



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators

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STATEMENT

By

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators

According to FOXNews.com (Friday February 27, 2009)¹ a Chicago man has been arrested for allegedly targeting President Obama and others in the administration with his HIV-infected blood sent through the mail.

The article states “Hussein, **with his brother acting as an interpreter**, told FBI agents ...”

In this case, as in any other criminal matter, a family member is not a neutral party, and should not interpret communications between law enforcement and a suspect. If true, this departure from proper interpreter procedure, which requires a neutral and highly qualified professional, is alarming to say the least.

Further, the article states “A judge ordered he receive a mental examination to see if he's fit for trial, but as of two weeks ago the **court couldn't locate a translator** to conduct the examination, according to court documents.”

The matter is even more disconcerting if the language indeed is Arabic as stated in the article. The need for accurate and objective Arabic interpreters and the methods to identify them has been a governmental priority. The fact that a family member carried out such a role calls the effectiveness of those methods into question. Authorities' ability to communicate accurately can only be guaranteed by the use of an interpreter free of any potential conflict of interest.

When a language barrier exists and life, liberty, or safety is at stake, it is paramount that unified policies be in place for both law enforcement and the judiciary to utilize highly qualified judiciary interpreters. The ability to quickly tap into available language resources is vital to the effective functions of law enforcement and the U.S. judiciary. Any court or justice-related department that lacks policies for dealing with persons of limited English proficiency is poorly equipped to deal with the current demographic realities of our nation.

¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/02/27/chicago-man-arrested-allegedly-targeting-obama-hiv-infected-blood/>, accessed 3/1/2009.

NAJIT maintains contact with community and government entities to make them aware of our extensive networks of language professionals and experts on policy in the field. NAJIT has the means to quickly survey our members, network with local sister organizations and other government entities, and exchange knowledge with community and private sector agencies, to assist in locating interpreters or translators.

Insufficient language resources have led our nation to be unprepared in the face of past emergencies, including the events that took place on September 11th 2001 and in the disaster response to Hurricane Katrina.

NAJIT is taking steps to develop the connective tissue between professional organizations and government agencies and to build relationships that allow the flow of best practices and information.

NAJIT is the world's largest association of judiciary interpreters and translators. Judiciary interpreters work in legal proceedings, both civil and criminal, inside a courtroom, and also work out of court (in quasi-judicial settings), in attorney-client consultations, prosecutor and victim or witness interviews, and law enforcement investigations.

For more information, contact NAJIT at <http://www.najit.org> or 202.293.0342

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