



The Truth About ISNA: *Past, Present & Future*

“...In my experience working with ISNA, their leaders have offered the United States a strong and consistent Muslim voice of peace...”

-Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches (NCC)

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What They Say About ISNA:

“...As a former United States Congressman... I am personally offended by the United States Justice Department’s apparent designation of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) as an ‘unindicted co-conspirator’ in the Holy Land Foundation case. This reminds me of the so-called ‘witch hunts’ of the 1950s...”¹

“...As a United Methodist pastor and former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches... I urge that this harmful designation be ‘expunged’ immediately...”



-Former Congressman Robert Edgar (D-PA), President and CEO, Common Cause

“...The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) has been privileged to work with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in an effort to advance tolerance and interreligious dialogue among our adherents in the United States...”

“... Because of the positive relationship we have nurtured with ISNA, we lament the organization being labeled by the government as an ‘unindicted co-conspirator’ in the Holy Land Foundation case... Because ISNA is one of the nation’s largest Muslim umbrella organizations, the charge is also damaging, and has a chilling effect on, the entire American Muslim community... It is our sincere hope that the damage that ISNA has had to endure... can and will be properly reversed, so that together we can all work to fulfill God’s vision of a world at peace with ourselves and with one another.”



-Statement of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), July 14, 2008

“...As an ally and friend of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)... the label of ‘co-conspirator’ is damaging to the excellent reputation of ISNA and those who collaborate with them to build a better America... In my experience working with ISNA, their leaders have offered the United States a strong and consistent Muslim voice of peace...”

-Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches (NCC)

“... The government's action [in the Holy Land case] is especially shameful because the charge it makes is so inflammatory - it has caused [ISNA's] reputation and good name to be dragged through the mud. The government has a constitutional obligation to correct the record and clear the name of ISNA...”



-Hina Shamsi, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) National Security Project

¹ Statements available at <http://www.aclu.org/safefree/discrim/36054res20080721.html>

About ISNA

For over 45 years, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) has been a non-profit organization representing approximately 100,000 North American Muslims in the United States and Canada. ISNA's mission is to provide an open, pluralistic platform for presenting Islam, supporting American Muslim communities, developing educational, social and outreach programs and fostering good relations with other religious communities and civic organizations.

Additionally, ISNA has always condemned terrorism and promotes a pluralistic approach to the diversity of Islam. For example, ISNA is an original signatory to The Amman Message (www.ammanmessage.com) calling for an end to all sectarian violence and ISNA is also an original co-sponsor to the **Fatwa Against Terror**, a religious decree endorsed by more than 120 American Muslim groups, leaders and institutions² condemning terrorism in all of its forms.



Other ISNA highlights throughout the years include:

-In 2005, officials of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) concluded the organization's 42nd annual convention by **announcing "... a \$10 million pledge for Hurricane Katrina relief efforts** in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama..."³

-The ISNA Leadership Development Center (ILDC) endorsed and distributed a guide entitled *Women Friendly Mosques and Community Centers: Working Together to Reclaim Our Heritage* designed to educate Muslim community leaders nationwide about best practices on **increasing women's participation at Islamic centers** across the country.⁴

² <http://www.isna.net/articles/Press-Releases/Fiqh-Council-of-North-America-Issues-a-FATWA-AGAINST-TERROR.aspx>

³ "North American Islamic Group Pledges \$10 Million to Aid Efforts" United States Department of State Washington File, September 5, 2005 available at <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2005/September/20050905132654retnuhategdirbo.4986688.html>

⁴ <http://www.isna.net/Leadership/articles/ILDC-News/ISNA-Endorses-New-Guidelines-for-Women-Friendly-Mosques.aspx>

- In June 2008, **ISNA sponsored a banquet dinner honoring former U.S. Ambassador Karen Hughes**, former Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the State Department. The dinner reception was held in honor of Ambassador Hughes' continuous public diplomacy efforts with the Muslim American community and the Muslim community abroad.

-During the **2008 Democratic National Convention (DNC)** in Colorado, ISNA President Dr. Ingrid Mattson was one of the national interfaith leaders from all walks of life to help kick off the DNC Convention at the Wells Fargo Theater in Denver. During her speech, Dr. Mattson highlighted that after 9/11, **“... If there are those who oppose us, there are also those who stand up for us – and in the last number of years, many Christian and Jewish Americans have stood up for the rights of their Muslim neighbors – to be treated equally and with respect...”**⁵



-In April 2008, along with other Muslim leaders, Dr. Sayyid Syeed, National Director of **ISNA Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances (IOICA)** met with **Pope Benedict XVI** in a **special private interfaith gathering** held at the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington DC⁶.

- Along with 200 other local and national religious organizations, **ISNA has been a prominent member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)**; a growing membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment⁷.

-The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), along with other Muslim organizations throughout North America, have **always strongly condemned and rejected the actions of terrorists and terrorism as being completely antithetical to the teachings of Islam.**

⁵ Press Release, “ISNA President Speaks at DNC Kickoff Event”, August 26, 2008 available at <http://www.isna.net/articles/Press-Releases/ISNA-PRESIDENT-ADDRESSES-INTERFAITH-BREAKFAST-AT-DEMOCRATIC-NATIONAL-CONVENTION.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.isna.net/Interfaith/articles/Interfaith-News/Interfaith-Community-Welcomes-Pope.aspx>

⁷ www.nrcat.org

ISNA in the News



NEWSWEEK Magazine *Who's Next 2007?* Newsmakers Issue, December 6, 2006⁸

ISNA President Dr. Ingrid Mattson “bringing the moderate viewpoint to the world”

“Mattson is the **first woman, the first nonimmigrant and the first Muslim convert to be elected to head [ISNA], the largest Islamic group** for social outreach and education in North America...”

