



**Council on American-Islamic Relations**

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September 13, 2012

The Honorable Thomas W. Corbett  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Board of Pardons  
333 Market Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

**Re: Terrance Williams**  
**Letter in Support of "Petition for Executive Clemency"**

Dear Governor Corbett and Members of the Board:

I write to you in my capacity as Civil Rights Director and Staff Attorney for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) Philadelphia Office. In this capacity, I write to you in support of the "Petition for Executive Clemency" submitted by Terry Williams.

In seeking clemency for Terry Williams, I am acting in accordance with the Islamic principles which underlie all of CAIR's advocacy efforts. As CAIR's leadership has previously stated, "CAIR believes that Muslims worldwide must offer themselves as personal examples of the *Islamic values of compassion*, tolerance and moderation."<sup>i</sup> I also follow the precedent established by my fellow Muslims, both internal and external to CAIR, and other persons of faith.

As I seek to save the life of Terry Williams, I am inspired by a man named Rais Bhuiyan. Shortly after 9/11, Mr. Bhuiyan was shot in the face at point blank range and miraculously survived. When his attacker was sentenced to death for related murders, he launched a campaign to save his attacker's life --- a campaign which Mr. Bhuiyan stated was driven by his Islamic faith, his beliefs as Muslim, and the dictates of the Koran. As reported by the *Huffington Post*, he explained that "[t]he Koran teaches that those who forsake retribution and forgive those who have wronged them become closer to God."<sup>ii</sup> As powerful as this statement was, it was followed by a statement which should touch the soul of any God-fearing person of faith: "*My faith teaches me that saving a life is like saving the entire human race.*"<sup>iii</sup> Because he spoke so eloquently about the sanctity of human life, and the religious imperative for mercy, from an Islamic perspective, CAIR has utilized Mr. Bhuiyan as our surrogate on these issues. He has been honored for his compassion by CAIR-National and, in his home state, by CAIR-Texas.

As the life of Terry Williams hangs in the balance, I feel it is imperative that CAIR, as a civil rights organization based upon Islamic principles, to forgo the use of a surrogate to speak on

matters of life and death. Therefore, I concur with the other persons of faith who have written to you in support of Terry Williams. I also echo the sentiments expressed in the September 6, 2012, letter written by clergy from other Abrahamic faiths.

I also write to honor the wishes of another believer of an Abrahamic faith --- **Mamie Norwood**, a woman who was married to Amos Norwood at the time of his murder in 1984. As Mrs. Norwood herself articulated: **“I do not wish to see Terry Williams executed. His execution would go against my Christian faith and my belief system.** He is worthy of forgiveness and I am at peace with my decision to forgive him and have been for many years. I wish to see his life spared.”<sup>iv</sup> Mamie Norwood, who seeks clemency for Terry Williams, is acting in symmetry with the stated belief of Rais Bhuiyan – because of her own faith tradition, she has forgiven Terry Williams and she does not seek retribution against him.

Respectfully, I strongly urge you to act in accordance with the stated desires of Mamie Norwood. As an operation of Pennsylvania law, a decision to commute the sentence of Terry Williams does not release him from responsibility for the death of Amos Norwood – he will remain in the custody of the Commonwealth for the remainder of his natural life. A decision to commute the sentence of Terry Williams simply recognizes a fundamental truth --- the cessation of Terry Williams’s life will never restore the life of Amos Norwood. The death of Amos Norwood took a life from this earth unnecessarily. I urge you to refrain from taking another life from this earth unnecessarily. I ask you, simply, to save the life of Terry Williams --- and, in saving the life of one man, I ask you to save the entire human race.<sup>v</sup>

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to grant the Terry Williams’s “Petition for Executive Clemency.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peace be upon you,



Amara S. Chaudhry, Esquire  
Civil Rights Director & Staff Attorney

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<sup>i</sup> Council on American-Islamic Relations National Office, Executive Summary, <http://pa.cair.com/about/who-we-are/#Summary> (September 13, 2012) (emphasis added).

<sup>ii</sup> *Huffington Post*, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/18/rais-bhuiyan-pleads-to-spare-mark-stroman\\_n\\_902137.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/18/rais-bhuiyan-pleads-to-spare-mark-stroman_n_902137.html) (Posted July 17, 2011).

<sup>iii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>iv</sup> Declaration of Mamie Norwood Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. 1746 and 18 Pa.C.S. 4904.

<sup>v</sup> *Supra*, notes ii-iii.