

COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

JULY 2012

RAMADAN MUBARAK

HADITH OF THE DAY

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:
"If you are put in a position of authority ... fear God and act with justice."

President's Note



Assalam Alaikum Brothers and Sisters,

As we step into the holy month of Ramadan, I thank Allah for a wonderful start of 2012 year for our chapter. In March we had a successful banquet, with all your support, Alhamdulillah.

During that same month, The Pittsburgh City Council voted unanimously to renounce anti-Sharia HB 2029. We were able to achieve this by reaching out to the city council members, and Inerfaith groups, and our own community insitutions in the city. We followed the initiation of the Philadelphia chapter where the Philadelphia city council renounced the bill. Br. Safdar Khwaja followed it up in Pittsburgh. In that same month, our board members met with Senators and Congressmen in Washington D.C., in support of the Due Process Guarantee Act during CAIR Day on the Hill. In May, in another significant step, the Philadelphia Bar Association passed a resolution against HB2029.

In June we successfully held a workshop on "Know Your Rights When Law Enforcement Contacts You," conducted by our Philadelphia chapter attorney Sr. Amara Chaudhry. I am certain our community benefitted much from this workshop and felt secure knowing a CAIR attorney was within reach.

In August and September, our chapter will conduct voter registration drives at different masajids, and we encourage anyone who is 18+ to vote, as every vote counts and our community votes are important. See Page 4 for more info. We request you to proactively vote and make a difference.

May this Ramadan bring much blessings into your homes.

Thanks much for all your support.

Jazakallah.
Azmat Qayyum
President, CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter.

CAIR Pittsburgh Team

Executive Council

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Azmat Qayyum

Vice President
Omar Slater

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Ishfaq Ahmad

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To join our mailing list or
file a civil rights complaint,
reach us at:
cair.pittsburgh@gmail.com
Phone: 412 606 3601
Please support CAIR Pittsburgh's advocacy
work with your Zakat eligible donation.
Mail your donations to :
CAIR PA Pittsburgh Chapter
801 Negley Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Chapter Update

Pittsburgh City Council renounces HB2029 - Anti-Shariah Bill



Safdar Khwaja speaks at the City Council public hearing

In March of 2012, the City Council of Pittsburgh passed a resolution renouncing HB 2029 - Anti-Shariah Bill. This was a significant accomplishment. Over 20 supporters present applauded the council action. Councilman Bill Peduto delivered a wonderful speech in support of the resolution. Taking the initiation from CAIR Philadelphia, the Pittsburgh chapter reached out to the city council and managed support from PAJC, PIIN, Rabbinical Council, Catholic Diocese, Pittsburgh United Labor, Iron Workers, and the ACLU.

The PA HB 2029 is much broader in meaning and can discriminate against all minority religions, but the first target could be Muslims. It can cause negative court rulings on disputes pertaining to daily practices such as basic five pillars of Islam on praying, fasting, etc, or community activities, halal food, relationships etc, thereby it could make life difficult for Muslims in America.

CAIR Pittsburgh would like to thank the City Council members, and the supporters who spoke in favor of the resolution upholding the freedom of religion, and to keep State Legislature out of religion.

Board members attend "CAIR'S Day on the Hill" at Washington D.C.

On March 5th, 2012, Azmat Qayyum, CAIR Pittsburgh President, and Ishfaq Ahmad, Executive Secretary, joined other chapters in Washington DC to commemorate CAIR's Day On the Hill to meet with Senators and Congressman to support Due Process Guarantee Act of 2011. It is our belief that this bipartisan piece of legislation [that repeals sections 1021 and 1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), H.R. 1540.] reaffirms that American citizens or lawful residents suspected of terrorism and arrested inside the United States cannot be indefinitely detained by the U.S. military, without charge or trial, as currently authorized by the NDAA.

Banquet at Soldiers & Sailors



CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter held its annual fundraising banquet in March at the Soldiers & Sailors venue, which was attended by nearly 300 community members.

Restaurant Owner Makes new Friends A story with a pleasant ending



Domenico's restaurant in Cranberry, PA

Here's an interesting story we'd like to share with you with a lesson on how misunderstandings can be erased with a simple friendly dialogue:

The owner of Domenico's restaurant in Cranberry, PA, decided to put a sign outside his restaurant that was targeted at Muslims in general, but it became a cause for concern not only to the Muslims but to tolerant people of all faiths. The sign said, "Flying Remote Control Airplanes into Muslim People at the Mall is My Thing." Soon, people who saw the sign sent e-mails to local mosques and the CAIR local chapter. Finally we decided one of our board members would handle this issue, as he lives in the vicinity of the restaurant.

