JOHN D. DINGELL
16TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

CO-CHAIR
HOUSE GREAT LAKES
TASK FORCE

MEMBER
MIGRATORY BIRD
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–2216

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
ROOM 2328
RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515–2216
(202) 225–4071

DISTRICT OFFICES:
5465 SCHAEFER ROAD
DEARBORN, MI 48126–3277
(313) 846–1276

23 EAST FRONT STREET
SUITE 103
MONROE, MI 48161
(734) 243–1849

July 23, 2002

The Honorable John Ashcroft
United States Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft:

On June 25, 2002, I wrote you to express my alarm and profound concern over Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service policy pertaining to the treatment of Yemeni nationals and Yemeni-Americans. In spite of my request of prompt attention to this issue given the importance of its subject matter, I have yet to hear a response from you, the DOJ, or the INS. This is unacceptable and I demand, again, that you provide answers to the questions and concerns I raised in my previous letter.

Apparently, for reasons that remain unknown, DOJ and INS have decided to restrict the ability of Yemeni nationals and American citizens of Yemeni descent to travel freely. Though it has not been explained to me or to those individuals subject to it, this policy would seem to fail to pass constitutional muster. Needless to say, it also appears patently discriminatory.

Again, please explain in detail the contents of the recently issued directive. What restrictions or requirements does this directive place on Yemeni nationals legally residing in the United States? Does it place restrictions or requirements on American citizens of Yemeni descent? For what duration of time will this directive be in force? Why specifically was this directive issued? Why are Yemeni nationals, in particular, included in this directive? What other nationalities were included in the directive, and what other nationalities are facing travel restrictions? Is the DOJ or INS monitoring how this directive is being applied?

As we work to protect the public from potential harms, we must not to deprive people of their liberty or constitutional rights. By depriving the liberty of one class of people, we all run the risk of losing our liberty. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "They that give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor justice."

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely yours,

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

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