

SOLIDARITY, PRAYER EVENT DRAWS 75

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Saba Jalil had two words for friends who inquired about her Islamic religion after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks: Timothy McVeigh.

Jalil likened the man behind the Oklahoma City bombing to the Islamic extremist Osama bin Laden. The actions of a few extremists, she said, do not represent an entire culture or religion.

"A lot of people didn't know about our religion before the attacks," she said. "A lot of people have asked me, 'What is up with your religion?'"

Jalil was one of about 75 people of different religions at the Islamic Center of West Virginia on Saturday. "A Day of Fasting and Prayer for Peace and Solidarity" started at 5 p.m. and featured prayers and thoughts from speakers from colleges, churches and the local community.

Jalil said she answered her friends' questions by explaining the five commandments or Pillars of Islam, which includes praying five times a day and making a pilgrimage to Mecca by those who are physically and financially able.

The terrorists used Islam as an excuse for the tragedies, said Samuel A. Majied, Islamic Association member. The public now needs to be educated about the true peaceful base of Islam and come together as Americans.

More than 1,300 Muslims were also killed in the attacks, he said.

"Suicide is something that is forbidden in Islam," he added. "Just like it is in Judaism and Christianity."

Posters that explained the different facets of Islam hung on the center's walls. One sign dealt with the status of women and noted that both men and women are equal before God.

Islamic Association President Dirar Ahmad said the world's 1.2 billion Muslims do not condone the actions of these so-called Muslim terrorists. The terrorists acted outside the realm of the Koran, which advocates love for the enemy, he said.

The dictionary meaning of solidarity is "union of interests," said Ivin Lee, president of the West Virginia Human Rights Commission.

The terrorists created a kind of American solidarity among U.S. citizens, which is one of the very few positives that were generated by the Sept. 11 atrocities, she said.

"Red, white and blue has become a part of our dress now, but most importantly, it has become an important part of our hearts," she said.