



For Immediate Release

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Islamic Institute Meets with Justice Dep., Discusses Ashcroft Comments

(Washington, D.C.) – The Islamic Institute met today with representatives of the Justice Department to seek clarification of offensive statements about Islam recently attributed to Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The meeting was held at the Community Relations Office of the Justice Department in Washington, D.C. Hosting the meeting was Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Rights Division, and Sharee Freeman, Director of the Community Relations Service. Other representatives from the Civil Rights Division, the Community Relations Service, and the Intergovernmental Affairs Division were also present. The Institute was joined by several national Muslim and Arab American organizations at the meeting.

The meeting focused on comments recently attributed to the Attorney General by Cal Thomas who quotes Ashcroft as saying, "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his son to die for you." The representatives of the Justice Department stated firmly that the comments did not represent the Attorney General's point of view about Islam or Muslims.

Sharee Freeman added that the statement, as attributed to Attorney General Ashcroft, was incorrect, and that it was in fact not what he said. She stated that Mr. Ashcroft was speaking about terrorists, and not Muslims. Assistant Attorney General Ralph Boyd further stressed that the Attorney General did not make the statement as it was attributed, and that it does not represent the views of Ashcroft or those of the Department of Justice.

Following the meeting, Abdulwahab Alkebsi, Executive Director of the Islamic Institute, said, "We appreciate the opportunity to continue a constructive dialogue with the Department of Justice. The Muslim American community perceives that it is targeted for abuse right now, and the perception in the community when they hear statements like those attributed to the Attorney General is that they are true." Alkebsi continued, "Positive confidence building measures by the Department of Justice are needed to clarify that the community is not a target. Muslim Americans are ready to help their country in the war on terror, but they must be treated as part of the solution, not part of the problem."