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*Nihad Awad, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and Ali Khan, a Pakistani-born attorney and professor at Washburn University School of Law, discuss the charges and reaction in the United States.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CAIR Asks GOP to Repudiate Anti-Mosque Tenn. Candidate**

Republican congressional candidate says planned mosque a threat to state's 'moral and political foundation'

(WASHINGTON, D.C., 6/25/10) -- A prominent national Islamic civil rights and advocacy organization today called on Republican Party leaders to repudiate Islamophobic remarks by a GOP congressional candidate in Tennessee who claims the construction of a new mosque poses a threat to that state's "moral and political foundation."

The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said Republican candidate Lou Ann Zelenik issued a statement yesterday denouncing plans to build a new mosque in Murfreesboro, Tenn. [Zelenik also says she is a leader in the Middle Tennessee tea party movement.]

In her statement, Zelenik backed opponents of the proposed mosque, which she referred to as "an Islamic training center." She even denied the religious nature of the mosque, claiming it "is not part of a religious movement; it is a political movement designed to fracture the moral and political foundation of Middle Tennessee."

**SEE:** [Zelenik Denounces Plan to Build Mosque](#)  
[Zelenik Issues Statement on Proposed Islamic Center](#)

The planned mosque has been targeted by extremists who have made a number of bigoted comments about Islam and Muslims. Yesterday, CAIR called on law enforcement authorities to investigate a second incident of vandalism at the mosque site as a possible hate crime.

**SEE:** [CAIR Reacts to Mosque Sign Vandalism](#)  
Tenn. Mosque Targeted by Islamophobia ([Video](#))

Last night, anti-mosque protesters tried to disrupt a peace vigil held in support of the local Muslim community and of religious tolerance.

**SEE:** Protesters Try to Disrupt Peace Vigil for Tenn. Mosque ([Video](#))

"State and national Republican leaders must repudiate Ms. Zelenik's extremist and un-American remarks and address the growing perception that their party promotes Islamophobia and intolerance against minorities," said CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad. "We thank all those who turned out last night in Murfreesboro to express support for religious freedom."

He noted that CAIR's Connecticut chapter recently urged state Republican leaders to distance themselves from a candidate seeking the GOP nomination for that state's Fourth Congressional District, who said: "It turns out, folks, they [Muslims] are here, they're among us. We are at war with Islam."

Awad said CAIR called on national Republican leaders to repudiate similarly Islamophobic campaign advertisements for a Florida GOP congressional candidate.

**SEE:** Fla. Candidate Produces Racist, Anti-Muslim Ads ([Video](#))

CAIR's Oklahoma chapter is also challenging the bizarre claim by a Republican state legislator that Muslims seek to impose Islamic law in that state.

**SEE:** [Sharia \(Islamic Law\) Not OK in Oklahoma](#)

CAIR said American Muslims are concerned that Islamophobic statements by elected officials or candidates for public office are contributing to an overall rise in anti-Muslim sentiment and incidents nationwide.

Just last night, CAIR's Washington State chapter reported that a van with advertisements about Islam on its exterior and parked near a mosque was apparently smeared with feces.

**SEE:** [Feces Smeared on Van Parked Near Bellevue Mosque](#) (Seattle Times)

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

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