



DIVINE GROUND BETWEEN US

Fox News, Attn: Editor-in-Chief
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036.

July 23, 2018

Dear Editor-in-Chief:

I am writing regarding Hollie McKay's article, "Critics say Turkish government using US mosques to play politics, spy on foes" (July 16, 2018), which is rife with false statements and allegations against the Turkish American Community Center (TACC), a/k/a Diyanet Center of America (DCA), in Lanham, Maryland, as well as our sister mosques across the nation.

Above all, I wish Ms. McKay would have talked with me before publishing. Her baseless accusations and insinuations that TACC and its sister mosques are hotbeds for extremists, centers of foreign political meddling, and dark spots for spying, belong to the disinformation campaign of the Fethullah Gulen Cult, also known as FETO in Turkey. The truth is that our mosques are devoted to serving religious, social and educational needs of all Muslim Americans regardless of their political views or ethnic backgrounds.

Unfortunately, this ill-informed and misguided article inspired such anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant rage in the commentaries and social media, that we were forced to contact Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, leading to the dispatch of law enforcement officers to make sure our congregation was safe. I attach photos of the enhanced security that Maryland provided under these conditions. Although we do not believe that incitement was the intention of Ms. McKay or Fox News, we do believe Ms. McKay and Fox News became the unwitting spokespersons of a cult who fails to see the broader ramifications of its unfounded words and actions.

I respectfully request the following courtesy from you: (1) the pleasure to host you, Ms. McKay and your staff for a tour of the TACC campus in Lanham, MD; (2) a meeting to discuss our concerns regarding Ms. McKay's article regarding TACC; (3) an update of Ms. McKay's article with true and accurate information regarding TACC and our activities. While we feel that a visit and a meeting are important for mutual understanding, journalistic integrity, allow me to use this opportunity to provide more information regarding TACC. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ahmet Aydilek
Secretary General
Turkish American Community Center (a/k/a Diyanet Center of America)



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I. Information Regarding TACC/DCA

TACC provides religious, social, educational and cultural services to the Muslim American community of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Our congregation includes more than 5000 Muslims of diverse national, ethnic, racial and socio-economic backgrounds. Our community space and facilities are open to all people equally - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist and others who preach and practice non-violence, personal integrity, and loyalty to the United States Constitution. As the overwhelming majority of our congregation is not of Turkish heritage, we take great joy and pride in engaging in cultural exchange and sharing the rich cultural, historical, and religious heritage of motherland Turkey in our homeland America.

People come to TACC to pray, spend time with friends and family, benefit from the library, enjoy Turkish food in our cafeteria that is managed by an award-winning culinary group, benefit from day care, swim in the Olympic size pool, play basketball and indoor soccer, exercise in the fitness center, relax in the Turkish Bath, or simply stroll in our gardens. While our facility is sizable, comparable to some of the largest churches in our area, we take great pride in the fact that our parking lots are underground, protecting green areas above.

The Imams at TACC and its affiliated mosques across the nation discourage the exploitation of religion for political purposes. They advocate strong personal development and productive integration into broader American society. Our community members come to our center to participate in programs, including English lessons, women's health, domestic violence awareness, drug awareness, recognizing violent extremism, knowing your law enforcement community, immigration compliance, civic duties and civil rights, voter registration, Census 2020, buying a home, saving for college, planning for retirement, and many other important topics. We provide numerous charitable services including free meals to the needy. We host over 1000 people for a free dinner every night during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

TACC is also a friendly place for local, state and federal leaders to meet with the friendly faces of the Turkish-American and Muslim American communities of Maryland. Recently, Maryland Secretary of State John Wobensmith and Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh were guests of honor at separate Ramadan Iftar dinners in the TACC Ottoman Room. Members of Congress have spoken at the TACC



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Conference Center, including Congressman Keith Ellison and Congressman Anthony Brown. Many state leaders have visited and spoken here as well, including Senator Susan Lee, Delegate Ben Kramer, Delegate Aruna Miller, Delegate Dan Morhaim, Delegate Alonzo Washington, and County Council Member Danielle Glaros. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan's Commission on Middle Eastern Affairs, which includes 23 Commissioners representing Muslim, Jewish and Christian Middle Eastern groups in the state, held its quarterly public meeting at the TACC Executive Board Room.

And, on our saddest days, TACC provides funeral and burial services, including the recent funeral of our fallen hero, Prince George's County police officer Cpl. Mujahid Ramzziddin, which was attended by several U.S. Congressmen and local politicians. We received a special thank you from Police Chief Henry "Hank" Stawinski III, for our respect to the law enforcement community and honoring service of this hero. As you may know, Cpl. Ramzziddin died in the line of duty while protecting a victim of domestic violence.

Politics that pit Americans against one another should be given no quarter in our neighborhoods. A society is only as strong as neighbors are respectful and kind to each other. Our mosques and community centers build strong neighborhoods by encouraging strong community bonds and individual responsibility. And for this we are thankful to our Imams, female chaplains, staff, volunteers, and our local partner organizations.

Our clergy are highly educated, trained, and experienced in religious and community affairs. They work hard to serve the needs of all American Muslims who want to practice their religion freely. Our Imams take the lead in making sure that our mosques do not mix religion and politics. They also play a critical role in identifying, addressing and preventing radicalization, by teaching the values and principles of Islam in a universal sense. Our clergy works hard to leave no void that might be exploited for radicalization or other malicious purposes, because the power of religion is as strong as the passion of its followers. We work to guide that passion toward good.

Our mosques and community centers are a gift from the Turkish people to the American people, in the spirit of inclusivity, diversity, and solidarity, and with the wisdom of a secular tradition that appreciates the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution.



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II. Maryland Law Enforcement Provides Safety to the TACC/DCA





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