



# *The InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC)*

*"Advancing Justice, Building Community, Nurturing Understanding"*

*The Gatehouse, 100 Allison Street NW, Washington DC 20011 • Tel: (202)-234-6300*

*• Fax: (202)-234-6303 • Email: [ifc@ifcmw.org](mailto:ifc@ifcmw.org) • Web: [www.ifcmw.org](http://www.ifcmw.org)*

Statement for ISNA Press Conference, April 14, 2016

Rabbi Gerald Serotta, Executive Director, Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington

I am pleased to be present today on behalf of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington whose membership includes eleven historic faiths traditions from all parts of the world. I am here to emphasize how deeply we appreciate the efforts of our brothers and sisters in the Muslim communities in our region and our country, and in particular the efforts of ISNA, in making a significant contribution to the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness and justice for all of our nation's citizens.

We call on people of every faith and of no faith to resist the religious bigotry which has emerged in recent days, to overcome ignorance about our neighbors and the efforts to divide us, especially with respect to our Muslim communities. Bigotry does not contribute to making us safer. To the contrary it has three dangerous effects:

- 1) This bigotry repudiates American values for which our soldiers of every race and religious background have given their lives.
- 2) The hateful comments give comfort and support to those who would attack our values of pluralism and freedom of religion expression and confirm their propaganda that our country is the enemy of hundreds of millions of righteous and peace loving Muslims worldwide.
- 3) Our fears may destroy America's opportunity to stand as a beacon of hope to refugees fleeing persecution whose many contributions in the past have made this country unique in the world.

We call on those public officials and media personalities to repent of their hatred and ignorance which threatens us from within at a time when we face clear and present dangers from the enemies who hate our freedom and our values of freedom of religion and welcome for the oppressed. As our first President George Washington wrote: *"...happily the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support..."*

Within our Washington area there can be no doubt of the good citizenship of our beloved Muslim communities, nor of their commitment to serving this country and protecting it from enemies foreign and domestic. Furthermore, our Muslim mosques and community centers have consistently reached out to support and protect our most vulnerable neighbors with, for example, free health clinics and other relief of the poor, as have their sister communities throughout the country.

When he wrote this particular letter to a Jewish Congregation, President Washington included the words of the prophets Micah and Isaiah: *"every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."*

We join the call today to our two great political parties. As they prepare their political platforms we ask them to specifically condemn religious bigotry and to affirm the American ideals of mutual respect and tolerance which are part of our unique strength and contribution to a divided world.

