

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful



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A Call for Muslim Solidarity

A Sit-in Denouncing the Sacrilege of Holy Sites and Loss of Human lives across Iraq

We would like to extend our heartfelt condolence to the Muslim Ummah for the recent attacks in Iraq. The atrocious blasts in the Askariya Mosque on February 22 were in reality an attack on Islam, its values, and its sacred symbols. This mosque was one of the most sacred sites in the Muslim world, housing the graves of two noble and highly revered descendents of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). With the precedent this sacrilege has set, the safety of all Islamic sites is now threatened. For now any enemy of Islamic unity can attack a venerated Islamic site or symbol to stir up immediate sectarian strife among Muslim brethren. And, given the globalization of communication, the ripple effects of such sacrilege could extend beyond the targeted locality within a very short time. The anti-Islamic elements behind these attacks, therefore, did not just attack one holy shrine but rather the unity of the entire Muslim Ummah living in Iraq and elsewhere.

It is evident that these anti-Islamic elements have dedicated themselves to dividing Muslims, as the recent attack is merely the latest link in a chain of atrocities aimed at provoking violence and destabilizing Iraq. These anti-Islamic elements wish to provoke Muslims in order to attack the essential Islamic values of unity, peace, and justice. With their constant violation of the sanctity of human life and values, these elements are not merely enemies of Islam, but of humanity itself. The Shia and Sunni religious leadership in Iraq must be commended in this regard for their staunch condemnation of all forms of violence and urging their followers to practice restraint and not to fall into the traps set by the anti-Islamic elements.

However, the message of Muslim solidarity needs to come out even more resoundingly from the masses. Only through displaying our unity can we defeat the vicious plot of these anti-Islamic elements. And only through unity can we preserve the sanctity of Islamic values and sites around the world. We must condemn the recent sacrilege and all forms of violence in Iraq, and we must come together for the sake of preserving unity, peace, and justice.

Brothers and Sisters, we ask you to join us in a sit-in to display your commitment to Muslim Unity and denounce the sacrilege of all holy sites in Iraq. Only through peace can we speak out to those who wish to provoke violence. And only through unity can we respond to those who wish to divide us. Let's stand firm in our display of solidarity and thereby send a resounding message to Iraq and to all the people of the world, Muslims and Non-Muslims alike. We must not let these anti-Islamic elements write history for us. By participating in this sit-in, let us write our own history with the noble ink of compassion, solidarity, peace, and harmony among Muslim brethren, InshAllah. We also urge all people of conscience to attend this sit-in to denounce violence against the sanctity of human life and values in Iraq.

“And hold fast, all together, to the rope of God, and be not divided among yourselves” (Holy Qur’an, 3:103)

Local Sit-in Schedule (City/Campus)

Date & Time (we suggest, making it an hour long at max)

Place

Format

Considerations (Need to bring along anything, directions, cold weather, etc.)

Organizing the Sit-in– Logistics

1. It always starts with a few people that ultimately make the difference

i) It can very well start with a core of a few committed people that share the same concerns and are sincere and motivated for the cause. Ideally, this sit in should be organized in coordination with the local campus/community organization(s).

ii) Tasks that would require coordination: Publicity; Funds; Location and Set up; Equipments; Refreshments; Program Design (which can include: speeches, skits, poetry recitation, documentary, panel discussion, etc.); Host(s)/Moderator/Speaker

2. Involvement of the Muslim Community

The involvement could be on a campus level, centered in one community, or on a city wide level. Doing it at the city wide level would of course be ideal that would involve a joint platform of all/most of the Muslim organizations/centers in that city. But for practical reasons, in some cases, doing it on a campus level or making it community centered might be more feasible. The point is to do the best we can **to call out all Muslims from the various backgrounds in these sit-ins.**

3. Choose the date, time, and location of the sit in

Public libraries, community centers, senior centers and university facilities are all ideal as they are low-to-no cost and accessible. Doing the sit-in in an open space may be useful in some cases but would require more careful planning, which would include counting in the weather factor, traffic and noise, possible disruptions and added security needs, and permission to hold such a gathering. Make sure that the timing is convenient and fits into the normal schedule of the community. Make it easy for the participants to attend. Also, check the parking availability in the vicinity.

4. Audio/Visual and Equipment

Many of the above locations will rent you a television and DVD player, or provide one free of charge. Another option is using a laptop computer connected to a projector. In either case test your equipment in advance, quality of picture and sound is very important.