Br. Asim Kokan, past president and board member at CAIR Pittsburgh, and a member of MAP (Muslim Association of Greater Pittsburgh), Kazim Reza, and their Interfaith group friends from the North Hills area, went to meet the restaurant owner.

The owner agreed to meet the group, and was surprisingly humble about the whole thing. He said he did not know any Muslims, and that he put the sign up as a joke. The group soon struck a friendly tone to their dialogue, and the owner apologized, and agreed to take the sign off. They shook hands and departed. The sign was taken off. As simple as that.

The positive outcome of this episode was that now the owner knows some Muslims in his city, and he made new friends.

The lesson of this episode is that when in conflict or dilemma, act with patience, and calmness, and be open to dialogue, and the outcome will benefit both parties. Misunderstandings can be bridged and it is upto us to build coalitions that cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, color and creed, just as God intended us to do!

CAIR Pittsburgh would like to thank Br. Kazim Reza, Scott Rudolph, and members of Unitarian Universalist Church and the North Hills anti-Rascism Coalition for being a support. And special thanks to the kindness and humilty shown by the owner of Domenico's - Mr. Michael Pollice.

Know Your Rights

“Know Your Rights When encountered by Law Enforcement” - A Workshop by Amara Chaudhry, Esq.



In June Pittsburgh Chapter organized a Know Your Rights workshop, at the ICP (Islamic Center of Pittsburgh) presented by Sr. Amara Chaudhry, Esq., Civil Rights Director with the Philadelphia chapter. The informative workshop was well attended by community members who benefitted from hearing directly from an attorney. The Q & A session received a good response. Sr. Amara Chaudhry's clear and concise advise on dos and don'ts gave a direction and a sense of security to the community members knowing there was an attorney at CAIR who cares.

Reminder to Community Members:

Know Your Responsibilities and Rights when Contacted by the FBI

CAIR-Pittsburgh continues to receive reports of FBI agents contacting members of the American Muslim community. In light of those reports and our recent workshop conducted by CAIR Philadelphia attorney, Amara Chaudhry, CAIR-Pittsburgh is reminding American Muslims of their legal responsibilities and rights when contacted or visited by law enforcement agents.

American Muslims strongly support law enforcement and the protection of our national security. As Americans, we also value the civil rights of every individual. All Americans have the constitutional right to due process and to be represented by an attorney.

Know Your Responsibility as an American Muslim: If you know of any criminal activity taking place in your community, it is both your religious and civic duty to immediately report such activity to local and federal law enforcement agencies.

Know Your Rights When Contacted by a Law Enforcement Officer:

- Understand that providing information to the FBI or any law enforcement officer, absent a subpoena, is strictly voluntary. You are not obligated under law to answer any questions from law enforcement officers other than providing them with an official identification card

- You may choose to have an attorney accompany or represent you for any interview or questioning. We strongly recommend you consult with an attorney regarding the risks and benefits of being interviewed by law enforcement agents in your specific case. CAIR may provide legal assistance, or can refer you to an attorney.

- If FBI agents show up at your home or workplace and do not

have a search or arrest warrant, you have no obligation to let them in

If they do have an arrest or search warrant, you can still exercise your right to remain silent. Comply with all directives and do not physically resist an office. Be polite and respectful at all times. You also have the right to an attorney

- If an agent or officer says they have some questions for you, you have the right to not speak to them and/or you may tell the agents or officers that you will have your attorney contact them if they wish to speak to you. Again, CAIR can provide legal assistance, or can refer you to an attorney

Note that anything you say to an agent or officer can be used against you in a court of law and that lying to an agent or officer is a criminal offense

- Should you decide to speak to agents alone despite the risks, note that you may set the conditions of the interview, including choosing when and where the interview is to take place, having a third party present such as a family member or community leader, deciding which questions to answer, and refusing to sign any documents. You may cancel the interview at any time (Ask the agent if you may record the interview.)

- Be sure to get the names, agencies, badge numbers, and business cards of all agents or officers.

Contact your attorney and/or CAIR to report the interview/incident and to discuss what may happen next. If you feel that your civil rights were violated, you may also file a complaint with the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. CAIR can help you with this process.

To files a civil rights complaint or speak with an attorney, please visit CAIR online or call 412 606 3601

Your Vote Counts

Voting: Significant Points

Safdar Khwaja

Voting is a primary individual right in democracies. Voting is where all citizens express their free choice from among the contesting candidates. In the present politically divided electorate, Pennsylvania has a role as a major state that can decide National elections; some have been decided by a few thousand votes. It is therefore even more significant to have every vote counted. A community vote can have major overall impact. So we urge you to please register, double check your old registration, and remember to apply for an absentee ballot if unable to vote in person (due to travel or incapacity).

