

OPENING STATEMENT FROM
COMMUNITIES IN SUPPORT OF
THE KHALIL GIBRAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY
9-19-07

I'm Donna Nevel. On behalf of Communities in Support of the Khalil Gibran International Academy, I would like to welcome you to this morning's press conference in support of the school and its founding principal and visionary leader, Debbie Almontaser.

For more than six months, the school and its principal were subjected to a virulent campaign of racism and hatred, resulting in Ms. Almontaser's resignation. Had our officials--Chancellor, Mayor, and UFT President--supported the school and its leader against these relentless attacks, Debbie Almontaser would still be principal.

Today, we call upon the DOE to do what is right for the school. To fulfill its potential, KGIA needs Debbie Almontaser as its leader. We must not allow anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bigotry to prevail and to influence educational policy and decisions about our schools. 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.

We asked Debbie Almontaser to join us for this press conference. She declined but wanted to convey her appreciation to all of us for being here in support of the school and demanding her reinstatement as principal of KGIA. She is not speaking publicly about her resignation and is consulting with a prominent civil rights lawyer.

We ask you to join us in pledging that we will not be silent. We will not be silent in the face of injustice. We will not be silent in the face of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism that has become an increasingly pervasive and destructive in this city and country. We will not be silent until Debbie Almontaser is reinstated as principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy. That is what is best for the school and its students and for all of us who are committed to creating a fair and just society.