



# ISLAMIC CENTER OF LONG ISLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ICLI statement on Rep. Peter King's Apr 17, 2009 remarks to MSNBC

Westbury, NY– April 21, 2009 -The Islamic Center of Long Island (ICLI), on several occasions, has reached out to Rep. Peter King to understand his misgivings about Muslims on Long Island or the broader American Muslim community. Despite our invitations, Mr. King has not responded, and seems to have no intention of engaging in constructive dialogue. While Mr. King refuses to discuss issues he continues to make disparaging remarks without facts and figures about American Muslims.

It's clearly evident that Mr. King's comments are self serving attempts to garner media attention. This is not becoming of an elected official. On a national level, Mr. King's remarks are more and more seen as fear mongering and bigoted. They are of no help to the American Muslim community or America at large and contradict President Obama's commitment to bridge gaps between America and Muslim communities.

To respond to Peter King's relentless ongoing onslaught we recall President Obama's April 6th remarks in which he said, "Let me say this as clearly as I can: The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam." President Obama also said, "We will listen carefully, bridge misunderstanding, and seek common ground."

We also note that in July 2008, Rep. Bill Pascrel of NJ clearly rebutted Mr. King's remarks about a public awareness campaign on Islam in NY City by saying, "I am deeply disappointed in any public official or media outlet that would use harsh rhetoric against this ad campaign which simply seeks to answer people's questions about Islam. Instead of making people fear one another, we should bridge the gaps in our collective knowledge."

In 2007, during meetings with Muslim leaders, former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertof himself said that there was "an unprecedented level of cooperation" from Muslim communities.

It is clear that Long Islanders are not deterred or divided by Mr. King's disparaging remarks. Mr. Habeeb Ahmed, ICLI Chairman, commented "There comes a time when such remarks are simply insulting. I strongly suggest that Peter King stop using such divisive methods. We are Americans and continue to successfully engage with people of diverse backgrounds on Long Island. ICLI's doors remain open and we are happy to engage with Rep. King as we have offered in the past."

Mr. Sajid Shah, ICLI's President added, "We all know that Peter King surrounds himself with controversy -whether it means picking on American Muslims to generate media attention or objecting to Notre Dame University's invitation to President Obama, suggesting Mr. Obama's values contrast with those of the Catholic Church. We can only guess on what his motivation is. We urge him to focus on serving the people of Long Island, regardless of race, religion, or creed. We are happy to help him understand how he can do that in a better way, especially with Long Island's Muslims."

ICLI enjoys very strong and cooperative relationships with law enforcement in Nassau and Suffolk counties as well as New York City. Since Rep. King's slanderous remarks are a direct assault on Long Island's mosques and the Muslims living here, ICLI plans to meet with all law enforcement officials to discuss the validity of these allegations.

## **Organization Profile:**

Established in 1982, the Islamic Center of Long Island ("ICLI") is a leading Muslim house of worship and community center serving over 25,000 Muslim households across Nassau and Suffolk counties. The Center holds daily and weekly prayer services and offers classes through its weekend education programs. The Center is also widely known as an active participant in a range of interfaith, civic, and cultural activities on Long Island.

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