

## INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S. HOSTS PASSIONATE DEBATE ON ISLAM BEFORE A SOLD-OUT CROWD IN NEW YORK

### ***Audience Rejects the Motion that Islam is a Religion of Peace***

NEW YORK – October 7, 2010 –Intelligence Squared U.S. (IQ2US), the Oxford-style debate series, an initiative of The Rosenkranz Foundation, hosted a timely and lively debate on Islam Wednesday night at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts at NYU. Four passionate debaters had the large crowd completely energized from the evening's first moment as they took on the motion, *Islam is a Religion of Peace*.

At the beginning of the evening, prior to the arguments for and against, 41% of the audience was in favor of the motion, 25 % were against it and 34% were undecided. After the debate, the side arguing against the motion carried the day with 55% of the audience rejecting it, 36% supporting and 9% remaining undecided.

The evening's winning team argued against the motion and included Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born, former Dutch parliamentarian, and activist, and Douglas Murray, director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, a London think tank focused on radicalism.

Maajid Nawaz, a former member of a radical Islamist party who served four years in an Egyptian prison as a "prisoner of conscience," and Zeba Khan, a writer and advocate for Muslim-American civic engagement argued in favor of the motion.

Among the debate's highlights:

"The people that I am protected against, and you as an audience, too, the individual who wants to kill me because I am an apostate of Islam is in part inspired to do that from the scripture of Islam, the example of the prophet Mohammad, the clergy that preached to him and the reward he will get in the hereafter that is promised in the Koran. All of that is Islamic." – **Ayaan Hirsi Ali**

"Enough to extremism, enough to terrorism, let's separate Islam from extremism and disempower the minority of extremists who are trying to hijack a good faith." – **Maajid Nawaz**

"If a Christian group decides to go back to the teachings of Christ, you know, the worst stuff they find is the Sermon on the Mount of Olive. They find one verse where Jesus is saying, I think in the Gospel of Matthew, to have said "I come not to bring peace but a sword." But the rest of it is all love thy neighbor and all that sort of stuff. If you're a Christian group looking to go back to the sources of Christianity, you just find a lot of, well, hippie stuff, for a lot of modern people... So what is it about this religion we're talking about tonight that you say is a religion of peace, that when people go back to the origins, they find a founder who was violent, teaching violence?" – **Douglas Murray**

"I look at my faith and the way I was raised with core Islamic principles, which is how my family raised me, and that I determined as an adult were correct, which is compassion and tolerance and plurality and strength and diversity, because we are a diverse population. There are as many interpretations of Islam as there are people." – **Zeba Khan**

John Donovan, correspondent for ABC News Nightline, is moderator of Intelligence Squared U.S. debates. Dana Wolfe is the executive producer.

To view transcripts and videos, download audio or video clips or learn more about Intelligence Squared U.S. please visit: <http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org>

This debate on Islam will air on Bloomberg Television on Monday, October 11, Tuesday October 12 and Wednesday October 13 at 9 PM. To find Bloomberg TV in your area, please visit <http://bloomberg.viewerlink.tv/>

#### ABOUT INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S.

Launched in September 2006, the goal of Intelligence Squared U.S., an initiative of the Rosenkranz Foundation, is to raise the level of public discourse and promote a realization that, on contentious issues, those who challenge the conventional wisdom have intellectually respectable and often persuasive viewpoints. We encourage citizens to “Think Twice” about their opinions and participate in the conversation, and we provide a forum for balanced discussion that transcends emotion and ideology. Through an annual series of between 10 to 12 live Oxford-style debates, IQ2US brings together experts and audience around public policy and cultural issues. IQ2US debates air on the Bloomberg Television network and are heard on more than 220 NPR stations nationwide.

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