

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NCC Interfaith Relations Commission Statement on the DVD
"Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West"**

In recent weeks many Americans have found in their mailboxes and morning papers a DVD called "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West." As the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, we are alarmed by the massive distribution of some 28 million copies of this DVD through paid advertisement by the Clarion Fund in more than seventy newspapers. While this film purports to educate and offers, at the outset, a disclaimer that it is not about the majority of peaceful Muslims, we see its content as serving only the aims of distorting truth and misleading viewers, fanning the sparks of mistrust, bigotry, and hatred that undermine the very foundations of a multi-religious democracy.

The National Council of Churches, bringing together thirty-five national Protestant and Orthodox churches, is concerned not only with relations among Christian churches, but also with our relations with neighbors of other faiths. Toward that end, we participate in a national dialogue between Christians and Muslims. We believe that deep relationship as neighbors calls us to common moral engagement and leadership in a world plagued by violence, poverty, atrocities, and environmental degradation.

We are deeply troubled by the apparent intent of a film that presents a barrage of violent images, pieced together with the voices of commentators who move from speaking of "radical Islam" to impugning Islam and Muslims more generally and presenting fear-mongering parallels between today's extremist terrorists and the Nazis. The National Council of Churches and its member churches consistently and adamantly denounce anti-Semitism in all its forms and condemn all forms of ethnic, racial, and religious hatred, including the Islamophobia typified in this film.

The stated aim of this film is to alert and educate the public about the dangers of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam. We recognize that in all our traditions, extremists and radicals have forged the weaponry of violence. The National Council of Churches condemns extremism, terrorism, and religiously motivated violence, as do our Muslim dialogue partners here in the United States and globally. We stand firmly against terrorism in all its manifestations. However, the content of this film has no useful analysis of terrorism beyond a shallow, monolithic, clash-of-civilizations theme that suggests that the only two responses to "radical Islam" are war or appeasement. Such a false choice serves only to incite the fear of Islam and aggression against Muslims.

As an alternative to the message of this DVD, we lift up the current and unprecedented worldwide exchange between Christians and Muslims. The Muslim initiative, "A Common Word Between Us and You," has gained wide response from the churches, including the National Council of Churches, and has generated an ongoing process of dialogue. Building constructively on the foundations that unite us in fractured world provides a far more hopeful way ahead for Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike.

In the National Council of Churches, we stand with our Muslim colleagues and fellow citizens who have experienced the de-humanizing effects of stereotyping and bigotry. As Christians, we are mandated to uphold the values of the Gospel. As Americans, we stand with all who are determined to create just and fair democracy.