

MUSLIMS IN W.VA. CONDEMN SLAYING

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Dirar Ahmad thinks Islamic terrorists in the Middle East might need a dictionary.

Ahmad, president of the Islamic Association of West Virginia, said the terrorists must not understand their holy book very well because there is nothing in the Quran that advocates murder.

“I don’t know what Quran they are reading, but it’s not the same one I grew up with and cherished,” Ahmad said.

Over the weekend, the Islamic Association of West Virginia condemned the execution-style slaying of American civilian Paul Johnson Jr., who had been held hostage in Saudi Arabia since last week by Muslim extremists linked to al-Qaida.

“We repudiate and dissociate ourselves from any Muslim group or individual who commits such brutal and un-Islamic acts,” the group said in a prepared statement. “We refuse to allow our faith to be held hostage by the criminal actions of a tiny minority acting outside the teachings of both the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.”

The statement also called for swift capture and prosecution of the terrorists.

Ahmad said the association wants to make it known that the Islamic religion is one of peace and not violence.

“Those people claiming to be acting as Muslims have nothing to do with our faith,” Ahmad said during a telephone interview Sunday.

Ahmad said the group feels a responsibility to speak out against the Islamic terrorists in the Middle East. He also said the association has condemned every other “murder” by Islamic terrorists, even if they did not issue a statement.

“In our hearts, my God and your God and everybody’s God is the same God. He created all of us from the same man and woman. For somebody to murder a person in cold blood because the person is not of the same faith is absurd,” he said.

Although he said there was some tension in the community following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Ahmad said the Muslims in and near Kanawha County — about 1,000 in all — and the several thousand who belong to the state group have always been made to feel welcome.

“We’re very fortunate in this community,” he said. “In a time when people were throwing rocks at Islamic organizations’ buildings, we had bouquets of flowers left on our steps and countless invitations from other religious groups to come to their place of worship if we ever felt scared.”