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## **PARENTS OF SOLDIER KILLED IN IRAQ TO SPEAK AT MUSLIM CONVENTION IN ROSEMONT**

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Pakistani immigrants Khizr and Ghazala Khan, whose son died fighting in Iraq, will be featured speakers at the largest assembly of Muslims in the U.S. and Canada over Labor Day weekend.

The Khans, who at last month's Democratic National Convention introduced the nation to their son, U.S. Army Capt. Humayun Khan, will be featured at this year's 53rd annual Islamic Society of North America convention, which is anticipated to have about 15,000 interfaith attendees. The event will take place Sept. 2-5 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont.

The Khans are expected to speak the evening of Sept. 3 and address a crowd of 10,000 people, organizers said. In an emotional appearance at the DNC, Khizr Khan criticized Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's proposal to temporarily ban the entry of foreign Muslims into the U.S., and accused Trump of making no sacrifices for his country. Trump challenged that assertion and also implied Ghazala Khan's religion prevented her from speaking at the convention.

Trump's repeated affronts to the military have stirred outrage among voters, and Republican lawmakers and veteran groups have been quick to denounce Trump's comments.

While the Islamic Society of North America is a religious nonprofit that does not endorse political parties or candidates, hundreds of thousands of Muslims have been inspired by the words and courage of the Khans, said Azhar Azeez, the organization's president.

"I told (Ghazala Khan) that her seven-minute silence at the DNC stage has given a voice to millions of voiceless women around the world," Azeez said, referring to his personal invitation to the Khans to speak at next month's convention.

The convention this year will focus on navigating a tense and anti-Islamic political atmosphere; organizers said this election year has had unprecedented "toxicity and rhetoric."

"Things that would only be said behind closed doors in prior elections are now being said out in the open," said Hazem Bata, the organization's secretary general. "(Muslims) realize now that political

activism is no longer an option, because the only way to counter the type of rhetoric that is being said, the types of laws and ideas that are being put forth, is to become more politically engaged."

Programming will feature roundtable discussions catered to the challenges Muslims may face, such as what they should do if they're escorted off a plane or if their child is called a terrorist by bullying classmates, organizers said.

A long list of the convention's speakers includes former Wheaton College professor Larycia Hawkins, who sparked controversy last year at the evangelical Illinois school for saying Muslims and Christians worship the same God, organizers said. Other programming includes a bazaar with hundreds of vendors, an entrepreneurial showcase, an art exhibition, a film festival, a basketball tournament and a fashion show, organizers said. People of all faiths are encouraged to attend, and the organization is extending free registration to Syrian refugees.

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Kaynak/Source: