

Statement: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE :
Local Muslim Community releases statement following the killing yesterday of Father Jacques Harmel in Rouen, France:

We are deeply shocked and horrified to learn of the terror attack yesterday on worshippers in Church of Saint –Etienne-du-Rouvray, Rouen, and the assassination of Father Jacques Harmel.

The fact that this appalling incident occurred in a sacred place devoted to God and at a time when the faithful were praying to God profoundly affects us all. To attack a religious person is to attack Divine message of love, peace and harmony.

The signatories to the statement are:

- Mufti Liakoth Ali, Imam of Portsmouth Muslim Academy, Portsmouth
- Sheikh Muhammad Muhiuddin, Imam of Jami Mosque, Portsmouth
- Saliqur Rahman, General Secretary, Jami Mosque, Portsmouth
- Ali Ibrahimi, Chairman, Imam Husein Islamic Centre, Portsmouth
- Nilofar Waltham, Chairperson, Al-Zahra Islamic Association, Southampton
- Armani Babar, Chairman, Central Mosque, Portsmouth
- Sirraajul Islam, Imam Central Mosque, Portsmouth
- Mohammad Hussein Amiry, President, Imam Ali Centre, Southampton
- Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato, Imam of Al Mahdi Centre, Wessex Jamaat Community.

Our deepest condolences to the parishioners of the Church of Saint –Etienne-du-Rouvray, the Portsmouth Catholic Diocese and the Roman Catholic Church. We also extend our sympathies to his holiness Pope Francis.

May Almighty God receive Father Jacques Harmel with abundant Mercy and grant him eternal rest. We pray for the injured to make a full and swift recovery.

As Muslims, we strongly condemn this evil and barbaric act of terror committed against innocent people engaged in serving the Almighty God in a house of worship.

We share the pain and horror caused by this absurd act of violence and also other acts of terror witnessed in the past few days across France, Germany, Kabul (Afghanistan), Kadhimiya –Baghdad (Iraq) and other parts of the world. All these acts of terrorism are appalling and deserving of strong condemnation.

Any claim of committing acts of violence in the name of any faith is illegitimate. Such acts of brutality and cold blooded murder are barbaric, abominable and are definitely contradicting the pristine teachings of religion of Islam. One of the fundamental values of Islam is peace. The teachings of Islamic faith are of compassion, love and peace. The Noble Qur'an testifies that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent as a mercy for the universe. The perpetrators do not represent Islam or Muslims; their views are perverse and self-serving. The terrorists make it abundantly clear that nothing is sacred to them.

In these challenging moments it is urgent now, as they were, to continue promoting interfaith understanding and building relationships amongst our communities. These mass murderers want to divide our society and pit people against each other. We must deny them this goal at every conceivable opportunity. As communities we must continue to reach out to our sisters and brothers, of all faiths and of no faith, and to work in solidarity against the spread of hate and fear.

Let us all stand firm with compassion and solidarity and continue to work towards establishing peace and harmony in the community

27th July, 2016
(ends)

**For more information, contact:
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