



Ahmed Mohamed's Clock Story Was Skewed to Fit the Narrative

The treatment of 14-year-old Ahmed Mohamed by the police and school officials on September 14 seems like an obvious case of "Islamaphobia," based on what almost all of us have thus far learned about the incident. It seems less that way, however, when certain facts thus far ignored by the major media are also considered.

As has been widely reported, Ahmed, who is a Muslim, was pulled out of his class at MacArthur High School in Irving, Texas, and questioned by police for bringing to school what they — and school officials — thought could have been a bomb, or at least a fake bomb. He was arrested and taken away in handcuffs. Yet it turned out that the suspected bomb was a clock the teenager said he made. Ahmed told the *Dallas Morning News* that when police questioned him — "interrogated" was the word he used to describe it — "It made me feel like I wasn't human. It made me feel like a criminal."

By the end of the day Ahmed Mohamed was a celebrity with his name and face all over the Internet. By mid-week he was receiving gifts and internship offers from corporations and a GoFundMe account was set up to with the goal to raise \$60,000 for his tuition to MIT. It has already raised almost \$8,000. Then, President Obama spoke up. Actually he tweeted. His tweet said, "Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It's what makes America great."

In an [interview with Good Morning America](#), Ahmed said, "This isn't my first invention and it won't be my last invention." He seems proud of his clock and his scientific ability which made it possible for him to create it. He said he has been offered an internship at Twitter and both Google and Facebook contacted him about opportunities with them. He added that he hopes to hear from the reality show *Shark Tank*, which gives inventors an opportunity to showcase their inventions and get funded by a panel of successful entrepreneurs. He told *Good Morning America*, "I've wanted to be on [Shark Tank] ... and I guess now I have a chance to be on there, only if the entrepreneurs on that show would accept me."

Microsoft sent Ahmed a few thousand dollars worth of products. When the executive director of the Dallas-Fort Worth chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Alia Salem, tweeted a picture of him with the goodies, Microsoft replied, "Enjoy ... we can't wait to see what you create with it all!" After all, he did invent a clock out of circuit boards, transistors, resistors, switches, a display and a



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small briefcase, right?

Except he didn't.

Several Youtube videos and articles [written by electronics experts and enthusiasts](#) compellingly demonstrate that Ahmed didn't invent anything. He didn't even build anything. All he did was take a commercially available digital clock from the 1980s, remove the internal parts from the plastic case, add a few wires — which serve no purpose and *do* make the whole thing look pretty suspicious — and drop it into a large pencil box that looks like a small briefcase. In other words, it's a hoax. Richard Dawkins — famous evolutionary biologist and atheist — called Ahmed “a fraud.”

Maybe Obama should have tweeted, “Nice try, Ahmed. I had one just like it in 1980-something.” Or how about, “You didn't build that!”

Instead, President Obama invited the young charlatan to the White House. Oddly, he has not made the same invitation to the many other kids who have been suspended, expelled, or arrested for drawing pictures of guns or biting their pop-tarts into the shape of guns. He has not tweeted invitations to the families of fallen police officers. But Ahmed did get an invitation. Ahmed, you see, fits a narrative.

Here's the narrative: A young, inquisitive, genius invents a clock and brings it to school, but because he is a Muslim, he is arrested for bringing a fake bomb to school. Yet his clock did look suspicious, and Ahmed himself acknowledged he was concerned his clock could have been viewed suspiciously. In a video interview with NBCFW, the Fort Worth, Texas, NBC affiliate, he said, “I closed it with a cable, 'cause I didn't want to lock it to make it seem like a threat, so I just used a simple cable so it won't look that much suspicious.”

He told MSNBC's Chris Hayes that when he was questioned by police, “I felt like I was a terrorist. I felt like all the names I was called.” When asked what he meant by “all the names I was called,” he explained that he had been called a “bombmaker” and a “terrorist” in middle school. Let that sink in. A Muslim boy says he was called a “bombmaker” and a “terrorist,” so he takes a clock apart, puts the internal parts and few extra lengths of wire into a small briefcase, takes it to school, and sets the alarm to start beeping in the middle of class. Then he gets arrested for bringing a fake bomb to school and becomes a celebrity. He gets a GoFundMe account and thousands of dollars worth of merchandise from Microsoft. He gets invited to the White House. And he fishes for an invitation to be on Shark Tank.

The Twitter hashtag #IstandWithAhmed has been used to show support for Ahmed. Hillary Clinton, never one to miss an opportunity for positive press — which is scarce for her these days — tweeted, “Assumptions and fear don't keep us safe — they hold us back. Ahmed, stay curious and keep building.” Ahmed seems to be enjoying the attention, and manages to keep the focus on the narrative. He tweeted, “Thank you for your support! I really didn't think people would care about a Muslim boy. #Thankyouforstandingwithme #IstandWithAhmed.”

People care about what happened to Ahmed because they believe the false narrative that he invented a clock and that he was badly treated because he is a Muslim. But there is another fact that should have been widely reported but was not because it does not fit the narrative: Ahmed's father is Mohamed Elhassan Mohamed, an Islamic activist who has twice run for president of Sudan; his platform included a pledge that within 100 days he would negotiate to have the United States lift the sanctions which were imposed over 20 years ago because of Sudan's sponsorship of terrorism.

So, an Islamic activist from a nation under sanctions for state-sponsored terrorism wants to end those sanctions. He has a son who says he was called a “bomb maker” who then puts together something that



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looks like a bomb, and gets arrested for it. And the media runs with the narrative. This could bring a lot of attention to the father's cause. He didn't waste any time getting in front of the media with his message, either. "He [the son] just wants to invent good things for mankind," Mohamed told the *Dallas Morning News*. "But because his name is Mohamed and because of Sept. 11, I think my son got mistreated."

While he defends his son's false claims that he "invented" a clock, and the mainstream media run with the story, there are other young people out there who really are inventing things. They won't get this kind of attention. They won't get their own hashtag. And they won't get invited to the White House. Because their stories don't fit the narrative.

Photo of Ahmed Mohamed: AP Images



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