

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Council on American-Islamic Relations
Georgia Chapter
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State Senator Michael Williams
3482 Keith Bridge Rd Ste 310
Cumming, GA 30041

June 11, 2017

Dear Senator Williams:

On behalf of Georgia's Muslim community, I write to thank you for your service to our state legislature, to wish you well in your campaign for Governor, and to invite you to engage in dialogue with your Georgia Muslim neighbors.

As you may know, over 100,000 Georgia Muslims live across our state, including some residents of your district. Every day, these Georgia Muslims make positive contributions to our community, including as doctors, lawyers, engineers, business owners, teachers, law enforcement officers, homemakers, and everything in-between.

This is also true for the American Muslims who have called this land home for generations. Indeed, 5,000 American Muslims currently serve in the U.S. military and some of our most popular cultural figures, including the late Muhammad Ali, have followed the tenets and practices of Islam.

One of the words that American Muslims use to describe those Islamic tenets and practices is "Sharia." Commonly translated as "the way to water," Sharia is analogous to Canon Law in Catholicism and Halakha in Judaism. When Muslims pray five times a day, tithe annually, fast during Ramadan, and obey the laws of the land on which we live, we are following "Sharia."

Despite these facts, the organization ACT for America held a "March Against Sharia" at Atlanta's Piedmont Park this weekend.

ACT—whose founder has argued that “every practicing Muslim is a radical Muslim,” that Arab Muslims “have no souls,” that female genital mutilation is an Islamic practice, and that observant Muslims should not hold elected office—organized similar rallies across the nation.

During your remarks at ACT’s Piedmont Park rally, you reportedly said, “We all need to come together, put aside some of our petty differences and unite together to fight sharia law. We do not need it in our country. Overseas in Europe and other places, they’re throwing people off of buildings, they’re decapitating people because they do not believe the things they believe.”

Although groups like ISIS and Boko Haram do indeed hold extreme interpretations of Islamic law, these groups are wrong about the teachings of Islam, just as the cross-burning racists of the Ku Klux Klan, Eric Robert Rudolph of the Army of God, and Joseph Kony of the Lord’s Resistance Army are wrong about the teachings of Christianity.

Terrorism knows no religion. Neither does female genital mutilation, a dangerous and disgusting cultural practice found among some Christians, Muslims, Hindus and animists in certain regions of the world. These horrific acts contradict the teachings of every Abrahamic faith, and American Muslims support the criminal prosecution of those who engage in such behavior.

Furthermore, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution forbids our government from establishing a religion. Although ACT for America claims that our nation’s 3 million American Muslims are somehow on the verge of imposing “Sharia” on a secular nation of 300 million people, this humorous conspiracy theory is neither true nor particularly unique. In fact, some Americans once expressed similar suspicion towards Catholic and Jewish communities.

In an effort to clear up such misconceptions and build bridges of understanding, we invite you to meet, greet and dialogue with your Georgia Muslim neighbors at a mosque in your area at a time convenient for you. Our Communications Director, who happens to be a resident of your district, is sending along potential times for your review.

In the meantime, please know that Georgia's Muslim community firmly believes that outreach is a far better response to disagreement than outrage. Thank you again for your service to our state, and we hope to hear from you soon.

Asalaam alaykum. May God's peace be upon you.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Ahmed Mitchell III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct "III" at the end.

Edward Ahmed Mitchell

Executive Director

Council on American-Islamic Relations

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