

### **Editorials** Reflecting the Views of the United States Government

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## Tolerance Through Truth

**8 American Muslim leaders visited Nazi concentration camps in an effort to promote tolerance, understanding, and change between Jewish and Muslims communities.**

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Photo: [blogs.state.gov](http://blogs.state.gov)

American Muslim leaders visit the Dachau Nazi concentration camp.

*"We condemn any attempts to deny this historical reality [of the Holocaust] and declare such denials or any justification of this tragedy as against the Islamic code of ethics."*

America's commitment to religious tolerance goes back to the very beginning of the country. It is a value that the United States pursues

within its borders and abroad. Recently, in an effort to promote tolerance and understanding between the Jewish and Muslims communities, 8 American Muslim leaders visited the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau.

U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Hannah Rosenthal and Rashad Hussain, Special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference also participated. In a joint article, they wrote that "for these 8 religious leaders, the future will be shaped by a shared understanding of the past, not by the prejudice of the present. As representatives of government and communities we joined these clerics to bear witness to the horror and tragedy of the Holocaust and reaffirm the pledge – 'never again.'"

The trip was initiated and led by an Orthodox Jew, sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German think tank, and attended by 8 American imams from varying backgrounds -- including many who were educated in systems where the history of the Holocaust is denied. This teaching is part of a growing anti-Semitism in Muslim communities. The goal of the trip was to educate those who might not have learned the truth about the Holocaust and to promote understanding and even change.

Viewing the crematoria at Auschwitz and Dachau, where millions of Jews were exterminated, Imam Muzammil Siddiqi observed, "We came here to understand the pain of the Jewish community. This is in order to improve relationships because you cannot build relationships with people unless you know what they've been through."

Determined to share this message of mutual understanding, the imams had this to say in a historic joint statement: "We condemn any attempts to deny this historical reality [of the Holocaust] and

declare such denials or any justification of this tragedy as against the Islamic code of ethics. We condemn anti-Semitism in any form. No creation of Almighty God should face discrimination based on his or her faith or religious conviction."

As President Barack Obama said, Holocaust denial, "is baseless, it is ignorant, and it is hateful." Such evil can only occur when people choose not to confront it. It is interfaith experiences like this one that will help overcome the bigotry and ignorance that come from denying the truth.