

Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT:

Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition

<http://stopthemadrassa.wordpress.com>

Email: stopthemadrassa@vigilantfreedom.com

Stop The Madrassa Community Coalition Demands Department Of Education Disclose Curricula, Texts and Teachers for Khalil Gibran International Academy

BROOKLYN, NY, July 24, 2007 – On Monday, July 23, 2007, the Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition sent a formal Freedom of Information Law request letter to Governor Eliot Spitzer, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the NY State Board of Regents, Dr. Richard P. Mills (NY State Education Commissioner), Chancellor Joel Klein, Garth Harries (Office of New Schools Chief Executive), and the Records Access Officers for New York and New York City. The letter requests release of fourteen specific categories of documents and records, all of which should be publicly available, concerning the Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA) slated to open September 2007 in Brooklyn, NY. The entire letter is posted here:

http://stopthemadrassa.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/letter_foil-req-to-gov-spitzer-mayor-bloomberg-et-al-re-kgia-fin.pdf .

The Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition sent the letter because the Department of Education has refused to reveal any documents at all for the KGIA. The letter states, “In addition to the written and oral requests made of these officials by several of our clients, the coalition we represent, through the efforts of one of its members, has made several FOIL requests to the New York City Department of Education for specific information relating to the curricula and faculty (see, e.g., FOIL request nos. 5213 and 5226). To date, no substantive information has been provided and no rational or even minimally reasonable explanation has been proffered to explain how it is possible that as of late-July 2007 such information is not readily available for a New York City public school scheduled to open in the upcoming Fall semester...”

Sara Springer, Brooklyn resident and a community leader in the Stop the Madrassa Community Coalition, criticizes the City’s lack of response and negligence regarding public accountability: “To date, despite numerous requests, the City has provided no explanation to members of the coalition or the public at large about the precise nature of the curricula, the text books that will be used, the publishers of those texts, or the lesson plans. Further, no one from the City has provided information about the selection process of the teachers for the ‘Arabic’ and ‘Middle Eastern’ subjects, whether they will be certified, and if not, how they will be effectively supervised. We demand to know why.”

Springer also raised community concerns about Islamist ties of the Principal and members of the Board of Advisors for the KGIA school: “Dhabah Almonstasser is a KGIA founder and the school Principal. She is on the board of the Muslim Consultative Network, whose members include unindicted co-conspirator CAIR, the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA, associated with Muslim Brotherhood of Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami), and the Majlis Ash Shura, the largest network of local imams and Shariah Law (extreme Islamist laws).” Twelve of the members of the Board of Advisors are religious clerics of one kind or another, Springer said, raising issues of separation of Church and State.

Chancellor Joel Klein has attempted to deflect all public inquiry with a statement-of-reassurance regarding KGIA : "If any school became a religious school, as some people say Khalil Gibran would be, or it became a national school, in the sense that it really wasn't an American public school, I would shut it down," said Klein. "I promise you that." [source <http://www.ny1.com/ny1/content/index.jsp?stid=9&aid=69409>]

Sara Springer says that Klein should be as good as his word. “KGIA is clearly both a religious school and a school with a one-sided political ideology. Keep your promise, Mr. Klein. Shut down the Khalil Gibran International Academy now, before it opens.”

For additional information on the Stop The Madrassa Community Coalition’s efforts to prevent the Khalil Gibran International Academy, contact Sara Springer or Pamela Hall at stopthemadrassa@vigilantfreedom.com . Visit the website at <http://stopthemadrassa.wordpress.com> .

ABOUT STOP THE MADRASSA - Stop the Madrassa is a grass roots coalition of citizen groups and individuals concerned about the NYC Department of Education's non-responsive posture regarding the creation of a new public school to teach Arabic history, culture and language: the **Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA)**. The school is projected to open soon - in September 2007 – but Mayor Bloomberg and the NY Department of Education have refused to answer the public’s questions. The community’s concerns have been dismissed and silenced by the school bureaucrats. City and state officials who are creating this special Arabic/Middle Eastern public school have either failed to properly conduct the necessary background and preparatory work to open such a school, or they are purposefully evading their legal obligations to inform the public of the status of their work.

- END -