



For Immediate Release

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COUNCILMEMBERS ALARCÓN AND CARDENAS JOIN LAFD, LAPD, RABBI FREEHLING AND LOCAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO CONDEMN RECENT CHURCH ARSONS AND OFFER REWARD

Los Angeles, CA – Today, Los Angeles City Councilmembers Richard Alarcón and Tony Cardenas and Rabbi Allen Freehling from the City Human Relations Commission joined with the Los Angeles Fire Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and local church leaders including Pastor Hugo Melvin Aldana, Pastor Dudley Chapman and Carol Koransky Executive Director of The Jewish Center, Valley Alliance to denounce recent arson attacks on local churches. Standing in front of the Church of the Nazarene, the scene of the most recent attack, the Councilmembers announced that they will be introducing a motion to offer a reward of \$50,000 for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who perpetrated these attacks. The FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms have added an additional \$10,000 each to the reward and the Pastor Chapman from the Greater Community Baptist Church has offered an additional \$5,000, bringing the total reward to \$75,000. Previously, the Council offered a reward for an attack on the Bernard Milken Jewish Community Campus.

In the last several months there have been arson attacks on three places of worship in the San Fernando Valley. Most recently, on April 20, 2008 at 2:00 AM, the Los Angeles Fire Department responded to an arson fire at Church of the Nazarene in Panorama City. The incendiary fire occurred due to a Molotov cocktail thrown at the steeple and it is currently under investigation. A month and a half earlier, on March 6, authorities began investigated a non-injury fire that was apparently sparked by a Molotov cocktail and caused slight damage to the Arleta Assembly of God Church. This fire was extinguished by 32 firefighters. Additionally, on Feb. 18th there was a 2:00 AM Molotov cocktail attack at the Bernard Milken Jewish Community Campus in West Hills.

“Make no mistake, there will be zero tolerance for these insidious crimes of hate in our community,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “When one place of worship is attacked, it is an attack on all places of worship and all people in the community, whether they are religious or not. Somewhere, someone knows something about these attacks, and we hope that the \$75,000 reward will act as incentive for these people to step forward and do the right thing.”

Councilmember Cardenas added, “These sadistic individuals attacked our holy sanctuaries and the very belief of what this country was founded upon – the freedom of religion. I will pray for these individuals and I will pray that this is brought to justice.”

In addition, Councilmember Alarcon and Rabbi Freehling announced that on May 22nd at 6:00 PM at Van Nuys City Hall they will be convening a meeting of religious leaders, lead by the City Human Relations Commission, the LAPD and LAFD, to discuss the recent arson attacks on places of worship in the Valley, how to protect places of worship from these attacks as well as what to do when attacked.

Anyone with information on any of these arson attacks is asked to call the Los Angeles Fire Department Arson Investigation Unit at 213.485.6095.