5. Inform the community about the event

i) **Add the answers to the who, where, and when of the event in the first page of this document. This first page is intended to serve as an introduction/statement for the flyer/petition.** This sit-in is more than just a 'reaction' to the tragedy in Iraq; it's a proactive effort at uniting the Ummah in this very sensitive juncture of history.

ii) Include contact information, a phone number and an e-mail, for inquiries. Make sure the people assigned to receive inquiries reply quickly.

iii) Request Muslim organizations to publicize the event through their listserv(s), notice boards, and announcement during prayers. Identify and contact the people that are committed to Muslim unity in these organizations. Having concrete information about the purpose and schedule of the sit in would be helpful.

iv) Hang flyers in local places of worship and bookstores. Many grocery stores and other public places have community notice boards. Most colleges also post community announcements, so do many organizations that have Muslim members (for example, Pakistani Students Association or Muslims Student Association). **Also approach humanitarian organizations, request their help, and invite them to join in your effort.** Ask imams to announce the event at Jumaah prayers. Give flyers to other Muslims to pass out to their friends and colleagues. Call everyone you have in your e-mail and cell phone contact lists and ask them to commit to bringing five other people.

6. Give Media an Alternate Frame to Appraise the whole Issue

i) Send a Media Advisory to your local media outlets. Include the answers to what you are doing (local Muslim community participating in the nationwide sit-in series for Pledging Muslim Unity and Protesting the Sacrilege across Iraq), when you are doing it, location, and a contact name and phone number. Media contact information can be obtained here <http://capwiz.com/cair/dbq/media/> (Part of the logistic section of this document has been adopted from a resource document CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, DC) has on its website. We would like to thank them here and acknowledge their sincere efforts at advancing the Muslim cause.)

ii) Unfortunately, the media coverage of the violence following 2/22 has tended to only reinforce the sectarian boundaries. The media have mainly portrayed the whole issue in terms of a religious conflict, with sectarianism to be its SOLE cause.

Any real EXPLANATION of this ensuing circle of violence has to take into account the continuation of its **SOCIAL and POLITICAL PRECURSORS/CONTEXT** in Iraq. It is very important that we come out with a strong message of MUSLIM SOLIDARITY for the media and that we present to media this **ALTERNATE FRAME** for appraising the whole issue.

7. Set Up

i) Arrange chairs in theatre style. Set up and test equipment in the location of the event as early as possible. During the event: Have someone present who can deal with any equipment issues, such as your sound system shutting off. Assign someone to keep things clean at places like the refreshment stand.

ii) After the Event: Thank you notes are often overlooked; however, they are an excellent reflection of your professional event and community. Send them to the people who helped make your event a success.

8. Most important of all, the Atmosphere

i) This is the atmosphere of unity, friendship, and harmony among Muslim brethren that we should strive to **CREATE** and **DISPLAY**. The first and the foremost thing that would help convey the message of this sit in is the attitude of organizers themselves in that gathering. As the saying goes, '**Be the change, you want to see in the world,**' the organizers need to be the first people that embody the message of the sit-in. **A sit-in has been given preference over reactionary or sensational kind of demonstration here, which was necessary for the reasons outlined in the statement on the first page and in point 6 above.** You are of course free to adjust and modify the format of this gathering the way your organization wants considering the local circumstances of your community.

ii) A well planned event, well prepared host, speakers, and other presenters are very important to build that atmosphere.

iii) Placards, banners, other forms of audio visuals can be useful aid. Make sure they reflect the spirit of the sit-in.

iv) Do make sure that you have security enforcement available just in case.

9. The Message conveyed through Symbols

i) Doing the sit-in after doing congregational prayers or concluding the program with congregational prayers (combined for all Muslims) could be symbolically very powerful and could have **TRANSFORMING** (not to confuse with 'proselytizing') effects on the participants. Dua Wahdat (Supplication of Wahdat w/ translation before the Arabic) while people hold their hands together at the end of the program or the congregational prayers could be another powerful gesture.

ii) Candle lights – lighting them up from the beginning or at the end of the sit in where the light up could start from one corner and Muslims help other Muslims light up candles could be very meaningful. The light would symbolize hope and the noble message of Islam, sharing them would symbolize harmony and brotherhood among Muslims.

iii) Other ideas that could be incorporated into the sit-in: Open mic, Small skits, Dialogues/Discussion, Petition Signing, Spread sheet to let people express their views.

For questions and suggestions, please contact: MuslimSolidaritySitins@gmail.com or for general questions contact sia@www.utexas.edu.

My success is only from God on Whom I have relied and to Whom I resort.