Local lecture ties to world events

By Tanya Irwin
September 22, 2012

When the United Muslim Association of Toledo scheduled an Islamic scholar to speak Sunday about the prophet Mohammad, it never could have predicted the relevance of the topic given the recent events in the Middle East in reaction to an anti-Islam video on YouTube.

Inamul Haq, a professor of Islamic Studies at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Ill., is to speak at 4 p.m. at the University of Toledo law school auditorium, 2801 W. Bancroft St., Toledo. A social gathering will precede it at 3:30 p.m.

The theme of Mr. Haq's lecture is "Mohammad of history and Mohammad of faith, understanding the Prophet of Islam."

On Sept. 8, an excerpt of the anti-Islam YouTube video "Innocence of Muslims" was broadcast on an Egyptian Islamist TV station. Demonstrations and violent protests against the film broke out on Sept. 11 in Egypt and Libya.

The protests spread to Yemen and other Arab and Muslim nations in the following days and included attacks on U.S. consulates and embassies. An armed attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, on Sept. 11 that resulted in the murder of U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans may not have been related to the protest of the film, but rather may have been a terrorist attack planned in advance, according the U.S. and Libyan officials.

"The present tension reflects many things," Mr. Haq said. "It's not strictly religious, it's more than that."

The unrest highlights the major cultural gap between the United States and the Islamic countries. In the Muslim world, attacking a religious figure like Mohammad prompts a much stronger reaction than if a similar event, such as the burning of a Bible, were to happen in the United States.

"The U.S. is secular," Mr. Haq said. "But for Muslims, if you attack a religious symbol, the sense of sacred, which is the Muslim identity, makes them feel very threatened. Muslims do have this attitude that they are under attack and under siege. They feel a loss of power in the modern world where they have no voice."

During his lecture, which will include a question-and-answer period, Mr. Haq will give a brief history of the prophet Mohammad's life, before and after he became a religious leader.
"Westerners look at him mainly as a historical figure, they don't understand the role he plays in faith," Mr. Haq said.

Anyone who is curious about Islam is encouraged to attend the lecture, he added.

Mr. Haq has served several Chicago area Muslim educational institutions in various capacities. His appointments have included a 10-year stint as principal at Universal School in Bridgeview and the Foundation School in Villa Park. Besides teaching at Elmhurst, he is an adjunct professor at Loyola University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Chicago Theological Union.

He has a passion for sharing information on Islam which manifests in weekly Friday sermons that he delivers at various area mosques and through his active participation and promotion of interfaith dialogues through the Chicago Theological Union, www.ctu.edu, where he serves on the board of the Cardinal Bernadine Center.

Mr. Haq is a founding member of the International Strategy and Policy Institute, an Oakbrook, Ill.-based think tank with a mission to promote the correct understanding of Islam and Muslims in the United States.

The mission of the United Muslim Association of Toledo is to uphold the principles and practices of Islam to provide for cultural, educational, economic, social, and political enhancement of the Islamic Community in the Greater Toledo area.

The group strives to promote interfaith understanding and accommodation in this area and to provide a platform to address social and political issues as they relate to the Muslims of Toledo. Definition of a Muslim is a person who believes in the oneness of God, Allah, accepts Prophet Mohammad as the last messenger of Allah, believes that Mohammad is the final prophet in a long chain of prophets sent to mankind, believes in the angels, in all the revealed Books, Qada and Qader, and the Day of Judgment.