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‘US Must not Ask for Religious Liberty While Violating Rights’

Officials asked to release Guantanamo inmates

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KUWAIT CITY: Participants of an “International Visitor Programme” told US officials that America cannot demand the spread of religious freedom and hold other countries responsible for violations while it is breaching the human rights of Guantanamo detainees, Al-Anba quoted Director of Islamic Studies at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammed Al-Omar as saying. “We asked US officials either to release Guantanamo detainees or send them for judicial trial immediately,” he added. Al-Omar said he visited the United States at the invitation of the US State Department as a part of the International Visitor Programme, adding “delegates from 11 other countries in the Middle East also participated in the programme.” Indicating his visit lasted 21 days, Al-Omar said “during this period I visited five American states and met several high-ranking officials of the US State Department.”

“The International Visitor Programme has been going on for over 60 years,” he said. “In the past many prominent international personalities like the late Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadat, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and several others have participated in this programme, in which various issues such as politics and economics are discussed.” He went on to say “as a representative of Kuwait I addressed the participants on “Dialogue among religions.” I talked about “Moderation is the way of life,” which has been adopted by the Awqaf Ministry. This issue was discussed from various angles, and I stressed Islam rejects violence, extremism and terrorism in all their forms and calls for good conduct.” “We met several prominent officials — including the Director of Middle East Department at the US State Department, and Director of International Visitor Programme Dr Eric who is a former employee of the White house and is currently working with Secretary of State Dr Condoleeza Rice,” Al-Omar continued.

“We met members of the Religious Freedom Committee in the Middle East and discussed the current level of religious freedom,” he said. “We told US officials that the level of religious freedom varies from one country to another and among different societies.” “I told participants of the programme the people of Kuwait enjoy religious freedom and everybody has the right to practise his religion without any constraint,” Al-Omar noted. On how the American society views Arabs and Muslims after 9/11 Al-Omar said “during our visit to Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New Mexico, Texas and Washington DC, we met several American families. We found that Americans are sympathetic towards with Muslims and Middle East issues.” “Common Americans share the same convictions with us and treat others nicely,” he added. Describing his visit as unique, Al-Omar said “I had the opportunity to understand the people of America better and their role in building their country.” The United States has a high-level of religious freedom, which is guaranteed to the society, he concluded.