“... [Dr. Mattson] has become **an ambassador for Islam in the West, preaching tolerance and understanding...**”

“... She founded a **Muslim chaplaincy program** at Hartford--the only one in North America--that trains students to represent their faith and minister in places like hospitals, colleges, prisons and the military...”

“Within the Muslim community, Mattson aims to form locally elected councils to give worshipers more control over who preaches in their mosques and help keep out extremists. She's also **encouraging mosques to hire more female imams** and pushing the women in her classes to be more assertive...”

⁸ Sarah Childress, 'Ingrid Mattson', Newsweek magazine, December 6, 2006 available at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/44247>

ISNA in the News (continued)

"If religion is about anything, it should be about the ability to extend empathy beyond our own family or tribe or religious community to humanity at large..."⁹

**-ISNA President Dr. Ingrid Mattson, Ecumenical News International
January 3, 2008**

"There is a sincere effort from the religious community to play a major role resolving the crisis in the Middle East... And it's the realization that religious communities must work together well..."

**-Mohamed Elsanousi, ISNA Communications Director, San Jose Mercury News
December 16, 2007**

"... It is our hope that our meeting today with Pope Benedict XVI will enhance our relations and open the ways for more dialogue and better relations..."

**-Muzammil Siddiqi, former ISNA president, The New York Times blog
April 17, 2008¹⁰**

"No one can speak in the name of Islam. If only that fact got out to the general public, people would know that Osama bin Laden doesn't have the authority to speak out on Islam..."¹¹

**-Dr. Muneer Fareed, ISNA Secretary General, The New York Times
April 13, 2008**

"American Muslims have become an important global force... Suddenly America became aware of the presence of Muslims in America..."¹²

**-Sayyid Syeed, ISNA Interfaith and Community Alliances (IOICA), Houston Chronicle
July 5, 2008**

⁹ <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/node/6519>

¹⁰ Muzammil Siddiqi, "The Muslim-Catholic Question" *The New York Times* blog, April 17, 2008 available at <http://thepope.blogs.nytimes.com/author/msiddiqi/>

¹¹ Anthony Ramirez, "Backstage With Six Rabbis, Six Imams and No 'Kumbaya'" *The New York Times*, April 13, 2008 available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/nyregion/13bias.html?_r=1&ex=1208750400&en=ab3696a0475eb01c&ei=5070&emc=eta1&oref=login

¹² Richard Vara, "Muslim Leaders Say Faith Gaining Ground in U.S." *Houston Chronicle*, July 5, 2008 available at <http://www.pluralism.org/news/article.php?id=20347>

ISNA on Terrorism

ISNA is an open and transparent non-profit membership organization that strives to be an exemplary and unifying Islamic organization in North America that contributes to the betterment of the Muslim community and American society at large.

To that end, ISNA has not now or ever been involved with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or supported any covert, illegal or terrorist activity or organization.¹³

In fact, ISNA has always sought “... **to state clearly that those who commit acts of terror, murder and cruelty in the name of Islam are not only destroying innocent lives, but are also betraying the values of the faith they claim to represent. No injustice done to Muslims can ever justify the massacre of innocent people, and no act of terror will ever serve the cause of Islam. We repudiate and dissociate ourselves from any Muslim group or individual who commits such brutal and un-Islamic acts...**”¹⁴

On September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks: “... The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), along with other Muslim organizations throughout North America, today condemned the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and offered condolences to the families of those who were killed or injured...

“... American Muslims utterly condemn what are vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. No political cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts.”¹⁵

On July 7, 2005 London Bombings: “... ISNA joins American Muslims around the country in expressing their shock, sadness, and outrage in response to recent findings that British nationals were responsible for the horrific terror attacks in London... These attacks not only violated Islamic principles that forbid the taking of any innocent life, but betrayed Islamic teachings that members of a community have a duty and obligation to protect, safeguard and uphold the laws of that community...”¹⁶

ISNA co-sponsored the North American Muslim Fatwa (Religious Ruling) Against Terrorism:

“... Islam strictly condemns religious extremism and the use of violence against innocent lives. There is no justification in Islam for extremism or terrorism. Targeting civilians' life and property through suicide bombings or any other method of attack is haram - or forbidden - and those who commit these barbaric acts are criminals, not 'martyrs'...”¹⁷

¹³ ISNA Press Release, “Setting the Record Straight” available at <http://www.isna.net/articles/News/SETTING-THE-RECORD-STRAIGHT.aspx>

¹⁴ <http://www.religioustolerance.org/islfatwa.htm> See also <http://www.law.ucla.edu/mlsa/islam/ATAEC.pdf>

¹⁵ ISNA Press Release, “ISNA joins AMPCC in Condemning Terrorist Attacks” September 11, 2001 available at <http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/AntiTerrorism/ISNAJoinsAMPCCinCondemningTerroristAttacks.aspx>

¹⁶ Supra note 13.

¹⁷ See <http://www.adamscenter.org/Media/PressReleases/P7.aspx>

For more information, please feel free to watch a 12-minute online video documentary of ISNA available at:

<http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/Documentary.aspx>



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