

US Muslim Group: Our Kids 'Didn't Comprehend' Song About Beheading Jews

Muslim leaders in Philadelphia apologized Wednesday for an event last month at which children were captured on video speaking in Arabic about beheadings and the "liberation" of the Jewish Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

The Muslim American Society's (MAS) Philadelphia chapter and the Leaders Academy issued a joint statement Wednesday that sought to explain how the extremely violent and anti-Semitic material found its way into an annual event that purports to celebrate diversity in Muslim communities.

A video uploaded to the chapter's Facebook page showed children dancing, chanting and reading from a prepared text in Arabic. Videos of the event appear at the bottom of this piece.

One girl in the video declared, "We will chop off their heads, and we will liberate the ... Al-Aqsa Mosque," referring to the Muslim structure built on top of the Jewish Temple Mount

The Al-Aqsa compound is currently overseen by an Islamic Trust called the Waqf. The Temple Mount is the holiest site for Jews, while Muslims claim Mohammad ascended to heaven from the location.

Currently, the Waqf enforces a ban preventing any non-Muslim from praying on the Temple Mount or entering either Al-Aqsa Mosque or the Dome of the Rock.

The Facebook video, which has since been taken down, sparked outrage and an ongoing investigation by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

According to the statement from MAS on Wednesday, its members “are deeply saddened to have hurt our partners in the Jewish community and beyond.”

The April 17 “Umma Day” event was intended to showcase 18 countries, with children singing songs from various Muslim cultures and wearing customary dress, according to the statement.

Officials said a volunteer aide selected the songs out of a desire to represent Palestinian people, “feels terrible she made a mistake” and has since stepped down. A large number of Palestinian immigrants attend the Al-Hidaya mosque at the site.

“The children did not understand this song as their command of Arabic is not advanced,” the statement said. The speech, it said, “was likewise a selection that primarily sought to highlight the children’s capacity to read and project Arabic rhetoric; however, they have not yet mastered enough grammar to comprehend the words.”

The Leaders Academy does not consider itself a school—a designation that would require it to register with the state Department of Education—but a gathering place for children following a state-approved cyber school curriculum. The academy supplies tutors to keep the students on task and answer questions, according to MAS attorney Timothy Welbeck, and also provides Arabic language and religious instruction.

The Leaders Academy and the Muslim American Society said they have taken steps to prevent a repeat of what they called a “grave mistake,” including new operating procedures, a new advisory council and sensitivity training. {eo}

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