



PRESS RELEASE

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**AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL
ISLAMIC ORGANISATION
REPRESENTING
MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

**45 Years of Community
Services**

8 July 2009

UIGHURS – WHO? MUSLIMS – GUILTY!

The President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Mr Ikebal Patel expressed concern at the escalating violence in Urumqi, the capital of China's only Muslim majority region, as thousands of Han Chinese roamed the streets looking for vengeance after Sunday's riots, which left 156 dead and more than 800 injured.

Mr Patel deplored these attacks directed against Muslim Uighur minority, who have been blamed for the carnage. The Turkic Muslim Uighurs are the indigenous inhabitants of Xinjiang. They enjoyed brief periods of independence but in the past 20 years or so there has been growing resentment at Beijing's policies, in particular, its resettlement of millions of Han Chinese there. The Uighurs have seen their homes demolished to make way for the Han immigrants; their culture has been swamped and they themselves reduced to a minority in their own homeland.

Mr Patel reflected on the longstanding relationship between Muslims, Arabs and the Chinese. He said, a rich history of Chinese-Arab and Chinese-Muslim interaction for over 1,400 years should not be allowed to be overtaken by violence and injustice.

He added, "As early as 651 AD, Caliph Uthman sent an ambassador, a companion and cousin of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, to the Chinese Emperor Gao-Zhong. He responded by giving Muslims the right to build a mosque in the port of Chang'an, halfway between Guangzhou (Canton) and modern Hong Kong; it still exists". Thereafter, for over a thousand years, Muslims played an influential role in the history of China, as leading merchants, army officers and government officials. That remarkable history counts for a great deal in Muslim minds."

The Australian Muslims appeals to the Chinese government to realize that persecution of its Muslims will not go unnoticed nor uncommented upon. Mr Patel appeals to the Chinese authorities to bring to an end to this rapidly deteriorating situation in a peaceful and expeditious manner and to exert all efforts in restoring the dignity and religious rights and all its citizens, including the Uighurs.

For further information, please contact:

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