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MAS President Letter to the Washington Post

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The following Letter-to-the-Editor was submitted to the Washington Post by Muslim American Society President Esam Omeish in response to an article which appeared in the newspaper on Saturday, September 11, 2004. The Post has not published the letter.

Dear Editor,

Although your article "In search of friends among the foes, US hopes to work with diverse group" by John Mintz and Douglas Farah, Saturday Sep 11, 2004, represents a comprehensive attempt to define the Muslim Brotherhood and its different relationships with the West, it falls short in many respects, contains many inaccuracies and confuses some issues.

While specific points concerning the Muslim Brotherhood raised throughout the article should be addressed by the Muslim Brotherhood organization itself, there are assertions made about their impact on Islamic activism in the United States that the Muslim American Society (MAS) would like to clarify.

We, MAS, are a religious, educational, activist, and civic organization espousing the comprehensive understanding of Islam as explained by the prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him), and as outlined and applied more recently by modern Islamic movements, of which the Muslim Brotherhood is pre-eminent.

The moderate school of thought prevalent in the Muslim Brotherhood represents a significant trend in Islamic activism in the United States and the West, and we in MAS accordingly have been influenced by that moderate Islamic school of thought as it applies to our American identity and relevance for our American reality.

We, in MAS, are an independent American Muslim organization with a staunchly clear and firm American identity operating with full respect and compliance with our laws and Constitution. We subscribe to the values and ideals of our country, its Founding Fathers and the Constitution of the land. The administrative structure and methodology of MAS is well-known and public. We maintain the highest levels of transparency and believe in the tenets of public work in a free society.

MAS' mission incorporates a comprehensive view of reform using a dual model of development and outreach. We strive to nurture our members into becoming exemplary citizens of our society and empower our community to positively integrate and fulfill their civic duties in building a more virtuous and moral society.

We also strive to achieve outreach through both *dawah*, or education, in presenting the beauty of Islam to our fellow Americans, and *Islah* (reform) through the advocacy of Islam's values and its solutions to society's problems, in an effort to contribute a genuine modern rendition of monotheism to the great heritage of our nation.

We in MAS are part of the history of recent Islamic activism in the United States, and the organizations outlined in your article were many of the public forums many of the current and former members of MAS developed prior to its incorporation in 1993 to fulfill their mission and advocate the comprehensive tenets of Islam. The activities led by the original organizations have been instrumental in constructing a vibrant Muslim community that is today well-positioned to contribute to the overall well-being and progress of our society. This asset should serve as a bridge for the cultivation of relationships and friendships with the world's 1.5 billion Muslims and the countries in which they reside.

The influence of Muslim Brotherhood ideas has been instrumental in defining our understanding of Islam within the American and Western context in order to espouse the values of human dialogue, tolerance and moderation; the genuine love of one's country and care for its welfare and prosperity; and the fostering of proactive involvement within society, fulfilling one's responsibility and claiming one's rights in the greater diversity of our country.

It also has been instrumental in defining our worldviews of justice and human rights; of terrorism, its scourge and its rejection in Islam; and of differentiating between terrorism and legitimate struggles against tyranny, dictatorships and



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occupation.

We in MAS hope to see the United States playing a more balanced and active role in ensuring that justice, democracy and freedom prevail in all parts of the Muslim world.

We categorically and unequivocally reject and condemn terrorism and its roots here in America and abroad. The cultivation of more relationships and dialogue with genuine moderate Islamic organizations such as MAS here in the United States will help resolve the "worrisome enigma", illuminate our ideas, and clearly show our fellow Americans, our political leadership and law enforcement agencies that understanding Islam and Islamic activism, and engaging its followers and proponents, is by far the most effective and best way to work together to rid our world of the scourge of terrorism, eliminate the clash of civilizations, and build a more peaceful and just human society.

Dr. Esam Omeish
President, Muslim American Society (MAS)

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