

Obama reaches out to make a difference for Muslims worldwide

Written by Akbar Muhammad, Africa and the World
Monday, 15 June 2009 13:55

President Barack Hussein Obama delivered a 54-minute speech from Cairo, Egypt to the Muslim world. One analyst described this speech as being more powerful than his speech delivered in Philadelphia regarding race in America after the Rev. Jeremiah Wright incident. Due to his diverse heritage no combination of US presidents could, in my opinion, do what this speech did so quickly. He is an African American man with a Muslim father, he lived in a Muslim country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

During the long grueling campaign he made a commitment that within the first 100 days he would deliver a speech from a major Muslim capital to reach out to the Muslim populations of the world. It may have taken him a little over 100 days, but he kept his commitment. These are the characteristics that produce a level of respect from the Muslim world towards the new American president and the direction his administration is forging.

The selection of the words he chose to deliver in this speech struck a chord in the Muslim world as he received congratulations and thanks from Muslims throughout the world. He struck a chord into their suffering and implied that he understood the past eight years produced indemnity between our nations. Not only have they suffered from the Islamophobia, religious and racial profiling, they have also suffered torture, and false imprisonment.

The speech was translated into 13 languages and immediately after the speech; it was put on youtube.com, facebook, myspace and twitter. The words that the president spoke when he said that Americans cannot always presume what is best for the rest of the world has proven to take the sting of how the Islamic world and other non-Muslims view America after the tragic eight years of the Bush/Cheney madness. Most Muslims were in awe and never thought that in their lifetime, they would hear a President of the United States quoting the Holy Quran. He quoted the Holy Quran three times in his speech.

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The setting that the President chose to deliver this speech, Egypt, is a country with a population of nearly 80 million people. It lies in the northeast corner of Africa and has the largest standing army in the Arab world. Egypt also has a population of nearly 8 million Coptic Christians.

No doubt that the nearly 10 million Muslims in America agreed when President Barack stated:

“Let there be no doubt, Islam is a part of America. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations - to live in peace and security, to get an education and to work with dignity, to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity.”

As I listened to the President, I could not help but think about the challenges we have in the African American community as well as Africans in the Diaspora. We all do a lot of talking in analyzing our problems and challenges.

This became clear to me when the President said: “Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people.

These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years ahead; and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared and our failure to meet them will hurt us all.”

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The President showed the necessity of our problems being dealt with in partnership. In this way we share in the progress that is accomplished.

He repeated to his Cairo audience and the world, the statement that he made in his first visit to a Muslim country, Turkey.

“America is not at war with Islam and America will never be at war with Islam.”

As much as he could, President Barack Obama took great care to bring some balance to the number one problem of the Middle East which is the Palestine/Israeli conflict. He discussed the Holocaust and persecution of the Jewish people.

He cited that 6 million Jews were killed during the reign of the Third Reich.

He also acknowledged the daily suffering of the Palestinian people

--Muslims and Christians-- for more than 60 years.

He acknowledged that this suffering has been endured for over 60 years.

“They (Palestinians) endure the daily humiliations - large and small - that come with occupation.

So let there be no doubt:

the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable.

America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.”

He added: “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. “ These statements are different from any other statement made by America’s presidents in the 60 year history of their struggle.

The President closed his talk with something that is an ultimate concern for the world, I.e, economic growth and development. He announced that he would partner with the Organization of Islamic Conference. He would work to eliminate fear and

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mistrust by talking to each other and not behind each others back by what is said in private would also be said in public. He
closed out his speech with a quote from the Holy Quran, Talmud and the Holy Bible.
This is a speech that should be viewed, read and discussed.