



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

February 22, 2008

Honorable Frank Wolf
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Wolf:

Thank you for your letter of February 14. We are tremendously proud of the long-standing work of the University's Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim Christian-Understanding. I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide information about the Center's activities and the December, 2005, gift in support of its work from Prince Alwaleed bin Talal.

Let me begin by saying that all of us at Georgetown University take very seriously the importance of protecting academic freedom. I want to reassure you that I am completely confident that the Center's work, to borrow your words, "maintains the impartiality and integrity" that we expect of all research conducted at Georgetown University. We apply this standard whenever we are discussing potential gifts with donors, because academic freedom and impartial scholarship lie at the core of our mission as an academic institution. In this case, Prince Alwaleed gave this generous gift in support of the Center's well known tradition of scholarship and service, and to allow its educational activities to grow. Since Georgetown University accepted the gift in 2005, all activities of the Center have been conducted in the most appropriate manner, and with no outside interference of any kind.

Prince Alwaleed supported both Georgetown's Center and a similar center at Harvard University because of his long-standing interest in promoting inter-religious and intercultural understanding. Prince Alwaleed recognizes that Christian and Muslim communities can and must learn a great deal about each other in our increasingly interdependent world. These are values that Georgetown shares as a Catholic and Jesuit University.

As you know, Prince Alwaleed has a world-wide reputation as a global business leader and philanthropist. He has made significant investments in U.S. and European businesses, and is a major stockholder in Citicorp and just recently provided a sizable infusion of funding which is helping Citicorp address its current financial difficulties resulting from the subprime mortgage situation. He made a very generous gift to the Louvre Museum to permit it to expand its collection of Muslim artwork. Also, he has funded centers at the American University of Beirut and the American University of Cairo to support the establishment of American studies programs on those campuses.

With regard to your specific questions about the work of the Center, it is not organized in such a way as to be home to scholars and researchers who are country-specific experts. Instead,

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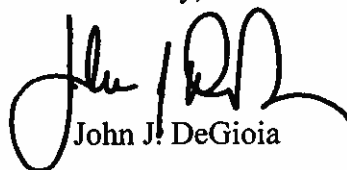
those who teach and conduct research and writing at the Center have expertise in particular academic fields that range across the Islamic world. For example, Dr. John Voll, a long-time member of the Georgetown faculty who now holds one of the professorships endowed by the Prince's gift, has written extensively about Wahhabism as he has about other Muslim movements. Professor Voll has not shied away from characterizing Wahhabism as being on the fundamentalist, literalist extreme of Islam. Likewise, Dr. Amira Sonbol has written extensively about human rights, women and Islam. Center Director and Professor John Esposito is a leading scholar and commentator on many issues relating to Islam and the Middle East. In addition to being Editor-in-Chief of the four volume Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, The Oxford History of Islam and the forthcoming six volume Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, he has more than 35 books; his publications have been translated into 28 languages. I enclose a copy of Dr. Esposito's book, Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam which was among the eight books (two by Dr. Esposito) assigned by Lt. General Vines to his top staff members.

Another measure of the value of the Center's work is the considerable extent to which multiple U. S. government departments and senior officials – particularly ones with extensive sophistication in issues of international concern – have relied upon the Center's scholars for their expertise. For example, our scholars have been called upon not only by the State Department, as you note, but also by Defense, Homeland Security and FBI officials as well as governments and their agencies in Europe and Asia. In fact, a number of high ranking U.S. military officials, prior to assuming roles with the Multi-National Force in Iraq, have sought out faculty with the Center for their expertise on the region. Clearly, many high level government officials have recognized the high quality of the Center's scholarship and have confidence that it maintains its integrity and impartiality. Those requests for the Center's assistance came both before and after Prince Alwaleed's generous support.

I hope this letter gives you the reassurance that you were seeking. I would add that a number of your colleagues in the Congress have called on Dr. John Voll and other scholars at the Center for their expertise. While Dr. Voll keeps a very full calendar as a leading scholar, I know that he would be pleased to meet with you to discuss his work on Wahhabism and other Muslim movements in light of your particular interest in religious issues in the region. Scott Fleming, our Assistant Vice President for Federal Relations, would be glad to work with your staff to arrange that. He can be reached at (202) 687-3455 or by e-mail at ssf2@georgetown.edu.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me if I can provide you more information. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,



John J. DeGioia

Enclosure