



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 21, 2009

Islamic Prayer Scheduled on Capitol Hill

A mosque in Elizabeth, New Jersey, is planning to host a "Day of Islamic Unity" on Friday, September 25 outside the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. Billed as the first event of its kind, the occasion is described by organizers as prayer for Muslims and friends of Islam.



According to the [Washington Post](#) event organizer Hassen Abdellah said, "Most of the time, when Muslims go to Washington, D.C., they go there to protest some type of event.... This is not a protest. Never has the Islamic community prayed on Capitol Hill for the soul of America. We're Americans. We need to change the face of Islam so people don't feel every Muslim believes America is 'the great Satan,' because we love America."

Abdellah says that the inspiration for this Muslim prayer event was Barack Obama's inaugural address in which the new president proclaimed: "To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect." Abdellah said Obama spoke about "Islam and Muslims not in an adversarial sense, but in the sense of being welcome and acknowledging we are integral citizens in the society."

His New Jersey Mosque, Dar-ul-Islam, applied for a permit for the event from the Capitol Hill police and was granted access on July 28. The gathering is set for 1 p.m. on September 25. Abdellah says he is expecting 50,000 people from across the country to attend. The event website, islamoncapitolhill.com, offers five sponsorship levels ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000 and also claims that more than 500 buses have been reserved to transport participants to Washington. The day's program includes Jummah (Friday congregational) prayer and readings from the Koran.

Abdellah, a New Jersey attorney, emphasizes that this is to be a peaceful demonstration. Political demonstrations and signs will not be allowed. "We want this to be purely about Islam. We want to change the perception of Islam to show we are not terrorists, but that most of us Muslims here love America and abide by its laws." He was likely not referring to two of his clients convicted on terrorist charges in 2004 and 2007. In the latter case, Mahmud Faruq Brent, pled guilty to attending a jihad terrorist training camp in Pakistan. The former case involved Numan Maflahi, who was sentenced to five years in prison for lying to investigators about terrorism financing efforts.

[OneNewsNow](#) reports that Gary Bauer, chairman of the non-profit organization American Values, has expressed concern over the event. He hopes organizers will "denounce Islamic fascism — the kind of extremism and regular violence we see around the world." Bauer pointed out that, though President Obama decided not to hold the annual National Day of Prayer at the White House, he did host a White House dinner honoring the Muslim holiday of Ramadan Kareem. He said he will be interested to see how Obama reacts to this gathering. "Most of us remember President Obama refused to do an event at



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the White House to mark the National Day of Prayer, which was deeply disappointing and certainly put him in a category by himself," he said, remarking that mainstream media coverage for the Muslim day of prayer has been generally favorable, while Christian events normally don't receive similar treatment.

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