

Everyone here today – the clients, the lawyers, the organizations involved – all want the very best airline security. We all fly on planes, and we want to be safe when we do so, just like everyone else in the country. But what happened to our clients has nothing at all to do with safety, and everything to do with discrimination.

Airlines have typically responded to complaints like those presented in the lawsuits filed today by saying that they take their responsibility to ensure the security of the flying public very seriously. As well they should. But that general statement should not be allowed to hide what is happening in these cases. If security were the issue, the airlines would not have put my client on the next available flight, without any further screening, with a \$10.00 voucher in his pocket, and the good wishes of the gate agent. If security were the issue, American Airlines would have trained its employees to differentiate between a complaint related to security, and a complaint from a passenger or crew member who simply doesn't want to fly with passengers who are or appear to be Middle Eastern.

Instead, American Airlines has made a conscious decision to privilege the feelings and concerns of one segment of the flying public – those who feel uncomfortable flying with Arab passengers – over the feelings and legal rights of those Arab-Americans. Their decision is immoral and illegal, and we have filed this lawsuit to ensure that this unconscionable practice stops.

No one should have to go through the pain and humiliation of being removed from an airline, or any other mode of transportation, for no better reason than what they look like, or where they are from. This country made that decision long ago. And no one should have to accept that a major U.S. corporation would allow a customer's fears and prejudices to dictate how it will do business. If one of Mr. Sader's fellow passengers was uncomfortable flying with him, there was a perfectly reasonable, non-discriminatory way to handle the situation: that passenger was free not to take the flight. But that passenger was not free to have American Airlines accept and act on those fears by removing Mr. Sader from the flight without any further inquiry or justification. In short, what American Airlines did is unamerican.