

Muslims around the world condemn violence on 9/11 anniversary

By staff writers

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On the tenth anniversary of attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, Muslim groups in the USA and around the world have united with people of other religions and of none to condemn terrorism and other forms of violence.

Many of them have insisted that the equation of violence with Islam is inaccurate and stirs up hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims. A range of interfaith groups have issued similar statements.

Rabia Terri Harris, a US Muslim writer on nonviolence, urged readers of her blog to 'invoke peace' today for the sake of 'our common life'.

During the last ten years, Muslims in the US have participated in over 7,000 prayer services for the victims of 9/11, according to calculations published yesterday by Aslam Abdullah, director of the Islamic Society of Nevada.

Abdullah criticised 'extremist Islamophobes' who use the attacks of 9/11 as an excuse to demonise Muslims. Writing in *The American Muslim*, he said, 'These people share the same ideology as the people who justified slavery, promoted the lynching of the blacks, denied religious rights to Mormons, Catholics and Jews'.

But he insisted, 'America will change and Muslims will have the same equal status and rights without any suspicion to their sincerity and integrity'.

In the UK, more than fifty Muslim groups issued a joint statement to express their solidarity with victims of terrorism.

The signatories to the strongly worded statement declared that, 'Those who seek to divide society have failed. Indeed their destructive actions have only brought communities closer together.'

The statement continues, 'Ten years on from the 9/11 attacks, our communities are growing stronger and more resilient. Communities have come together to find common ground and resolve differences.'

In a further rejection of terrorist means, the statement points out that the recent Arab Spring demonstrated the power of ordinary citizens standing in peaceful protest to secure greater political participation and freedom.

This is the first time such a large number of British Muslim organisations have sought strength in numbers, coming together to use the opportunity of the tenth anniversary of 9/11 to express their sympathy for the victims and to look forward to the future with greater optimism. Among the organisations spearheading the initiative are the Islamic Society of Britain, Radical Middle Way and Inspire.

Similar messages were reflected in sermons at mosques throughout the world on Friday (9 September). Muslims remembered the victims of 9/11 and their families, as well as others affected by terrorism.

‘Terrorism is an evil that no Muslim should feel the need to defend, or make excuses for,’ said Dilwar Hussain, President of the Islamic Society of Britain, ‘Terrorists are not 'on our side' - they are in fact our opponents. They are an obstacle to our cause, which is to be a force for good, to spread peace amongst our people.’

The Christian-Muslim Forum also marked today's anniversary with a call for peace.

The Forum's director, Julian Bond, who is a Christian, said, ‘Muslims have been at the forefront of interfaith peace initiatives in the UK since the 1980s, encouraged by pluralist injunctions in the Qur’an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad. These Muslims have seen their religion hijacked by plane hijackers who sought to link Islam to acts of terror.’

He suggested, ‘Ultimately violence breeds more violence and war contains the seeds of the next war’.