

An Open Letter to President George W. Bush

from the 9/11 Families United to Bankrupt Terrorism

November 1, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

As founding members of the 9/11 Families United to Bankrupt Terrorism, on behalf of more than 3,000 9/11 family members and survivors, we are writing to express our shock and dismay at news reports that the United States Government might seek to delay or dismiss our legal action against al Qaeda's bankrollers. We trust and hope that these reports are in error.

Mr. President, your decision in this matter will determine whether our government stands with American families or Saudi royalty . . . with stopping terrorism or soothing hurt feelings . . . with homeland security or imported oil . . . with accountability or appeasement . . . with justice or expedience . . . with our democratic rights or a monarchy's privileges . . . and with our society's central values or with the extremism that afflicts parts of Saudi society.

The USA Patriot Act that you signed explicitly encourages Americans to take action against terrorism. It empowers us to seek accountability from those who financed the murders of our loved ones and the injuries we suffered on September 11, 2001. We trust that you will not encourage, nor allow, our government to try to block our action and undermine a central role it can and will play in the war against terrorism.

Moreover, any U.S. government intervention would represent a stunning reversal both from the personal assurances you have given some of us and from the August 28, 2002 statement of a State Department spokesperson that "this is a domestic issue and we are not going to get in the middle of it. It could be obstruction of justice if we got involved."*

In the past week, your CIA director and an independent report both warned that additional terrorist attacks, perhaps equally catastrophic, may be imminent. We know you agree that cutting off the al Qaeda money pipeline must be an urgent national priority. Certainly, you can recognize how our action is a legally valid centerpiece of this effort.

Please, Mr. President, do not let the pleadings of those who fostered and tolerated the growth of Islamic extremism in their country cut out the moral center of our government.

If some of your advisors have legitimate questions about our allegations against certain Saudi royal family members, why not let our civil jurisprudence system determine their accuracy? Our civil justice system is a cornerstone of the freedom we are defending against the extremism of the terrorists, who abhor such liberty. Your administration's delaying or dismissing this action would strike a self-inflicted blow against this uniquely American freedom — and would only make our society more like those where justice is nothing but a pipe dream.

We seek, as we know you do, to hold those who financed the atrocities of 9/11 accountable and to prevent future attacks by bankrupting terrorism. Since we, as American civilians, are now the prime targets of our enemies in this war, we are entitled to strike back using the law as our weapon. We have a right to the truth and to justice. We trust you will disavow any effort by our government to disarm us as we join you in the fight against terrorism.

Sincerely,

Liz and Steven Alderman, Armonk, NY
James J. Allingham, Holmdel, NJ
John and Sonia Bonomo, Jackson Heights, NY
George Bonomo, Jackson Heights, NY
Deena Burnett, Little Rock, AR
Tom and Beverly Burnett, Sr., Northfield, MN
Bill Doyle, Staten Island, NY
April Gallop, Woodbridge, VA
Fiona Havlish, Yardley, PA
Jean Hunt, Cranford, NJ
Monica Iken, Bronx, NY
Mindy Kleinberg, East Brunswick, NJ

Joan Molinaro, Staten Island, NY
Victor Panzella, Staten Island, NY
Yogesh Patel, Garden City, NY
Albert Petrocelli, Staten Island, NY
Julio Roig, East Hanover, NJ
Ellen Saracini, Yardley, PA
Matt and Loreen Sellitto, New Vernon, NJ
Vivian Shoemaker, Princeton, NJ
Irene Spina, Staten Island, NY
Terry Strada, Chatham, NJ
Lori Van Auken, East Brunswick, NJ
Pat Wotton, Middletown, NJ

Members of the Steering Committee
9/11 Families United to Bankrupt Terrorism

* Statement of State Department spokesperson Gregory Sullivan, reported in the *Staten Island Advance*, August 28, 2002.