



Controversy Over Ground Zero Mosque

Despite the millions of square feet available for rent (and countless buildings for sale) in New York City, New York Muslims have chosen an area 600 feet from where the World Trade Center stood to erect the Cordoba House, a 15-story, \$100 million mosque and Islamic cultural center. Not surprisingly, the prospect of constructing the mosque in this sensitive location has been controversial. In fact, while New York residents have rightfully earned a liberal reputation and typically preach tolerance, a Siena Research Institute poll shows that 6 out of 10 New Yorkers stand opposed to building the mosque near Ground Zero.



The poll indicates opposition to the Cordoba House that spans religious, ethnic, and ideological lines. The strongest resistance comes from suburban and upstate New York residents, as well as from self-described conservatives. Surprisingly, however, 55 percent of those identified as liberals and moderates also stand opposed to the project. The poll shows 73 percent of Catholics and 75 percent of Jews against the prospect of the mosque. Ethnic makeup did little to alter the results, with 69 percent of whites, 52 percent of blacks, and 62 percent of Latinos opposed to the Cordoba House.

According to the *Daily Caller*, "The results of the poll echo similar findings from a July poll by Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, which found that New York City voters opposed the Cordoba proposal by 52 percent to 31 percent." A month later, the opposition has continued to grow.

Of the many opposed to the project is the "9/11 Families for a Safe & Strong America," which called the Cordoba House "a gross insult to the memory of those who were killed on that terrible day." ??Tea Party favorite Sarah Palin turned to Twitter to ask the "peace-seeking Muslims" to reject the building of the mosque at Ground Zero, as it will interfere with the American recovery from the September 11th attacks.

Former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan argues, "The issue here is the appalling insensitivity, if not calculated insult, of erecting a mosque two blocks from a World Trade Center where 3,000 Americans were massacred by Islamic fanatics whose Muslim religion was integral to their identity and mission."

Several Muslim groups have voiced their opposition to the project as well.

Founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy Zuhdi Jasser reacted to the prospect: "For us, a mosque was always a place to pray, to be together on holidays — not a way to make an ostentatious architectural statement. Ground zero shouldn't be about promoting Islam. It's the place where war was declared on us Americans."

Stephen Suleyman Schwartz, director of the Center for Islamic Pluralism, asserted, "Building a 15-story Islamic center at Ground Zero isn't something a Sufi (spiritually wise Muslim) would do. Sufism is supposed to be based on sensitivity toward others," as opposed to the imposition of a Muslim mosque in



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an area where Americans were attacked by radical Muslims, a prospect that Schwartz calls "grossly insensitive."

Articulating similar sentiments, Raheel Raza of the Muslim Canadian Congress told Fox News' Bill O'Reilly, "How does building a mosque in the very place where Muslims murdered so many other Americans create any kind of respect? And as a Muslim, I read in my holy book, the Quran, that we should be very sensitive towards people of other faiths, especially when we are living in lands that are not Muslim lands. And these are the neighbors and our colleagues and the people we care about. We don't show our caring for them by being intolerant. Building a mosque for a place of worship in a particular spot across the street from Ground Zero is a slap in the face of all Americans."

Despite the strong opposition to the Cordoba House, the project has also acquired some big-named support as well, including New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer.

The *Daily Caller* writes, "Those in support of the Cordoba House, which claims it seeks to encourage interfaith dialogue as part of its outreach, tend to see the project as a positive step in building relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the U.S."

Unfortunately, the potential for the mosque to build a positive relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is likely diminished by the Imam behind the Cordoba House: Fiesal Abdul-Rauf (See: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,599162,00.html>).

Several days after the 9/11 attacks, Feisal stated, "I wouldn't say that the United States deserved what happened, but United States policies were an accessory to the crime that did happen."

Furthermore, Feisal is affiliated with the Perdana Global Peace Organization, the same that donated \$366,000 to the Free Gaza Movement, which organized the six-ship flotilla resulting in a violent conflict with Israeli soldiers.

Clearly, Feisal is not the face for a so-called "outreach" project.

Funding for the \$100 million Cordoba House proves to be an obstacle currently, but the State Department has elected to finance an overseas trip for Imam Feisal, in order to secure funds for the project.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley confirmed this:

"[Feisal] is a distinguished Muslim cleric. We do have a program whereby we — through our Educational and Cultural Affairs, you know, bureau here at the State Department — we send people from Muslim communities here in this country around the world to help, you know, people overseas understand our society and the role of religion within our society."

The State Department's generous offer to finance Feisal's exploits unfortunately creates a tangled web that cannot serve to bolster President Obama's credibility. Feisal's connections to the Free Gaza movement tie him to the terrorist organization Hamas, a group Feisel has refused to denounce, and to friends of President Obama — left-wing radicals Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn, and Rashid Khalidi, who promised to launch another flotilla offensive. The coming offensive is to be called "The Audacity of Hope," the title of President Obama's book, which was named after the sermon of Obama's radical minister Reverend Jeremiah Wright.

Conservative pundit Glenn Beck explained that he was of two minds on the subject of the mosque's construction. While he believes that building the mosque is an exercise of "religious freedom," a



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constitutionally-protected right, he also contends that the prospect is a “slap across the face.” More than anything, Beck stands opposed to the presence of a “radicalized mosque” at Ground Zero, and with Imam Rauf as head of the mosque, one cannot be sure that such will not be the case.

Beck indicates, “Despite the blatant disregard for the sensitivity of the mosque’s location and despite the obvious slap in the face of the dedication date (they were going to open it on 9-11-11), and despite the funding source, that is unknown, I think those are kind of red flags.”

It did raise red flags.

In an effort to appease angered New Yorkers, New York State Governor David Paterson [proposed](#) several other locations for the construction of the Cordoba House, but his offers were rejected by the organizers of the project.

Where and when the Cordoba House will be constructed remains to be seen.

With a CNN/Opinion Research Corp poll showing 70 percent of Americans opposed to the construction of the Cordoba House at Ground Zero, one wonders if the will of the American people will once again be ignored by the powers that be.

Photo: In this Aug. 3 photo, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and unidentified local religious leaders bucked the majority to voice support for a proposed mosque near ground zero at a news conference on Governors Island in New York harbor: AP Images



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