



FSWC ISSUES NATIONAL ALERT

Champion of hate and violence to be honoured at Mississauga event

March 26, 2009, TORONTO – Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) has learned that two radical clerics are being extolled as heroes at an event in Mississauga on April 5: Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Imam of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Attallah Hanna, Bishop from a Greek Orthodox Christian rite, are addressing Canadian Palestinians and Arabs. Research conducted by FSWC reveals these Jerusalem-based clerics will likely offer a divisive message of hate, racism and radicalization to Canadian audiences; one that incites violence over dialogue.

“Canada is a country that promotes tolerance, respect, truth and non-violence,” said Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of FSWC. “It is absolutely appalling that an event so linked and imbued with hatred and antisemitism is taking place so close to home and without any questions.”

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center has embarked on a swift education effort to inform Canadian authorities, donors and civic leaders about the event, its negative effects on audiences and to stress the importance of dialogue and tolerance over divisiveness and hate.

Sheikh Sabri has repeatedly praised suicide bombers, especially children younger than 17. In an interview with an Egyptian paper, Sheikh Sabri said: “There is no doubt that a child [martyr] suggests that a new generation will carry on the mission with determination. The younger the martyr – the greater and the more I respect him.” Asked how he felt about Jews, Sabri answered: “...I am filled with rage toward the Jews. I have never greeted a Jew when I came near one. I never will. They cannot even dream that I will. The Jews do not dare to bother me, because they are the most cowardly creatures Allah has ever created....”

Like other Holocaust Deniers, Sheikh Sabri has questioned the severity of the Holocaust. He stated in a 2000 interview with La Republica: ‘Six million Jews Dead? No way, they were much fewer. Let’s stop with this fairytale exploited by Israel to capture international solidarity. It is not my fault if Hitler hated Jews, indeed they were hated a little everywhere”.

Hannah has a questionable record as well which must be further investigated. He once stated, “We emphasize that Jerusalem is an Arab city, read the history” – a controversial statement which reinforces divisiveness and adversity. Benlolo added, “We will be encouraging Canadian authorities to investigate this matter to the fullest extent of the law and to protect Canada and Canadians from incitement to hate and possibly, ominous fundraising activities”.

In an effort to demonstrate dialogue and stay true to Simon Wiesenthal’s vision for tolerance among peoples, Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center is preparing an open letter to Palestine House, the not-for-profit hosting the event, to express dismay and concern, which will be shared with key members of government. Avi Benlolo and the staff and volunteers at FSWC invite donors and supporters to send e-mails to media@fswc.ca with a short answer to the following question: why do you think an event such as this one hinders the prospect for peace? Select answers will be adjoined to Mr. Benlolo’s letter.

About Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies is a Canadian human rights organization dedicated to fostering tolerance and understanding through community involvement, educational outreach and social action. Visit: www.fswc.ca for more information.

Media contact:
Daniel Torchia, APR
Torchia Communications
416-341-9929 ext. 223
daniel@torchiacom.com

Direct Action

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5075 Yonge Street # 902 Toronto Ontario Canada M2N 6C6
Tel. 416-863-9735 Fax 416-864-1083 Toll Free 1-866-864-9735 www.fswc.ca