

## ARAB TV CHIEF: 9/11 MOSQUE WOULD BE 'MONUMENT' TO TERROR

Says world's Muslims don't want to give hijackers 'source of pride'

By Drew Zahn

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The director of a Dubai-based, Arab television network writes that most of the world's Muslims couldn't care less about building a mosque near Ground Zero and that plans to do so would only create a "monument" to terrorists.

Abd Al-Rahman Al-Rashed, director-general of Al-Arabiya TV, wrote a column in the Aug. 16, 2010, London daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat arguing that President Obama was wasting his time championing construction of the proposed mosque, which Al-Rashed says the majority of world's Muslims don't want anyway.

"I can't imagine that Muslims [actually] want a mosque at this particular location, because it will become an arena for the promoters of hatred, and a monument to those who committed the crime," writes Al-Rashed in the column, which was translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute. "Moreover, there are no practicing Muslims in the area who need a place to worship, because it is a commercial district. Is

there anyone who is [really] eager [to build] this mosque?"

He adds, "I do not think that the majority of Muslims want to build a monument or a place of worship that tomorrow may become a source of pride for the terrorists and their Muslim followers, nor do they want a mosque that will become a shrine for the haters of Islam."

New York Islamic leader Faisal Abdul Rauf, president of the Cordoba Initiative, is leading the plan to build a proposed 13-story, \$100 million Islamic cultural center and mosque near the corner of Park Place and West Broadway – about two blocks from the site of the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Al-Rashed, whose network competes with the more extremist-friendly Al Jazeera TV, condemns Rauf's plan.

"The individual who submitted the building application – I do not know whether he [really] wants [to build] a mosque that will promote reconciliation, or whether he is [just] an investor looking for quick profits. Because the idea of a mosque next to a site of destruction is not at all an intelligent one," Al-Rashed writes. "The last thing Muslims want today is to build a religious center that provokes others, or a symbolic mosque that people will visit as a [kind of] museum next to a cemetery."

President Obama has released a pair

of statements in regards to the planned mosque, qualifying support for the religious freedom of Muslims to build the mosque – even in the shadow that was once cast by the World Trade Center – with a hint that the location of the proposed construction may not be the wisest choice.

Al-Rashed's column addresses the president's comments as well:

"U.S. President Barack Obama took a difficult position when he supported the construction of a mosque on a site where 3,000 U.S. citizens were killed by Al-Qaeda terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001," Al-Rashed writes. "Though the president's position was correct in principle, that is, in terms of the principle of freedom of worship, I think he took a political stand [on an issue] that is unnecessary and unimportant, even for the Muslims. This mosque is not an issue for Muslims, and they do not care about its construction."

Al-Rashed's comments prompted commentary from William Kristol, editor of The Weekly Standard:

Al-Rashed's statement, Kristol writes, "should mean the end of plans for a mosque near Ground Zero. Mr. Al-Rashed supports President Obama's stand for the mosque in principle. ... But his practical case against building the mosque is irrefutable. It should lead well-meaning liberals to join with us dastardly conservatives ... in calling for the organizers to shelve

the plans for a mosque at this site."

WND reported earlier this week that Mahmoud al-Zahar, a co-founder of Hamas who is regarded as the chief of the group is Gaza, says the mosque must be built.

"We have to build the mosque, as you are allowed to build the church and Israelis are building their holy places," he said during a radio interview with Aaron Klein, WND's Jerusalem bureau chief and host of an investigative radio show on New York's WABC Radio.

As Muslims, "We have to build everywhere," al-Zahar said. "In every area we have, [as Muslims] we have to pray, and this mosque is the only site of prayer, especially for the people when they are looking [to be] in the group, not an individual."

He also said that Muslims around the world, including those in the U.S., are united in a common cause.

"First of all, we have to address that we are different as people, as a nation totally different. We already are living under the tradition of Islam. ... Islam is controlling every source of our life as regard to marriage, divorce, our commercial relationships. ... Even the Islamic people or the Muslims in your country, they are living now in the tradition of Islam. They are fasting, they are praying."