



Press Release

For Immediate Release:

August 1, 2016

Contact:

Salaam Bhatti

[\(202\) 499-7035](tel:(202)499-7035)

salaam.bhatti@ahmadiyya.us

@Islam_Press

Former Presidential Candidate, Martin O’Malley, Headlines Nation’s Longest Running Muslim Convention

***U.S. lawmakers, governors, diplomats and faith leaders tout Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community as a role model for fighting extremism, pursuing peace***

Prominent civic, political and religious leaders across the country lauded the efforts of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA during its 68th Annual Convention this past weekend in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. More than 8,000 convention delegates, including 1,500 guests, attended the oldest and longest running Muslim convention in America to discuss efforts to combat extremism and the role of the new “True Islam” campaign in that effort.

Former Maryland Governor and U.S. Presidential candidate Martin O’Malley headlined the guest session and spoke to the audience about the work being done to end extremism. He said, “The True Islam campaign is a gift. It underscores the freedom of conscience, religion, charity, kindness, and generosity to strangers. These values have been demonstrated the world over by you.”

Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, Commissioner of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, who was overjoyed to attend the Muslim convention, discussed her expertise on the war against religious freedom. She stated, “Since your movement’s founding, there has been no stronger voice against the rise of extremism and hatred than yours, nor has there been a stronger voice for the recognition that we cannot counter religious extremism of some without defending the religious freedom of all.”

The convention attendees also witnessed an unlikely speaker when Ted Hakey, Jr., a former Marine who shot at the Community's mosque in Connecticut in November 2015, took the stage and explained why he was there. "Nobody is more surprised than me that I'm here today. I see the banner on the wall: Love For All, Hatred For None and I'm living proof that it works. Forgiveness, education, and Grace of God will overcome hatred every single time." Since the mosque shooting, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has forgiven Mr. Hakey and he routinely attends the mosque and engages in fellowship with Muslims.

Pennsylvania State Representative Mark Cohen, who is the Dean of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, expressed his appreciation of the work and message of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community: "Your presence here today - and your advocacy of rational, common sense means of settling disputes, your annunciation of violence, your obvious love for all Americans and all people, your willingness to publicly explain your beliefs and to invite others who are not familiar with your beliefs to understand what they are - does great things for expanding honest dialogue and mutual understanding. I really wish that one of your spokesmen was at the conventions in Cleveland or Philadelphia."

Nick Miccarelli, from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, presented the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community with a citation in recognition for their efforts. He expressed appreciation of its efforts by stating that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community "is a shining light of freedom and tolerance in a world that is in desperate need of understanding."

Brian Levin, the Director of the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University in San Bernardino, addressed the convention floor and cited examples of American heroes who have been Muslim, including Muhammad Ali and Captain Humayun Khan, whose father moved a nation with his address at the Democratic National Convention. After citing examples of Islamophobia and the dangers of terrorists, Mr. Levin concluded, "In Our America, our religious liberty fulfills the dreams of our ancestors, but only if we work together to sustain it."

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, who attended last year's annual convention, sent a video message this year to be played for the convention audience, in which he said he has been "impressed by the spirit of volunteerism, your deep commitment to serve humanity, and the extensive work you're doing to promote interfaith peace and harmony. You're leading by example wherever you are...I want to especially commend the leadership of His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the global Spiritual Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, who has twice graced Pennsylvania with his presence. He's a tireless advocate for global peace and interreligious harmony."

Harrisburg Mayor Eric Papenfuse sent a video message to the convention audience, which he said: "Your community has been a vibrant part of Pennsylvania since 1920 when the first Ahmadi Missionary arrived in Philadelphia. I would like to applaud your

community's True Islam campaign to fight extremist ideology and protect our national security. You are truly an example of peace and goodwill throughout the world."

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA also presented its annual Humanitarian Award to Dr. Milton Boniuk, Founder of Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance at Rice University.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community also was given a citation from the Maryland General Assembly for the work of its local chapters. In addition, over two dozen other U.S. lawmakers and state and city officials sent official greetings.

More Information:

<http://convention.ahmadiyya.us>
<http://www.MuslimsForPeace.org>

About Ahmadiyya Muslim Community:

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a dynamic, reformist and fast-growing international movement within Islam. Founded in 1889, the Community spans over 200 nations with membership exceeding tens of millions. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, established in 1920, is among the first American-Muslim organizations.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the only Islamic organization to believe that the long-awaited messiah has come in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) of Qadian, India. Ahmad claimed to be the metaphorical second coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine guide, whose advent was foretold by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The Community believes that God sent Ahmad, like Jesus, to end religious wars, condemn bloodshed and reinstitute morality, justice and peace. Ahmad's advent has brought about an unprecedented era of Islamic revival and moderation. He divested Muslims of fanatical beliefs and practices by vigorously championing Islam's true and essential teachings.

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