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Fallen Soldier's Family Wants Out of Trump Media Circus

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(CN) - The parents of a decorated Muslim Army captain killed in Iraq said Monday they want to extricate themselves from the highly public feud with GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump to maintain their dignity.

"We want out of this controversy," Khizr Kahn said during a televised interview Monday morning.

"[This] is not our style," Kahn told CNN. "This is not our path ... We want to maintain our dignity."

Khizr Khan gave an emotional speech at the Democratic National Convention on Thursday in which he rebuked Trump for the hateful rhetoric he's spewed toward Muslims in interviews and particularly on the campaign trail.

Khan's son, Army Capt. Humayun S.M. Khan was killed in Iraq in 2004 by a vehicle filled with explosives. According to the Pentagon, Khan saved the lives of several other soldiers by urging them to stay back while he approached it.

"Let me ask you, have you even read the U.S. Constitution? I will gladly lend you my copy," he said as his wife stood by his side. "Look for the words 'liberty' and 'equal protection of law.' Have you ever been to Arlington National Cemetery? Go look at the graves of the brave patriots who died defending this country."

"You have sacrificed nothing," he said.

Trump, who prides himself on being a counter-puncher, erupted in a way rare even for him, and in the process broke a political taboo - demeaning the family of a soldier who died for his country. Specifically, Trump tweeted that Ghazala Khan did not speak alongside her husband at last week's Democratic convention because they are Muslim and she was not allowed to speak.

Outraged, on Friday, Khazir Khan pleaded with Republican leaders to repudiate the party's standard-bearer, saying "If your candidate wins and he governs the way he has campaigned, my country, this country, will have constitutional crises [like] never before."

But Trump doubled-down, saying Khan's remarks were not from the heart, but instead were actually prepared by Hillary Clinton's campaign.

That effectively assured the controversy would roil throughout the weekend.

Nearly a dozen Gold Star families published a joint [letter](#) through the progressive non-profit VoteVets.org [website](#), demanding that Trump apologize for his comments.

Eleven of the families that signed the letter had sons that were killed in Iraq. One of the families that signed the letter was that of soldier who died in Vietnam.

"Your recent comments regarding the Khan family were repugnant, and personally offensive to us," the letter says. "When you question a mother's pain, by implying that her religion, not her grief, kept her from addressing an arena of people, you are attacking us. When you say your job building buildings is akin to our sacrifice, you are attacking our sacrifice."

Meanwhile, Trump kept Tweeting.

"Captain Khan, killed 12 years ago, was a hero, but this is about RADICAL ISLAMIC TERROR and the weakness of our "leaders" to eradicate it!" he said.

Hours later, the candidate added, "This story is not about Mr. Khan, who is all over the place doing interviews, but rather RADICAL ISLAMIC TERRORISM and the U.S. Get smart!"

Then: "I was viciously attacked by Mr. Khan at the Democratic Convention. Am I not allowed to respond? Hillary voted for the Iraq war, not me!"

A former Trump adviser then weighed in, stoking the controversy by suggesting Kahn, a Pakistani-born lawyer, is an "agent" for the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist group.

"Mr. Khan (is) more than an aggrieved father of a Muslim son — he's a Muslim Brotherhood agent helping Hillary," Stone tweeted late Sunday, linking to a conspiracy theorist website.

Trump pressed on during an appearance with ABC News' George Stephanopoulos on Sunday, again accusing "Hillary's script writers" of putting words in Kahn's mouth, and opining that he has "made a lot of sacrifices" in his life.

"I work very, very hard," Trump said.

"I've created thousands and thousands of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs, built great structures. I've had tremendous success. I think I've done a lot," he continued.

For the second time in as many weeks, Trump's running mate, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence tried to blunt a controversy brought on by the Republican presidential nominee.

"Donald Trump and I believe that Captain Humayun Khan is an American hero and his family, like all Gold Star families, should be cherished by every American," Pence said in a statement released through the campaign.

"Captain Khan gave his life to defend our country in the global war on terror. Due to the disastrous decisions of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, a once stable Middle East has now been overrun by ISIS. This must not stand," Pence said.

"By suspending immigration from countries that have been compromised by terrorism, rebuilding our military, defeating ISIS at its source and projecting strength on the global stage, we will reduce the likelihood that other American families will face the enduring heartbreak of the Khan family," he said.

Pence was last cast in the steady role by the campaign after Trump suggested Russia should find some 30,000 emails he said went missing from the former secretary of state's private email server.

Predictably, the Democratic presidential nominee has been having a field day with the controversy.

With just 100 days to go before the general election, she told a gathering at a church in Cleveland on Sunday that Trump had

disrespected both the Khans and a time-honored American ideals.

"Mr. Khan paid the ultimate sacrifice in his family, didn't he?" Clinton said. "And what has he heard from Donald Trump? Nothing but insults, degrading comments about Muslims, a total misunderstanding of what made our country great."

Clinton kept the heat on Trump later in the day saying his comments on the Kahn's are just the latest manifestations of a disturbing pattern.

"He called Mexicans rapists and criminals ... he said a federal judge was unqualified because he had Mexican heritage — someone born in the neighboring state of Indiana. He's called women pigs. He's mocked a reporter with a disability," she said, recounting a list of offensive comments Trump has made during and since the presidential primaries.

Several prominent Republicans have also condemned Trump's treatment of the Khans. In separate statements, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan strongly defended the honor of Capt. Khan, while also trying not to become mired in the feud themselves.

"All Americans should value the patriotic service of the patriots who volunteer to selflessly defend us in the armed services. And as I have long made clear, I agree with the Khans and families across the country that a travel ban on all members of a religion is simply contrary to American values," McConnell wrote.

Added Ryan: "America's greatness is built on the principles of liberty and preserved by the men and women who wear the uniform to defend it. As I have said on numerous occasions, a religious test for entering our country is not reflective of these fundamental values. I reject it.

"Many Muslim Americans have served valiantly in our military, and made the ultimate sacrifice," Ryan continued. "Captain Khan was one such brave example. His sacrifice -- and that of Khizr and Ghazala Khan -- should always be honored. Period."

Photo caption:

FILE - In this Thursday, July 28, 2016 file photo, Khizr Khan, father of fallen US Army Capt. Humayun S. M. Khan and his wife Ghazala speak during the final day of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

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