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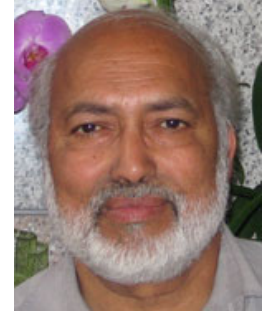
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## Fatwa Against Terror

by Iftekhhar Hai

I WAS IN my house watching television when I heard about the London bombing last week. My immediate reaction was fear. Now there will be more hate crimes against innocent Muslims who abhor such acts of violence, I thought, and the press will collectively accuse all Muslims for the crimes of very few criminals who called themselves Muslims.



As the days passed, I became more determined than ever to root out terrorism theologically, to defeat extremist interpretations of Islam that breed hatred and violence.

### 'Heinous and barbaric'

More than 50 died and hundreds were wounded by the London explosions, disrupting life and causing people pain and suffering.

True to form, a group claiming affiliation to al-Qaeda was quick to take responsibility, glorifying the crime and claiming it served the cause of Islam.

Muslim leaders in the past have been slow to condemn terrorist attacks, but this time they acted fast. All over the Bay Area and nationwide, they renounced the attacks as "heinous and barbaric."

My own group, the United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance, and the Islamic Society of San Francisco, immediately called a press conference at the Jones Street mosque, joined by several interfaith groups.

"Islam views such acts as crimes of the worst type. It is aimed at defenseless civilians, causing indiscriminate killing, irrespective of nationality, race, color, sex or age. We jointly condemn such actions without hesitation," said Souleiman Ghali, ISSF president.

"We understand that there are extremists from every faith, including Jews," said Abby Fleischman, of the Jewish Community Relations Council. "To have our friends from the Muslim community condemn this act as not being part of their Islamic faith is important, and it's important for us to lend our support and stand by their side."

Unfortunately, not everyone is so understanding. The Council for American Islamic Relations has received more than 100 negative phone calls and e-mails since the London attack, including a few to the Santa Clara chapter.

"At a time of international crisis, we've learned to expect it," said Amina Ansari, spokeswoman. "We're told to go back from where we came from, that we're not needed here."

### **Declaring ourselves**

The United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance is encouraging an intense theological debate to condemn the extremist version of Islam that sanctions terrorism. We want to come up with the "fatwa," a religious declaration, signed by all the Islamic scholars in the United States honoring life, renouncing the use of force and making mandatory peaceful negotiations as the only means to conflict resolutions.

I have found tremendous support for this fatwa. With a collective partnership and the Internet spreading our message all over the world, it is only a matter of time before American Muslims will lead the rest of Islamic world in re-interpreting scriptures in the light of 21st century values and ethics.

Iftekhar Hai, a South City resident is president of United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance