

'ZIONISTS ARE DESTROYING AMERICA'

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Body

A speaker appearing at the same American Muslim Council convention that FBI Director Robert Mueller is scheduled to appear at today said yesterday that "Zionists are destroying America." AMC officials and the FBI portray the council as mainstream.

A professor emeritus at Wake Forest University, Jamil Fayeze, made his remarks while sitting near another speaker, Mohammed Alomari, who wrote an article last year listing 27 supposed "Israelis and pro-Israel Jewish advisors" to President Bush, including Secretary of State Powell

Mr. Fayeze's statements yesterday afternoon came during the Capitol Hill kickoff of the four-day AMC conference, which moves next to Alexandria, Va., where Mr. Mueller is scheduled to speak today. Mr. Mueller has come under public fire from terrorism experts, Jewish groups and a New York assemblyman for agreeing to speak to the AMC, whose founder once proclaimed his support for Hamas and Hezbollah, which the U.S. government has named as terrorist groups.

The critics say Mr. Mueller's appearance at the convention contradicts President Bush's war on terrorism.

Some of the crowd of approximately 30 people attending the conference said they disagreed with Mr. Fayeze's remarks, but to varying degrees.

"Destroying' is a harsh word," ***Brenda Abdelall***, a University of Michigan political science and Arabic/Islamic studies major, said. "The Zionists have a strong voice in American politics. I would say they're controlling a lot of it."

She said the loss of Rep. Earl Hilliard, a Democrat from Alabama who was defeated in a primary race this week, shows the Jewish influence in politics. Mr. Hilliard had come under attack from Jewish groups for earlier this year voting against a resolution passed by the House earlier this year that condemned Palestinian suicide bombings.

Ms. Abdelall's mother, Mona Abdelall, who recently started an Ann Arbor, Mich., chapter of AMC, said she agreed with her daughter.

"Just listen to President Bush's speech" on the Middle East this week, she said. "He's just blindly supporting Ariel Sharon."

The elder Ms. Abdelall said the Jewish influence on American politics may have to do with a longer history of activism here. The AMC was founded in 1990, but groups such as the Zionist Organization of America have been around for a hundred years, she said.

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Kasim Arshad, an economics and political science major at Northwestern University, said Mr. Fayeze's remarks sounded like they were off-base.

"I don't know how you can make such sweeping statements," Mr. Arshad said.

The conference attendees spent most of the day discussing foreign policy and trying to meet with legislators.

On the list of legislators they hoped to meet with was Rep. Cynthia McKinney, a Democrat from Georgia who is facing a stiff primary challenge of her own after suggesting Mr. Bush may have had prior knowledge of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Mr. Alomari, the media director of Focus on American & Arab Interests & Relations, spoke to the audience about how the U.S. economic embargo on Iraq had affected the people there; he blamed it for the deaths of 2 million Iraqis.

The AMC director, Eric Vickers, upon learning that a reporter for the New York Sun was in attendance, announced it to the audience.

"This is the newspaper that wrote the articles linking us to terrorists and saying Robert Mueller shouldn't speak to us," Mr. Vickers said. "I just wanted everyone to know that this reporter is interviewing people here today."

A group of AMC members took the reporter out into the hallway and apologized, but not before Mr. Fayeze got in a few licks.

"He's distorting my words," Mr. Fayeze said. "I said that the Zionists are destroying the democratic fabric of America."

In fact, asked about Lyndon LaRouche's ideas, Mr. Fayeze had replied, "I don't know a lot about Lyndon LaRouche, but I know that he says Zionists are destroying America. And it's true."

Mr. Fayeze was one of four speakers on a panel as part of the conference.

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