

Turnout at Muslim Rally Lower Than Expected

✖ A Muslim prayer rally on Capitol Hill Friday drew between 3,000 and 5,000 participants, a figure well below the 50,000 organizers hoped to attract.

Among those gathered were several dozen protestors. Some stood at the rear of the crowd holding Bibles and praying. Others yelled “repent” from across the street, where they gathered with banners and crosses, the *Washington Post* reported.

At one point, organizers asked the protestors to show the Muslim group some respect, likening the Friday prayer service to Sunday worship services.

“We would never come to a prayer meeting that you have to make a disturbance,” said Hamad Chebli, imam of the Islamic Society of Central Jersey, according to the *Washington Post*.

Organizers of the Islam on Capitol Hill rally said their goal was to unify Muslims and show the nation the spiritual side of Islam.

“This is not a protest,” Imam Abdul Malik of New York said Friday. “It is a day of prayer, of devotion, hoping that we can work ... for the betterment of the world community.”

But several Christian leaders expressed concern that the prayer gathering was an attempt by Muslims to exert greater influence in the nation.

The Rev. Canon Julian Dobbs, leader of the Convocation of

Anglicans in North America's Church and Islam Project, said in a statement that the Friday gathering was "part of a well-defined strategy to Islamize American society and replace the Bible with the Koran, the cross with the Islamic crescent and the church bells with the Athan [the Muslim call to prayer]."

Nigerian prayer leader Mosy Madugba echoed Dobbs' sentiment.

"If they succeed, they will acquire greater boldness to press for stronger and greater Islamic influence in USA," said Madugba, leader of the Ministers Prayer Network in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and the Florida-based Global Prayer Network. "What they are trying to do is test the waters. For every ground Islam gains, the church loses some."

Madugba joined TheCall founder Lou Engle in urging Christians to pray before and during the event. Engle said intercessors were not fighting against Muslims but "against principalities, powers and forces of darkness."

"There is a great spiritual conflict with a rising tide of Islamic boldness being manifested," Engle said in a statement at TheCall Web site. "We must pray that God would restrain the spiritual powers behind Islam and grant us the great awakening that we desperately need for America."

Other Christian leaders expressed concern that one of the lead organizers, Hassen Abdellah, was part of the legal team that represented one of the men convicted in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Family Research Council President Tony Perkins and Liberty Counsel founder Mat Staver were among several conservatives who issued a letter before the Friday gathering calling on Abdellah and other organizers to denounce specific recent terrorist acts and plots.

In a prayer call he led Thursday night with Engle and Shirley Dobson, chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, Perkins called the Muslim prayer gathering a wake-up call for the church. "If we [Christians] don't fill the void that's in

this nation with the truth, it will be filled with something else," he said.