

# **COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**

## **STATEMENT ON INCREASING VIOLENCE**

**August 29, 2012**

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago deploras in the strongest possible terms the outbreak of violence against religious communities in our area. In the past days:

- On August 4, the Sikh temple (Gurdwara) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin suffered gun violence that left 10 persons dead or wounded . . . the work of a neo-Nazi.
- On August 10, the Muslim Education Center in Morton Grove, Illinois was shot at with a "high-velocity pellet gun with a scope" by an enraged neighbor while 500 persons were holding nightly Ramadan Prayers inside the building. Fortunately, in this incidence no one was injured.
- Two days later, August 12, the College Preparatory School of America, a fulltime Muslim school in Lombard, had a bottle full of acid thrown at the school during nighttime Ramadan Prayers. Again, no one was injured.

All this, along with the continuing escalation of gun violence in the City of Chicago. Since January 1, 2012 there have been with 356 homicides in the city, with 54 happening this month alone, making August the highest monthly homicide total for the year. As of yesterday, there have been 1,648 total shootings for the year. We have confirmed these figures from the Chicago Tribune's RedEye reporter Tracy Swartz.

It is in this context that we remind public officials and political groups of their responsibility to refrain from the use of inflammatory rhetoric that provides additional encouragement for engaging in acts of violence against other persons, houses of worship and religions other than one's own.

On behalf of the Council, we have written, phoned, and met with those affected by these outrages. We have been a part of various meetings and press conferences. We have also been in touch with appropriate law enforcement officials offering any assistance to their excellent work in these cases.

We ask our members, our judicatory leaders, to continue to stand with our inter-religious partners as they experience these hate filled acts of violence. We urge everyone to continue to speak strongly against those who intentionally or unintentionally speak in ways that hurt and divide our citizens. We pray for the welfare and common good of all who dwell within this metropolitan community.

Fr. Donald Senior, President

Stanley Davis, Co-Executive Director

Paul Rutgers, Co-Executive Director