

# Interfaith Coalition on Mosques

## Statement of Purpose

In recent weeks we have seen reports about a disturbing rise in discrimination against Muslims trying to legally build or expand their houses of worship, or mosques, across the United States.

From Florida to California, ugly rhetoric has replaced civil dialogue at local government planning meetings and community debates over proposals by Muslims citizens to exercise the rights guaranteed to everyone in America.

In Tennessee, plans for three new Islamic centers provoked hateful reactions from opponents, including vandalism against a mosque with the spray-painted message, "Muslims go home."

In Sheboygan, Wisconsin, some Christian ministers loudly opposed a Muslim group seeking local government approvals to open a mosque in a former health food store owned by a Muslim doctor.

In California, members of a local Tea Party group took dogs and picket signs to Friday prayers at a mosque in Temecula looking to build a new worship center at a nearby vacant lot.

Mosque opponents are misrepresenting the Koran and taking passages out of context and seeking to use the statements of a few extremists to claim that all American Muslims secretly want to impose Islamic Shariah law in the United States.

The level of hostility, fear mongering and hate speech is unacceptable and un-American.

We believe the best way to uphold America's democratic values is to ensure that Muslims can exercise the same religious freedom enjoyed by everyone in America. They deserve nothing less than to have a place of worship like everyone else.

We also believe that public figures, particularly religious figures, have a special responsibility to demonstrate sensitivity and respect.

Therefore, we have come together, individuals and organizations from different faith traditions, to announce that we will stand together to fight for the rights of our Muslim neighbors when they are being violated.

Working as the national Interfaith Coalition On Mosques (ICOM) under the sponsorship of the Anti-Defamation League, our purpose is to assist Muslim communities who are being denied permission to build mosques in their neighborhoods.

While we are extremely concerned about discrimination against mosque building in America, we will also recognize that local governments have legitimate concerns about zoning and other planning issues within the framework of current federal, state and local laws.

Therefore, ICOM will carefully monitor incidents of mosque discrimination around the country. We will gather facts and analyze the information. We will raise our voices when appropriate to help Muslim communities who are encountering prejudice. We will not take political sides. We will not make decisions based on ideology.

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