

Joint Shia-Sunni Statement Against the Actions and Ideology of ISIS

December 2, 2014

The Shia and Sunni Muslim communities of New Jersey condemn the inhumane actions of the terrorist group the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” (ISIS), or the “Islamic State in Levant” (ISIL), also known as “Da’esh”.

Da’esh has been denounced by Shia and Sunni scholars across the world because they take inspiration from a violent *takfiri* ideology. A *takfiri* is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy. The victims of this extremist ideology have been innocent Shia and Sunni Muslims. Da’esh has also engaged in the Islamically unlawful killing of innocent Christians and Yazidis. The vast majority of Muslims stand firmly against this type of violent extremism and espouse the Qur’anic injunction that says, “There is no compulsion in religion” [2:256]. This Islamic principle of no compulsion is not just a Muslim standard towards non-Muslims, but also applies to differences amongst Muslims. This clear instruction of God serves as a guideline for the Muslim community to not impose one’s interpretation on others. This has been emphasized and reiterated in numerous joint declarations and proclamations at the local, regional, [national](#), and [international](#) level. Thus, as American Muslims, our respect for religious freedom is not only stipulated in the First Amendment to the Constitution, but is also enshrined in our Muslim tradition.

The policies of failed governments, foreign intervention, reckless military operations, and political exclusion have fueled anger and resentment in Iraq, Syria and the region generally. That same resentment has formulated into a tactile force of aggression, which is now Da’esh. Thus, Da’esh and their brutal campaign has little to do with Islam as a religion or being Muslim, but is actually political at its core. The terrorist group is using their warped interpretation of Islam to justify their criminal acts and is preying on the ignorance of a few Muslims regarding Islam when it recruits members to its cause. Many ethnic and religious groups in the region carry legitimate political grievances against their own leadership or foreign powers. For those Muslims who are unable to express their dissatisfaction constructively, Da’esh capitalizes on their distress and twists political concerns into religious ones. Islam, like any religion, has powerful symbols and metaphors that deeply resonate with its believers. Hence, it can be a provocative tool when hijacked by a malicious group aiming to recruit impressionable, poorly informed, and aggrieved persons. To counteract this, it is imperative that our government respect the principles of sovereignty and self-determination, allowing local actors to direct the response to the crisis. This will also help to calm the climate of politically-motivated, sectarian aggression that adds to the destabilization of Muslim-majority countries.

Da’esh does not accept the most common interpretations of Islam, which are followed by the vast majority of peaceful Muslims around the world. The overwhelming majority of Muslims find it morally reprehensible and un-Islamic to torture and murder people, destroy any house of worship, and terrorize entire nations. When it comes to criminal acts of violence in the name of Islam, the Shia and Sunni Muslim communities of NJ are unified and unequivocal in condemning such acts. The messaging promulgated by violent extremist groups such as Da’esh perpetuate misinformation about our faith. We find it obligatory in this instance to clarify and

apprise folks of the clear message of Islam, which espouses tolerance, religious freedom, and peace, above all.

We, the undersigned, strongly encourage American imams and Muslim community leaders to continue to speak out against Da'esh and any other violent groups or individuals that may sympathize with their extremist views.

The above statement was formulated by the Shia-Sunni Alliance of NJ, a new Muslim network devoted to building bridges between the Shia and Sunni communities of New Jersey and to inspire greater cohesion and collaboration on common causes and joint initiatives.

Signed,

Ahlul-Bayt Student Association (ABSA) of Rutgers University
American Arab Civic Organization
American Muslim Congress, Inc. (Livingston)
Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers University (CILRU), Convener of the Muslim Chaplaincy at Rutgers University
Council on American-Islamic Relations-NJ (CAIR-NJ)
Drew University (Madison) Muslim Students Association
Elzahra Education Foundation (Teaneck)
Graduate Muslim Students Association at Princeton University
Graduate Muslim Students Association at Rutgers University
Imam-e-Zamana Foundation of North America (Bait Wali-ul-Asr)
Imamia Medics International
Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS)
Islamic Center of Basking Ridge
Islamic Center of Jersey City
Islamic Center of Morris County
Islamic Center of Old Bridge
Islamic Center of South Jersey
Islamic Circle of Mercer County (ICMC)
Islamic Society of Central Jersey (ISCJ)
Masjid-as-Saffat
Masjid-e-Ali (Muslim Foundation, Inc.)
Mehfile Shahe Khorasan (Englewood)
Muslims for Peace, Inc,
Muslim Life Program at Princeton University
The Muslim Public Affairs Council of New York and New Jersey
Muslim Students Association of Rutgers University
New Brunswick Islamic Center
Safina Society
Shia Association of North America (Baitul Qayem)
Souls March Coalition
The College of New Jersey Muslim Students Association
Zubaida Foundation