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Local

## D.C. police won't intervene [\[Print\]](#) [\[Email\]](#) to remove women from mosques



By: [Bill Myers](#)  
Examiner Staff Writer  
June 21, 2010

The D.C. police department will no longer intervene in an ongoing protest by Islamic women over their place in area mosques, The Washington Examiner has learned.

A group of Muslim women has provoked confrontations in mosques in and around the capital for months by claiming the right to worship next to men. The gestures have led to angry arguments between the women and conservative men among the Muslim worshippers.

As late as February of this year, D.C. police escorted a group of women out of the Islamic Center on Massachusetts Avenue Northwest after complaints from the men there. There was another confrontation in Falls Church last month, and police intervened there, too.

Internal e-mails obtained by The Examiner show that the D.C. police department has now decided that the men are on their own.

"We are not to get involved," Inspector Matthew Klein wrote in a May 24 e-mail. "Important that our officers not escort women out of there."

Klein's e-mail, marked "IMPORTANT," follows a directive from Police Chief Cathy Lanier to her command staff, telling them to "make sure your [officers] are aware of our position. ..."

D.C.'s reversal is a victory for a small group of reform-minded Muslims in the capital region who say that their faith has to shake off its backward view of women.

Told of the department's about-face, protest organizer Fatima Thompson let out a sustained whoop.

"This is such a win," she said. "We're supposed to be one community. Yet the moment we walk in, we're separated one from the other."

Thompson converted to Islam from Catholicism 18 years ago. She said that in recent years, she's grown increasingly worried about the role of Saudi-backed conservatives in the faith and sees her protests as a push back.

"I'm frustrated that so many Muslims ... are demanding that the world adapt to their religion," she said. "They're guests in these many countries. I think that the correct way is to try to adapt to whatever society we find ourselves, instead."

An official at the Islamic Center declined comment.

D.C. Attorney General Peter Nickles said Sunday he was not aware that the police had changed their policy.

But the department's climb-down raised the hackles of Ilya Shapiro, a legal scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute.

"The religious angle is beside the point. This isn't a lunch counter or a restaurant or a hotel," he said. "Basically this is a private institution, and that's what this turns on -- private property rights. If you don't want a trespasser on your lawn ... you do rely on the police, ultimately, to eject people you don't want."

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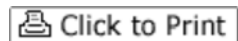
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