



Written by on September 13, 2010

Imam Tells Elite Group He Is Considering All Options for Ground Zero Mosque

"We are exploring all options as we speak right now, and we are working to what will be a solution, God willing, that will resolve this crisis, defuse it and not create any unforeseen or untoward circumstances that we do not want to see happen," [AP quoted](#) Rauf as saying during a question-and-answer session following a speech before the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).



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When questioned about the wisdom of building the center at the proposed location, Rauf replied that, despite the controversy, the location was important. "We need a platform where the voice of moderate Muslims can be amplified. ... This is an opportunity that we must capitalize on so the voice of moderate Muslims will have a megaphone," AP quoted the imam.

Rauf also said he wanted to clarify a "misperception" that the proposed site was, as some claim, sacred ground, because of its proximity to a site where over 2,700 people died on September 11, 2001. "It is absolutely disingenuous as some have suggested that the block is hallowed ground," said Rauf, arguing that such claims were discounted by the existence of nearby strip clubs and betting parlors. As to whether the project was worth the intense amount of controversy it had generated, he answered: "The answer is a categorical yes. Why? Because this center will be a place for all faiths to come together in mutual respect."

A report in the [New York Times](#) quoted Rauf's statement to those present at the CFR: "Everything is on the table. We really are focused on solving it" in a way that will be best for everyone concerned. "I give you my pledge."

When a member of the influential foreign-policy group asked Rauf if he would consider delaying the project as a means of allowing more time for public discussion about it, Rauf replied: "Our advisers have been looking at every option — including that."

The *Times* reported that when CFR President Richard N. Haass asked Rauf why — even if the vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists — "so many terrorists are Muslims," the Imam replied that the



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problem had roots that are political, religious, and socioeconomic — but mainly political.

Rauf said that many Americans may sincerely not realize the distinction between Islam and the people who commit violence in its name. He seemed to offer an olive branch to those who may be opposed to the project, stating: "I'm not at all suggesting that people against the center are actually extremists. There is a lot of unawareness of Islam in this country."

Despite Rauf's conciliatory tone, the *Times* noted that he does not control the location of the proposed Islamic center, which will include a mosque, health club, and theater. Control of the center's location is in the hands of real estate developer Sharif el-Gamal, who, along with his supporters, has said that merely moving the project's location would not satisfy its critics.

Though most media reports of Rauf's public appearance made mention of the Council on Foreign Relations, the only description of the policy group we found, other than its name, was a report in the religion section of northjersey.com that referred to the CFR as a "a think tank."

While not entirely inaccurate, referring to the CFR as a mere "think tank" would be like calling the Federal Reserve System a "financial institution." More accurate descriptions of the CFR appeared in the *Sofia* (Bulgaria) *Echo* for Apr 17, 2003, which called it, "The nation's most influential foreign-policy think tank," and an item from Inter Press Service of August 22, 2005 described it as the "most influential and prestigious think tank in America."

Even those descriptions are understated, considering what James Perloff (author of a major expose on the CFR entitled [Shadows of Power](#)) noted in his [article](#) for *The New American* online of July 23, 2009:

Since the council's founding in 1921, 21 secretaries of defense or war, 19 secretaries of the treasury, 17 secretaries of state, and 15 CIA directors have hailed from the Council on Foreign Relations.

Perloff could have also added (and did in *The Shadows of Power*) the many members of the CFR who have headed our nation's major financial institutions, broadcast networks, major newspapers, and most prestigious universities.

Rauf's opportunity to address such an influential "think tank" is perhaps indicative that his influence extends beyond what might usually be associated with the Imam of a single mosque in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood. In addition to his role at the center of what has become a political firestorm and media circus, Rauf is a member of the World Economic Forum Council of 100 Leaders (for Islamic-West dialogue). Like the CFR, the Geneva-based World Economic Forum is among the most influential institutions promoting *internationalism* — a philosophy advocating the merger of world political and economic functions at the expense of national sovereignty.

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