

# INTERNATIONAL

## Flooding Worst in Pakistan's History

Caitlin Griffin, Staff Writer

According to International Development Secretary of England Andrew Mitchell in his September 7 address to the House of Commons ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)), more than 1,700 people have died in the past week from the torrential flooding in Pakistan that is a result of the annual monsoon rains and an estimated 17 million have been left homeless and stranded without food or clean drinking water after complete villages were submerged.

Maurizio Giuliano, a spokesman for the United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), quoted in the August 9 "Pakistan Floods" article on the Telegraph's Neil Tweedie ([www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)), called the flooding in Pakistan "the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history." Giuliano emphasizes that although fewer people have died as a direct result of the flooding, the disaster has affected more people overall than did the Southeast Asian tsunami in 2005, the devastating earthquakes in Kashmir during that same year, and the disaster in Haiti in 2009 combined. Pakistan is currently facing a national public health crisis as sediment from the floods has left very little drinking water untainted. Violent rioters are demanding food from the few remaining town markets after watching their own crops wash



Photo from <http://stockmarkettoday.in/2010/07/31/pakistan-flood-400-dead-rescue-ops-on/>

away. In Pakistan's mountainous regions, people are being buried alive by the daily landslides.

Delays in the arrival of aid to the destroyed regions is leading to additional problems. According to Tweedie, floods wrecked the steel girder bridge that spanned over the Khyali River, which served as an essential passage for the delivery of goods to the Charsadda region; economists estimate that the devastated villages will financially require "billions of pounds", but the international response to the crisis in Pakistan has been described as "lukewarm" by Oxfam team leader Arif Jabbar Khan (Tweedie). The United Nations has requested hundreds of millions of dollars in monetary donations from member nations in order to provide food, medicine, and shelter for

surviving Pakistani civilians - yet eight to ten million people still desperately need these resources. Jean Maurice Ripert, the UN Secretary General's special envoy for assistance to Pakistan, has stated, according to Pakistani newspaper The Daily Times, that "The UN is preparing to ask member nations to give an amount that will be double the \$460 million it requested last month at the start of the flooding." So far, the UN has received \$310 million in aid from member nations, although subsequent private donations bring the global amount pledged to Pakistan flood assistance to \$1.1 billion.

Political issues are also erupting in shattered Pakistan. Extremist Islamic sects allegedly associated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban are fighting to fill the

political vacuum resulting from the loss of many Pakistanis' faith in President Asif Ali Zardari's competency as a national leader. Enraged, ill, and starving survivors in the worst flood-ridden areas have reportedly lashed out and attacked government officials as a means to vent their frustration against the inefficient bureaucracy.

Experts predict that the crisis in Pakistan will only grow worse as the seasonal monsoons continue for the next few months. Without much-needed supplies, it remains to be seen how many Pakistani citizens will survive the harsh winter that awaits them.

## New Buildings Near Ground Zero: A Campus

Rebecca Brodney, Staff Writer

The United States has just reached the nine-year anniversary of one of the most devastating events in the nation's history: 9/11/01. On this day, our level of patriotism escalated, but our level of tolerance for people pertaining to other religious traditions and cultures dwindled. Today, with this anniversary in mind, we are questioning whether or not we should allow a Muslim community center to be built several blocks away from Ground Zero.

According to the May 7, 2010 CNN article "Mosque to go up near New York's ground zero" by Nicole Bilman, the project to design this community center is a collaboration of the American Society for Muslim Advancement and the Cordoba Initiative, both of which are organizations that work to improve relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. This community center would very

strongly resemble a YMCA or a JCC—it would consist of fifteen stories with amenities such as a mosque, a performance art center, a gym, a swimming pool, and other various spaces. This debate is not one that exists in the bubble that is New York; it is a heated argument in all parts of the country, and people seem to be divided equally between those who support the project and those who do not.

Meredith College is a good representation of how our entire country feels about this important debate. Collins Crowe, a junior, believes that "in this day and age, we have to be accepting. Building a mosque near Ground Zero should not be an issue here. The issue should be how everyone is viewing others around them and the prejudice and hatred that 9/11 has bred in this country." Senior Kathryn Fairbrother echoes Collins' beliefs by saying "I think that as times change, so must we. If we are truly a place where everyone and every religion

are welcome, we must embrace this." Freshman Elizabeth Guiles also believes that the community center should be built because not allowing it to be built would be a disgrace to the tenants on which our country is founded: "The people here are Americans, with all of the same rights as the rest of us. To prevent them from building a place of worship, no matter where the site is, would be hypocritical of our national standards."

An equal number of students, however, oppose the construction of this community center, feeling that it would be "rubbing salt in the wound," as phrased by one anonymous student. Other students feel that nothing should be built in that specific geographic area so as to preserve the memories of all of the lives lost on that day. Junior Allison Meares says "I know the Muslims that hit Ground Zero were radicals; however, it feels like it will end up desecrating the memory of those that lost their lives there." Another student, who requested

that her comment remain anonymous, described her feelings about the community center as, "I respect the fact that it is America and that they should be allowed to worship in whatever way they see fit. Personally, I don't think that anything should be built [at Ground Zero], whether it is a mosque, a pizza shop, a library, a school, etc. It should be left as a memorial ground."

Clearly, the country are divided regarding this issue. But would it not be a violation of first amendment rights, which includes freedom of religion, to prohibit the construction of this community center at Ground Zero? What if a Christian group wanted to build a YMCA in the same spot? Would that be forbidden as well? So what kind of message will we send about religious tolerance in the United States if we do not allow this center to be built?