

AREA MUSLIM COMMUNITY RAISING FUNDS, PRAYING FOR DISASTER VICTIMS, AT LEAST HALF OF THOSE KILLED BY TSUNAMIS WERE OF THAT FAITH, IMAM SAYS

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The area Muslim community is seeking contributions to help those touched by tragedy in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami in Asia.

Jamal Daoudi, imam of the Islamic Center of West Virginia, said at least 50 percent of those who died or suffered in the tragedy were Muslim.

"It is part of our responsibility as Muslims to extend our hand to people of our faith," Daoudi said. "The catastrophe is so big it requires the cooperation of people of all faiths to help."

Daoudi has noted people of various faiths as well as many organizations helping with the effort. The Islam community felt it was important to do their share, he said.

The executive committee of the Islamic Association of West Virginia offers condolences to victims and encourages local Muslims as well as those of other faiths to contribute toward relief efforts.

The association has established a Tsunami Relief Fund and is accepting financial donations to support relief efforts.

Also, a short memorial service for victims will follow the regular 1:30 p.m. Friday prayer service. Donations will be collected and designated for the Tsunami Relief Fund. Daoudi said the prayer service is always open to the public. The Islamic Center of West Virginia is located at 1 Valley Drive in South Charleston.

To reach the center from Charleston, take the Montrose exit, go left and then turn right onto Kanawha Turnpike. When the road splits, turn left on Valley Drive.

Donations may be mailed to Islamic Association of West Virginia, P.O. Box 8414, South Charleston, W.Va. 25303. Checks should be made payable to IAWV and earmarked "Tsunami Relief" in the memo portion.

For more information call Imam Jamal Daoudi at 541-4999.

The local Islam community includes about 250 families in Charleston and surrounding areas and about 600 families in the state, Daoudi said. He said latest statistics show about 1.4 billion Muslims throughout the world who may be Arabs, Turks, Persians, Indians, Pakistanis, Malaysians, Indonesians, Europeans, Africans, Americans, Middle Eastern and other nationalities. There are more than 10 million Muslims in America, he added.

The Islamic Center of West Virginia includes 15 nationalities, Daoudi said.

"I really hope our effort will help in whatever capacity," said Daoudi, who noted the continually rising number of casualties from the disaster. "It's really devastating."

Contact writer Charlotte Ferrell Smith at charlotte@dailymail.com or 348-1246.

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