

Jews, Muslims Respond to bin Laden's Demise

Osama bin Laden is dead—and much of the peace-loving world is rejoicing.

Reactions from around the world are beginning to roll in as news of a successful U.S. operation to kill the murderous and elusive al-Qaeda leader spreads.

Obama addressed the nation to announce the news late Sunday night.

“Today, at my direction, the United States launched a targeted operation against that compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan,” Obama said. “A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. No Americans were harmed. They took care to avoid civilian casualties. After a firefight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body.”

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) was among the first to respond to the news that bin Laden was killed. AJC Executive Director David Harris expressed the group's heartfelt admiration and appreciation to the United States government for the relentless pursuit of bin Laden.

“This is an extraordinary moment for all concerned about the fight against international terrorism. It sends an unmistakably powerful message of American resolve to go after those who would wreak human havoc in the name of their perverted hatred, packaged as fanatical faith,” Harris says.

Since bin Laden's body was buried at sea, some are skeptical that he has truly be brought to justice. But Harris, for one, is satisfied.

Still, as Harris sees it, much remains to be understood, such as the future of the al-Qaeda network without its long-time leader. Harris also questions how was it possible that bin Laden could apparently live hidden in plain sight in the heart of Pakistan—and not in a cave but a mansion.

“In the end, did Pakistani officials actually help the U.S. track him down or, in fact, try to prevent his discovery?” Harris asked. “But for now, we can only breathe a sigh of relief and express profound gratitude that, nearly 10 years after the horrors of 9/11, the killer-in-chief has, at long last, been hunted down and killed.”

Obama stressed in his address that the United States is not—and never will be—at war with Islam. “I’ve made clear, just as President Bush did shortly after 9/11, that our war is not against Islam,” he said. “Bin Laden was not a Muslim leader. He was a mass murderer of Muslims. Indeed, al Qaeda has slaughtered scores of Muslims in many countries, including our own. So his demise should be welcomed by all who believe in peace and human dignity.”

Often criticized by groups battling radical Islam, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR, welcomed the announcement that bin Laden was killed. CAIR is America’s largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization.

“As we have stated repeatedly since the 9/11 terror attacks, bin Laden never represented Muslims or Islam,” the organization said in a statement. “In fact, in addition to the killing of thousands of Americans, he and Al Qaeda caused the deaths of countless Muslims worldwide. We also reiterate President Obama’s clear statement tonight that the United States is not at war with Islam.”