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CAIR Launches Islamophobia Dept. at Sold-Out Banquet

New Department to address 'alarming' rise in anti-Islam sentiment

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A prominent national Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization has announced the launch of a department devoted to addressing the alarming rise of Islamophobic sentiment in American society.

The Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) made that announcement at its 16th annual banquet on Saturday in Arlington, Va. Some 900 Muslim community members and activists, interfaith leaders and diplomats attended the sold-out banquet. CAIR said it exceeded its goals for fundraising at the banquet.

Almost 300 Muslims from around the nation also attended CAIR's day-long leadership skills training conference held prior to the banquet.

CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad announced the new Islamophobia Department in his address to the evening banquet.

Awad said the department will produce an annual Islamophobia report that will track trends in rhetorical attacks on Islam and Muslims and will offer accurate and balanced information to be used in the struggle for tolerance and mutual understanding.

Along with an annual Islamophobia report, CAIR's new department will organize conferences, seminars, cultural exchanges, and other activities and events designed to provide opportunities for education and dialogue.

"We have seen a small but vocal group of bigots and hate-mongers manufacture an atmosphere of anti-Islam hysteria through smear campaigns that rely on distortions, misinformation and outright falsehoods," said Awad. "We have witnessed this un-American phenomenon before in the targeting of Jews, Catholics, African-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Native-Americans, and others. American Muslims are but the latest minority to feel the sting of prejudice and hate."

"It will take joint efforts by people of goodwill of all faiths to challenge this epidemic of hate," said Awad.

He noted that four New York teenagers who allegedly attacked a Muslim classmate because of his faith were arrested yesterday and now face hate crime charges.

SEE: Four Staten Island Teens Charged in Muslim Hate Crime

<http://tinyurl.com/3y3u22x>

Awad said Islamophobia is a worldwide phenomenon and that Muslim-bashers in America are forging links with far-right racist groups in Europe.

SEE: UK Far-Right Group Forges Links with American Islamophobes (Guardian)

<http://tinyurl.com/382oqms>

NY Times Profiles Leading American Islamophobe

<http://mediamatters.org/blog/201010100004>

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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SOURCE Council on American-Islamic Relations

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