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## Somalis take to the street to protest group's actions

Relatives and friends of a dead Minneapolis teen complain that a Muslim civil rights group is blocking an FBI inquiry.

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Relatives, friends and neighbors of a Minneapolis teen killed in Somalia pressed their argument Thursday that a Muslim civil rights group is hampering a federal investigation into the disappearances of dozens of Twin Cities Somali men.

At a protest outside the Brian Coyle Community Center in Minneapolis' Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, Abdirizak Bihi, the uncle of Burhan Hassan, who relatives say was killed last week in Mogadishu by a terrorist group, accused the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Minnesota chapter of discouraging local Somalis from cooperating with the FBI.

"We don't want anyone to come into our community and tell us to shut up," Bihi said.

"Law enforcement will not be able to do anything without information from the community."

About 50 people attended the rally, waving signs and hollering, "CAIR out! Doublespeak out!"

During a months-long investigation into the disappearance of up to 20 Somali men, CAIR Minnesota launched a campaign to encourage anyone asked to speak to the FBI to be aware that they can have a lawyer present.

Jessica Zikri, communications director for CAIR Minnesota, said that effort is not meant to discourage anyone from speaking to investigators. Rather, the campaign is meant to ensure that people's civil rights are protected, she said. She said the group is willing to meet with families of the missing men.

CAIR Minnesota cosponsored an ice cream social at the Coyle Center to discuss the future of the complaint investigation unit of the city's civil rights department. Protesters used the occasion as an opportunity to voice their frustrations.

Jama Dhagad, a distant relative of Hassan, was among the protesters. "These people in

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the building, they're not representing the Somali community in a good way," he said.

Ifrah Hassan, a cousin of Burhan's mother, balanced her 18-month-old son as she shouted slogans.

"I don't want my son, when he's 18 years old, out of nowhere going someplace else," she said. "We need to find out who did this."

Osman Ahmed, another relative of Hassan, said some in the family believe CAIR has aligned itself too closely with mosques where some believe the missing boys may have been influenced to leave.

"They are supporting the groups we suspect of recruiting our kids," Ahmed said. "We refuse to be silent."

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