

**Statement on the irresponsible and insulting cartoons
published about the Prophet Muhammad***

Montreal, February 9, 2006

In response to the printing of 12 cartoons by various European newspapers and elsewhere, we, the undersigned Islamic organizations and centers condemn these actions and those responsible for the publications. Moreover, as Canadian and Quebec Muslims, we are astonished and shocked by the actions of the above mentioned media outlets for they clearly demonstrated their lack of respect and tolerance for the beliefs and traditions of the Islamic faith.

As Canadian and Quebec Muslims, we understand and respect the importance of freedom of speech and independence of media. We would like to see these freedoms and rights applied in our society with responsibility and tolerance, whereas in recent days these hard-earned rights have been misused to disparage and malign the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic faith. Let it be crystal clear that the printing of the cartoons in no way promotes freedom of speech while it was undoubtedly offensive to the Muslim community and misrepresented the Islamic faith.

Recently, Islam and Muslims have been negatively promulgated through government policies and media coverage. Canadian Muslims appreciate the way that most media outlets, in Canada and Quebec, are dealing with this issue. Media outlets on this side of the Atlantic have shown their respect for their fellow Muslim citizens by way of choosing not to publish the offensive cartoons. The best way to maintain peace and stability within our society is by mutual respect and dialogue.

While Canadian and Quebec Muslims share in the intense emotions and displeasure of their fellow Muslims the world over, we call upon them to address this most serious matter in a calm and constructive manner. We condemn the violent reactions in response to the publications and ask all those involved to find creative and peaceful methods to voice their concerns. We call upon the Canadian federal and provincial governments to clearly state and condemn the misuse of the freedom of expression and speech in Europe and to pass a law that considers Islamophobia a hate crime. We must not allow Islamophobia to be spread under the illusory blanket of freedom of speech.

In order to work towards an atmosphere of dignity and respect and to better understand the deep sentiments of the Muslim community about the caricatures, we hereby announce the following initiatives by the collective body of Montreal Islamic centers and organizations.

- 1) Open houses in local mosques with information sessions on the Prophet Muhammad will be held in the upcoming two weekends (Feb. 11-12 & Feb. 18-19).
- 2) Information pamphlets about the character of the Prophet Muhammad will be available through mosques, centers and other public domains.
- 3) A conference, open to all, will be held in the upcoming weeks to highlight the importance of the Prophet Muhammad and his teachings in the daily lives of Muslims and the human race.

We call upon our society to affirm their refusal to accept any and all types of discrimination and stop stereotyping Muslims and Arabs; who remain the only accepted victims of racism, and afford them the same dignity and respect as everyone else in society.

For further information please contact the following spokespersons:

English media:

Salam Elmenyawawi (514) 748-8427

French media:

Bachar Elsolh, (514) 983-5323 and Faker Daoud, (514) 572-6975

* This statement is published by the Muslim Coordinating Committee for Justice (MCCJ) on behalf of the following mosques and organizations.

Abou Bakr Asseddiq Mosque
Al-Hijrah Association
Al-Iman Mosque
Al-Islam Mosque (ICQ)
Al-Nouaman Academy
Al-Ommah Al-Islamiah Mosque
Al-Rawdah Mosque
Alternative Perspective Media (APM-RAM)
Association Bel Agir
Association Musulmane Québécoise (AMQ)
Astrolabe
Assunnah Annabawyah Mosque
Canadian Islamic Centre (Al-Jamieh)
Canadian Islamic Congress Montreal (CIC)
Canadian Muslim Forum (CMF)
Center Islamique BADR (CIB)
Islamic Community Center (ICC)
Khadijah Mosque
Khaled Ben-El-Walid Mosque
Longueuil Mosque
Makkah AlMukarramah Mosque
Markaz El-Islam, South Shore Mosque
Montréal Mosque (MM)
Muslim Association of Canada (MAC)
Muslim Community of Quebec (MCQ)
Muslim Council of Montreal (MCM)
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Muslim Student Association McGill (MSA)
Muslim Student Association UQAM
Nour Al-Islam Mosque
Regroupement Des Marocains Au Canada (RAC)
Shah Jalal Mosque
United Muslim Student Association (UMSA)