

# FRIDAY BRIEF

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## Islamic Institute meets with Turkish Delegation on Religious Freedom

The Islamic Institute met on Thursday at the State Department with a delegation from the Turkish government. The delegation was headed by Mehmet Nuri Yilmaz, who serves as President of Religious Affairs.

The group discussed issues related to religious freedom in Turkey, a Muslim state and American ally as a member of NATO. The government has received criticism for its rigid interpretations of its laws governing freedom to worship, and religious expression, especially in government offices. According to the State Department Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, the government still imposes restrictions on "religious minorities and religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions."

Abdulwahab Alkebsi, Executive Director of the Islamic Institute, attended the meeting. "I think this is a good dialogue that the State Department has with Turkey," he said. "Religious freedom is a very important issue to Muslim Americans, many of whom came to America to exercise the rights to worship that were denied to them."

## Court Challenges Funding Faith-Based Charities

A potential blow to the government's "Faith Based Initiative" has been made in a court in Wisconsin. A federal judge has ruled that direct state funding to a drug and alcohol-addiction program that relies on Christian teachings amounts to government support for religious indoctrination.

The Faith Based Initiative aims at engaging religious groups more fully in combating and solving social problems such as poverty, substance abuse, and other issues. However, it would allow these groups to receive federal funds to aid their projects without having to create separate entities for that purpose to satisfy the demands of separation of church and state.

While the case focused on issues of state funding decisions, the judge did not rule on the constitutionality of the federal charitable choice legislation currently in the Senate. A faith-based bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives in early 2001, but a compromise plan in the Senate did not reach a vote before the holiday recess.

## WB Network Show Decries Muslim Discrimination

A television show on the WB Network will address the problem of backlash and discrimination against Muslims in an upcoming episode. In an episode titled "Suspicion," the fictional family of the popular show 7th Heaven takes steps to protect a Muslim friend of their young daughter from bullies who are terrorizing her because of her religious and ethnic background.

The 7th Heaven show has found success in the last few years through its strong promotion of family values. The "Suspicion" episode will air this coming Monday, January 21 at 8:00 pm. More information on the show can be found at the WB Network website: [www.theWB.com](http://www.theWB.com).

