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"Share the Quran" inspired by Obama's Muslim outreach Muslims offer 100,000 Qurans to US leaders



The group aims to reach out to public speakers to present the correct image of Islam

DUBAI (Al Arabiya)

America's top Muslim civil liberties advocacy group launched its "Share the Quran" campaign on Tuesday in which it will hand out 100,000 free copies of Islam's holy book in an effort to reach out to the country's elected officials and influential opinion shapers.

The initiative, which has been labeled an educational campaign, was announced by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) at a press conference in Washington and was said to be prompted by President Barack Obama's recent speech in the Egyptian capital of Cairo in which he repeatedly quoted from the Quran to reach out to Muslims.

"When he quoted the Quran on the fundamental values we share such as sanctity of human life, racial diversity, importance of speaking the truth, we believe it was a surprise to many people not familiar with Islam," CAIR's executive director Nihad Awad told the Washington Post.

One of the group's stated objectives was to target "local elected and public officials, media professionals and other local or national leaders who shape public opinion or determine policy" to give them a better understanding of Islam based on the Quran and not on sensationalized media stories.

The initiative was "also to provide an opportunity for American Muslims to reach out to their fellow citizens of other faiths," CAIR's Board Chairman State Sen. Larry Shaw said.

"Share the Quran" is a multi-year initiative and American Muslims have been asked to donate \$45 to their local officials to sponsor the distribution of the more expensive Qurans, which include Arabic and English texts and English commentary.

In 2007, a group of 24 Oklahoma lawmakers refused to accept a copy of the Quran as a gift from the

Ethnic American Advisory Council as part of the state's centennial celebration.

Republican lawmaker Rex Duncan said at the time that he had researched the Quran on the Internet and found it "supports killing."

The initiative is an outgrowth of CAIR's "Explore the Quran" campaign and is part of the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Washington-based council, which has 35 offices across the U.S. and in Canada.