

Contact: Erica
Phone: 718-431-4465
Email: kgiasupport@gmail.com

For Immediate Release

ELECTED OFFICIALS DEMAND SUPPORT FOR ARABIC SCHOOL

Parents and officials call on the DOE to support the Khalil Gibran International Academy

10:00 A.M., Wednesday, September 19, 2007 at the NYC Department of Education (52 Chambers Street), a press conference will be held in support of the Khalil Gibran International Academy and founding principal Debbie Almontaser. Speakers will include parents, public officials (Council members Robert Jackson and John Liu, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, State Senator Bill Perkins), and others.

After a six-month smear campaign against the school, Ms. Almontaser was forced to resign from her position as principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy. "We believe that, had the school received the support that it deserved from the Department of Education (DOE), the Mayor, and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) President, voices of racism and bigotry would not have prevailed and Ms. Almontaser would still be principal," said Fatin Jarara, KGIA family member and Planning Team member.

Public officials and parents are calling on the DOE to show its support for the school by providing it with the support it needs to counter any anti-Arab and anti-Muslim smear campaigns that target the school. "The lack of an aggressive defense of Almontaser, by the Department of Education, signals an insidious nod to those extremists who seek to undermine public education by silencing, censoring, intimidating and demonizing many, including disproportionately Arabs and Muslim Americans" says Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Urban Education at the CUNY Graduate Center.

These ongoing attacks have been spearheaded by the Stop the Madrassa Coalition, which has formed a lobbying organization called American Values for Kids, which will donate money to public officials to target multicultural education.

Public officials and KGIA parents are also calling on the DOE to invite the school's founding principal, Debbie Almontaser, to resume her position as its principal. The loss of the school's highly regarded leader three weeks before the school was scheduled to open was not in the best interest of the school and is a serious threat to its well-being. "How can a school whose leader was forced to resign as a result of a smear campaign operate with any integrity and without fear of intimidation?" asked Najat Handou, KGIA parent. "As part of our support for the school, we are calling for an investigation into the reasons why the DOE did not support Debbie in the face of these attacks and left her to defend the school by herself, said Donna Nevel, a member of Communities in Support of KGIA. "This should never have been allowed to happen."

"There has been an amazing outpouring of support for Debbie Almontaser and the school from many different communities throughout NYC. All our communities have come together, and we will not permit anti-Arab racism to go unchallenged. What happened is a moral outrage, and we will not be silent," said Rabbi Rolando Matalon of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan.

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www.kgia.wordpress.com. Interviews available upon request.