



FERIAL★MASRY

A New Voice, A New Vision for California's Future



37th District

PRESS RELEASE: Wednesday February 17, 2010

San Fernando Valley, CA. The International Visitors Council of Los Angeles will be sending a visiting delegation of four from Europe tomorrow to visit Ferial Masry as they share information on the role of religion and community activism in the United States. Community activists are from Albania, Germany, Lithuania, and Russia. They will be examining how U.S. religious and ethnic minority groups function in the context of a democratic society.

- **From Albania of Mr. Ndricim SULEJMANI**, Mufti of Shkoder;
- **From Germany of Ms. Karimah Katja STAUCH**, Vice President, German Muslim League and Coordinator, United Religions Initiative Europe (URI Europe);
- **From Lithuania of Ms. Ruta PUISYTE**, Assistant Director, Vilnius Yiddish Institute;
- **From Russia of Ms. Shamgiya Nurgaleevna AKHMETOVA**, Principal Secondary School, Ufa-Shigiri Village Nizhneserginsky Region, Sverdlovsk Oblast. They will be accompanied by English Language Officer **John Zins**.

Ferial Masry's experience is being recognized by Kim Ngoc Le, Senior Program Officer at the International Visitors Council of Los Angeles, as "beneficial for them to meet . . . (and) to hear about your experience as a minority woman in the U.S. and your activism in your community. "

Next Thursday the delegation will be meeting with Masry at Cleveland High School in San Fernando Valley.

The International Visitors Council of Los Angeles (IVCLA) is a private, non-partisan, non-profit organization, which implements the International Visitor Leadership Program of professional and cultural exchanges. The purpose is to increase mutual understanding through communication at the personal and professional levels and thereby contribute to improving relations between the United States and other countries. These established or potential foreign leaders in government, politics, media, business, education, science, arts and other key fields are selected by American embassies overseas to visit the United States to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to experience the U.S. first hand.

The U.S. Department of State has outlined the following goals for the program:

- To examine how U.S. religious and ethnic minority groups function in the context of a democratic society; to increase understanding of the U.S. political system, society and culture; and to explain the constitutional basis for the separation of church and state.
- To explore the role of faith-based groups in American civic and community life;
- To discuss religious activism in the U.S., with an emphasis on community service, tolerance, and inter-faith dialogue;
- To examine how the United States handles integration of immigrants, including the legal requirements for gaining U.S. citizenship.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Albania

Name: Mr. Ndricim SULEJMANI

Present Position: Mufti of Shkoder

Previous Positions: Hodja of Shkoder Mosque, 2001-2006

Teacher, Maddressa of Shkoder, 2001-2004

Education/Training: Theology University, Damascus, Syria, 1997-2001

Languages: Albanian (primary), English

Professional Background: As Mufti, Mr. Sulejmani has been an active proponent of including civic education in the curriculum at the Maddressa of Shkoder.

Germany

Name: Ms. Karimah Katja STAUCH

Present Position: Vice President, German Muslim League

Concurrent Position: Coordinator, United Religions Initiative Europe (URI Europe)

Board Member, United Religions Initiative Germany

Lecturer and panelist on Islamic and interfaith subjects

IT specialist for German Agro Action (Welthungerhilfe) charitable organization

Previous Position: Vice President, Christian-Islamic Society, 2001-2008

Education/Training: Studies of Economics, University of Frankfurt (diploma, 1994)

Islamic Studies, University of Bonn (M.A., 2003)

Languages: German (primary), English

Professional Background: Ms. Stauch is active in the leadership of several nonprofit organizations whose role is to advance the integration of Muslims in Germany. She is Vice President of the German Muslim League Bonn e.V., as well as a ranking member the Global Council of the United Religions Initiative. For the Christian-Islamic Society (CIG), she served on the board for twelve years (1996-2008) and as Vice President from 2001-2008. She is also a prolific speaker on interfaith issues. In 2004, she published a book, *An Empirical Study of Islamic Culture in Germany with Special Consideration of Women's Issues*.

Lithuania

Name: Ms. Ruta PUISYTE

Present Position: Assistant Director, Vilnius Yiddish Institute

Previous Positions: Academic Secretary of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum of Lithuania, 1997-2005

Education/Training: Studies at Vilnius University: B.A. and M.A. diplomas in Modern History (Holocaust in Lithuania), 1993-1999

Publications: "The Holocaust in Jurbarkas," *Lithuanian Archives*, no. 13, 1999

Co-author and compiler of the exhibition catalogue "Jewish Life in Lithuania," 2001

"The Holocaust in the Lithuanian Provinces," *Jewish Museum Almanac*, vol. 2, 2002

"The Holocaust in Jurbarkas" (English translation), *The Memorial Book for the Jewish Community of Yurburg, Lithuania*. Translation and Update, Assistance to Lithuanian Jews, Inc.: New York, 2003

"Uncle Chatzkel" (biography of Chatzkel Lemchen), 20 pp. Tyliaus grafika, 2004

Languages: Lithuanian (primary), English

U.S. Travel: Member of the Lithuanian delegation, Symposium on the Holocaust in Lithuania, sponsored by the Soros Foundation of Lithuania, 1999

Research in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum for the educational project, "Jewish Life in Lithuania," in cooperation with the Anne Frank House (the Netherlands), sponsored by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, 2002

Professional Background: As a university student, Ms. Puisyte wrote a detailed account of the Holocaust in a small town in Lithuania and behavior of the Holocaust perpetrators in Lithuanian provinces.

Russia

Name: **Ms. Shamgiya Nurgaleevna AKHMETOVA**

Present Position: Principal, Secondary School, Ufa-Shigiri Village, Nizhneserginsky Region, Sverdlovsk Oblast

Previous Positions: Teacher of English, Urmikey Village School

Education/Training: Chelyabinsk State Pedagogical Institute, Diploma of Higher Education, 1979

Memberships: Education and Science Employees' Trade Union

Publications: Five articles in *Obrazovaniye v Selskom Sotsiume* ("Education in Rural Environment") journal. *Languages:* Russian (primary), English

Professional Background: Ms Akhmetova has served as Director of the School in the Ufa-Shigiri village since 1985. In that capacity, she manages school staff; organizes the educational process; develops the curriculum; teaches English and regional studies; and reports to the Sverdlovsk Regional Ministry of Education. At the school, she has incorporated regional studies, including religious and cultural components, into the school curriculum. She has been active in developing voluntarism and community activism in the younger generation of the village through faith and traditional culture, and she organizes an annual ecological summer camp to raise ecological awareness among the village's young people. In March 2008, students in her school participated in a video conference on Environmental Protection and Indigenous Culture in an Age of Climate Change in which Ufa-Shigiri students talked to their peers in the United States, Malaysia, and Uganda. Ms. Akhmetova has also managed the construction of a new school building.

International Visitors Council of Los Angeles is located at 3540 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 910, Los Angeles, CA 90010, 213-388-1428 ext. 22 phone; 213-388-5879 fax. Their site is www.ivcla.org. Ferial Masry is a candidate for the 37th Assembly District covering the following cities:

FERIAL MASRY FOR THE 37th Assembly District, www.ferialmasryforassembly.com, Email: MasryForAssembly@gmail.com (805) 498-7608, P O Box # 19244, Newbury Park, CA 91312-0213. Friends for Ferial Masry for Assembly 2010 FEC #1321069