

Florida Pastor Cancels Quran Burning

Florida pastor Terry Jones said he is canceling his planned "International Burn a Koran Day," claiming the group behind the proposed mosque near Ground Zero agreed to relocate it.

Jones told reporters Thursday afternoon he planned to meet with Feisal Abdul Rauf, the imam behind the controversial Islamic center, on Saturday. Rauf, however, denied that he had agreed to a meeting and refuted claims that the mosque would be moved. Imam Muhammad Musri, president of the Islamic Society of Central Florida, told the Associated Press he offered to arrange the New York meeting but said no deal had been reached to move the Islamic center.

Thursday night Jones began to back away from his plans cancel, saying the Quran burning was "suspended." On Friday, however, he told ABC's Good Morning America that his event was off and he still expected to meet with Rauf.

"Right now we have plans not to do it," Jones said.

"We believe that the imam is going to keep his word, what he promised us yesterday. ... We believe that we are, as he said, and promised, going to meet with the imam in New York tomorrow."

Jones was widely criticized for planning to burn 200 Qurans on the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. President Obama said the move would be a "recruitment bonanza for al Qaeda."

Christian leaders also widely denounced the plan, with Samaritan's Purse founder Franklin Graham urging Jones to cancel the event and the Vatican calling Jones' effort "outrageous and grave."

The pressure on Jones to cancel the event mounted this week as international leaders warned of possible violent attacks, including against Christians in predominantly Muslim nations, if the Quran burning went forward.

Officials in Gainesville, Fla., where Jones' Dove World Outreach Center is based, said they would charge the church for the cost of beefed up security Saturday, CNN reported. The pastor, who said he has received more than 100 death threats, also was visited by the FBI this week and received a call Thursday afternoon from Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who urged him to cancel the Quran burning, saying it could endanger U.S. troops.