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EUPHRATES INSTITUTE AND URI REACH OUT TO AMERICAN MUSLIMS
Interfaith Groups Offer Solidarity in the Face of Violence and Bigotry Toward Midwest Muslim Community

St. Louis, MO, April 21, 2011 — [The Euphrates Institute](#), a member of the [URI \(United Religions Initiative\)](#) global interfaith network, extends its solidarity and support to the Midwestern Islamic community in response to an unprecedented rise of xenophobia and acts of violence.

Recent Koran burnings and staged events by Terry Jones, vandalism at a mosque in Springfield, Missouri, and proposals by state legislators for formal bans on Sharia law are shameful acts of intimidation that threaten the fabric of our national and international community.

“The idea that Sharia is a rapidly advancing threat to our laws, our Constitution, and our way of life is entirely groundless,” said Euphrates Institute Chairman Byron DeLear. “Legislating against it is a meaningless political stunt—an act of bigotry that has no place in America.”

Both URI, the world’s largest grassroots interfaith organization, and Euphrates, an organization dedicated to healing the post-9-11 divide between the United States and the Middle East, are calling on citizens and faith and interfaith communities around the country to rally to the support of their Muslim compatriots.

“We must work together to ensure that people everywhere, here in the United States and beyond, are free to practice their religion without fear,” said URI Executive Director Rev. Charles P. Gibbs. “We must work together to uphold the dignity of every human being.”

Euphrates Founder and CEO Janessa Gans Wilder emphasized the need for healing and “to amplify voices of reason as we head into the tenth anniversary of the ruinous events of 9/11. It is a time to bring the American family together, not break it apart.”

The Institute has launched a public campaign in support of religious freedom and civil liberties to counter rising Islamophobia in America. Ms. Wilder, a former CIA analyst, spoke at the Arab-American National Museum on April 16 about the steps individual Americans can take to build

bridges with Arabs and Muslims, beginning in our own communities, and has been invited to speak on WJR-760AM Detroit.

URI has also published a [Tool Kit](#) with ideas and resources to help individuals and communities speak out against prejudice and attacks on Muslims.

On October 27-8, the Euphrates Institute (EI) will be hosting a two-day summit: [Our World Beyond 9/11](#) at Principia College in Elsah, Illinois, in which thought-leaders, conflict transformation experts, policymakers and interfaith community representatives will present key challenges of the past ten years and showcase burgeoning trends of hope and examples of peaceful solutions.

For more information about the Euphrates Institute or to schedule an interview with Ms. Wilder, please contact Hillary Austin at hillary@euphratesinstitute.org. To learn more about URI or schedule an interview with Rev. Gibbs, please contact Julian Foley, jfoley@uri.org.

About the Euphrates Institute:

The Euphrates Institute uses the power of citizen diplomacy, awareness, and advocacy to heal divides between the Middle East and the West in the wake of 9/11. In a climate of war and the “clash of civilizations,” it promotes cooperation and prepares for peace. Through a student Fellows program, Travel Study trips to the Middle East, an active media branch, and its trademark Warriors for Peace® action platform, Euphrates mobilizes civil society and next generation leaders to promote understanding and restore trust. Euphrates is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit, educational organization. Visit www.euphratesinstitute.org for more information.

About URI:

URI is a global network of more than 500 grassroots organizations, called Cooperation Circles, in 78 countries, dedicated to peace and justice through interfaith and cross-cultural cooperation. Its nearly half a million members are overcoming distrust and hostility every day for the good of their communities—mediating religiously motivated conflict; building schools, orphanages and health clinics; campaigning for citizenship rights and more. They touch the lives of an estimated 2.5 million people. The network is led by Executive Director Charles Gibbs, President William E. Swing, and Yolanda Trevino, chair of an elected 29-member Global Council of Trustees from 19 countries. URI is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization headquartered in San Francisco, CA.

Visit www.uri.org for further information on URI’s projects in Africa; Asia; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; Middle East and North Africa; Southeast Asia and the Pacific; and North America.