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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement from the Muslim Bar Association of New York Concerning the Park51 Muslim Community Center in Lower Manhattan**

The Muslim Bar Association of New York is greatly concerned by recent attacks on the constitutionally protected right of a Muslim group to build the community center known as Park51 in Lower Manhattan.

There is no dispute that the Park51 organizers have every legal right to proceed. Their use of the private property at issue as a community center and prayer space is protected by the fundamental rights on which our great nation was founded: freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Moreover, the organizers have received clearance from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and support from the local community board. Muslims are part of the fabric of American society and have every right to practice their religion, which strengthens the vibrancy and diversity of our nation.

The events of September 11, 2001 deeply affected all New Yorkers and we sympathize with all who suffered that terrible day. The current discourse, however, has been overtaken by a troubling conflation of Muslims with terrorists, and a corresponding rise in anti-Muslim rhetoric and bias attacks on people and property in New York and elsewhere. As members of the Bar, we condemn such hateful actions and call upon politicians, elected leaders and other public officials to repudiate negative or prejudicial portrayals of Muslims. We commend Mayor Michael Bloomberg and other civic leaders for their support of religious freedom for all New Yorkers, irrespective of creed or faith.

**About the Muslim Bar Association of New York (MuBANY):** The Muslim Bar Association of New York was created to serve the educational, professional, and social needs of Muslim legal professionals and law students living and working in the New York metropolitan area.