

Controversial N.Y. mosque loses another leader

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(RNS) The proposed Park51 Islamic community center and mosque project near Ground Zero is again looking for a top imam after Sheik Abdallah Adhami resigned the post less than one month into the job.

Adhami, 44, said in a statement he was leaving to devote more time to writing his book, "which assists English readers in understanding and facilitating the language of the Quran."

The American-born imam came under fire when reporters discovered taped lectures on the website of his non-profit organization, Sakeenah, in which he implied that former Muslims who preach another faith should be jailed, and that homosexuality was the result of childhood abuse.

"An enormously overwhelming percentage of people struggle with homosexual feeling because of some form of violent emotional or sexual abuse at some point in their life," Adhami said in one lecture. In another, he stated: "If someone preaches about apostasy or preaches their views, they're jailed."

Adhami was appointed Jan. 14 to replace Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, who became the public face of the Park51 project as it became mired in controversy last summer. Rauf reportedly had disagreements with Sharif el-Gamal, the real estate developer who owns the site, but remains on its board of directors.