

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media contact:

Wajahat Ali, 510-909-7506, wajahatmali@gmail.com

Muslim Americans Call for Swift Action Against Domestic Violence

Murder of Buffalo resident Aasiya Zubair spurs American Muslims to forcefully address domestic abuse and violence against women; call on imams to address DV in Friday sermons

SAN FRANCISCO – A coalition of Muslim organizations, journalists, community leaders, imams, and other concerned citizens are calling for immediate action by American Muslim leaders and religious figures to address domestic abuse and violence in America, including that found in the American Muslim community, on Friday, February 20, 2009.

In response to the collective concern of the American Muslim community, imams and religious leaders across America have been asked to speak out against domestic violence to their congregations. They are asked to remind congregants of the Prophet Muhammad's abhorrence of harshness, abuse and violence, and emphasize solutions that strengthen families and ensure all members are treated with fairness and respect, free of fear of abuse or violence.

Members of the coalition are contacting imams and religious leaders in major Islamic centers and mosques. They are encouraging sermons addressing domestic violence and offering resources available through the Peaceful Families Project, a Muslim-run domestic violence prevention organization founded in 2000, to help educate the American Muslim community. This education addresses the extent to which domestic violence exists and strategies to stop it.

Several prominent imams have heeded the call to action by concerned American Muslims including Shaykh Hamza Yusuf of the Zaytuna Institute in Berkeley, Ca. and Imam Tahir Anwar of the South Bay Islamic Association in San Jose, Ca. These imams have committed their Friday sermons to addressing domestic violence and preaching that in the Islamic tradition and by the example of the Prophet Muhammad, family harmony can never be achieved by force and that emotional and physical abuse is never acceptable.

This call is being broadcast through various channels, including blogs, Facebook groups, personal contacts, and news media. "The outcry among Muslim Americans against this type of violence is a heartfelt one," said Shahed Amanullah, editor-in-chief of the online newsmagazine altmuslim.com. "It is essential that we address the problem and take steps to ensure that no one else faces the same tragic fate as Ms. Zubair."

Specific calls to action for imams and religious leaders include:

1. Unequivocally denounce domestic violence and any attitudes that enable or excuse it
2. Remind Muslims that the Prophet Muhammad condemned with unequivocal language all forms of spousal abuse.
3. Immediately create community social service committees made up of qualified social service providers to supply educational resources and staff institutional programs that support abused and battered women.
4. Promote educational and awareness programs that outline abusive and violent behaviors.
5. Allow community members ways of pointing out and preventing the emergence or escalation of possibly abusive relationships and environments

Individuals and organizations helping to organize this call (partial list, titles for identification purposes only):

- Salma Abugideri, Peaceful Families Project
- Wajahat Ali, Playwright, Attorney and Journalist, domesticcrusaders.com
- Shahed Amanullah, editor-in-chief of the online newsmagazine altmuslim.com
- Zeba Iqbal, Council for the Advancement of Muslim Professionals
- Ruby Khan, Director, Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services
- Dr. Aminah McCloud, Professor of Islamic Studies, DePaul University
- Hussein Rashid, Visiting Professor at Hofstra University, husseinrashid.com

Mosques, imams, and organizations confirmed to have joined this effort (partial list):

- Islamic Society of San Francisco - Imam Khalid Siddiqui
- Islamic House of Wisdom (Dearborn, MI) - Imam Mohammad Elahi
- Arab American Association of New York (New York, NY)
- Arab Muslim American Federation (New York, New York)
- Council of the Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago - Imam Abdul Malik Muhajid
- Islamic Center of Greater Lansing (Detroit, MI) – Imam Dawud Walid
- South Bay Islamic Association (San Jose, CA) - Imam Tahir Anwar
- The Islamic Center at New York University - Haroon Moghul
- Zaytuna Institute (Berkeley, CA) - Shaykh Hamza Yusuf

Resources for the media regarding Muslim efforts to confront domestic violence:

- ACCESS (Michigan): www.accesscommunity.org
- Apna Ghar (Chicago): www.apnaghar.org
- Central Texas Muslmaat (Austin, TX): <http://www.ctmaustin.org>
- Domestic Violence Resources for Muslims:
http://www.crescentlife.com/psychissues/domestic_violence.htm
- Facebook Call to Action: www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=54807221754

- Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services (Chicago): <http://www.hamdardcenter.org>
- Manavi (New York, NY): <http://www.manavi.org>
- Muslims For Progressive Values (Los Angeles): <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/mpv-dv>
- Narika (San Francisco): <http://www.narika.org>
- North American Islamic Shelter for the Abused (San Francisco): <http://www.ask-nisa.org>
- Peaceful Families Project: www.peacefulfamilies.org
- Sakhi (New York, NY): <http://www.sakhi.org>
- SEMAH (San Francisco): <http://www.semah.org>
- Tahirih Justice Center (Falls Church, VA): <http://www.tahirih.org>
- Turning Point for Women and Families (New York, NY): <http://www.turningpoint-ny.org>

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