believe mosques should be "closely monitored" by federal law-enforcement agencies.

✖ 22 percent believe the government "should profile citizens as potential threats based on being Muslim or having Middle Eastern heritage."

The survey also found that highly religious people were more likely than people of little or no faith commitment to support restrictions on Muslims' civil rights, as were Republicans versus Democrats and independents.

In addition, the results suggested the more television news a respondent watches, the more likely he or she is to favor such restrictions.

"Our results highlight the need for continued dialogue about issues of civil liberties in time of war," said James Shanahan, a communications professor at Cornell and one of the authors of the study, in a statement.

"Most Americans understand that balancing political freedoms with security can sometimes be difficult," Shanahan continued. "Nevertheless, while a majority of Americans support civil liberties even in these difficult times, and while more discussion about civil liberties is always warranted, our findings highlight that personal religiosity as well as exposure to news media are two important correlates of support for restrictions. We need to explore why these two very important channels of discourse may nurture fear rather than understanding."

The telephone survey involved 715 respondents from a nationwide sample. Its margin of error is plus or minus 3.6 percentage points.

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