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- A US citizen (even a dual citizen) must turn at least 18 years old by election day to vote (you can be less than 18 to register now).
- You must live at a street address in Pennsylvania (no P.O. Boxes acceptable). Homeless people can use the address of the shelter or Masjid they frequent.
- Check your existing status at: www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/pages/voterregistrationstatus.aspx
- You do not have to read or write English to vote, but should have an official photo I.D. to identify yourself.
- You can obtain a free PennDOT photo I.D. from a PennDOT Driver's License Center (in case you do not have a driver's license) But do this as soon as possible.
- If you are a student away at college, or travelling (even overseas), or expect to be unavailable to vote on election day, you can apply for an Absentee Ballot at: www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us/pages/absenteeballotform.aspx
- Apply for absentee ballot as soon as you have your voter registration card. The ballot will arrive at your PA address, it may have to be mailed to you by family/friend, then you will have to fill it out and mail it back to the Election Board.

DEADLINES TO REMEMBER:

- First time voter registration: October 9, 2012 (but do not wait).
- Last day to apply for absentee ballot: October 30, 2012 (but should apply much earlier to avoid up to three mailing delays).
- Absentee ballots have to arrive by mail at County Board of Elections: November 2, 2012.
- Election day: November 6, 2012.

CAIR-PA-Pittsburgh Chapter will be conducting voter registration drives starting in August 2012.

Congressman's Advice to Muslim Community

Aliya Khan

On April 21, 2012, Andre Carson of Indianapolis, Indiana, visited Pittsburgh at MCCGP to address the Muslim Community. Mr. Carson is one of the two Muslim Congressmen serving terms in the House of Representatives. I'd like to share few points I noted from his talk. He offered many insightful suggestions for our community. He encourages Muslims to pursue public service.

In order to build trust and worth in the community, he suggested that existing Muslim should foster partnerships community-wide by co-sponsoring job fairs, health screenings, free-care clinics - any action that helps humanity (and promotes Islamic values). If an organization is seen as a doer of good, any harmful accusations will fall by the wayside. Use good marketing tools to inform the public about yourself.

To embrace political activism, he recommends that Muslims must:

- Join local city councils.
- Volunteer to call for/help our local politicians at the Ward level.
- Work for judges, public service officials, etc.
- Join with health, business, religious councils in our neighborhoods to impact people on a personal level.
- Donate funds wisely. If a politician is anti-Islam, support his/her opponent despite their political affiliation. If the opponent wins, we gain reputation as a player with voting/financial power.
- Visit the Pittsburgh Mayor's office, Harrisburg, etc. to see how the system is organized and run. When meeting a Congressman to address an issue, our appearance should be clean and professional. Our appearance counts to be heard.
- Organize a Muslim Women's political action group and begin to speak out on issues of concern to us, support community causes in which we believe, send out press releases, take stands on issues in our community, etc.

He encouraged Muslim women to take political leadership roles. Muslims are seen as patriarchal and discriminatory towards women. He said just one woman in a position of leadership challenges these notions.

Finally, he asked if we had identified the young person or people who would be the Muslim political leaders of tomorrow. And what were we doing to foster, support and encourage their careers?

Community News

CAIR Pittsburgh Team Members Volunteer for Community Work

• Free clinic at Braddock

CAIR Pittsburgh Chapter President **Br. Azmat Qayyum, MD.**, has been active in the Free Clinic project since its inception last year when a group of Muslim community members got together to inaugurate the clinic at Braddock. Br. Azmat, who is one of the volunteer physicians says, "The clinic has got an overwhelming response and is doing great service to people who have no medical insurance." The people in the Braddock region benefitted a great deal from the free clinic after the UPMC closed its hospital in the region.

• Helping the homeless

CAIR Pittsburgh team member, **Sister Zohra Lasania**, has been involved in distributing food to the homeless every Sunday. She initiated the project with the help of Sister Rasheeda from Atlanta, and the number of volunteers have increased manifold, since then. The food is distributed directly by the volunteers each Sunday, at the downtown site where the homeless take shelter. The

homeless people at this site look forward to meet Muslims each Sunday, and discuss their problems, as they are vulnerably at the mercy of the elements and look forward to human interaction. **Sr. Maryam, CAIR Pittsburgh board member, and Br. Azmat, president** are active volunteers of the project.

• Visiting the sick and elderly

As members of Muslim Women Association, **Sr. Maryam and Sr. Zohra, both CAIR Pittsburgh team members**, participate in reaching out to visit the senior citizens homes, along with other members of the group.



Recently the group visited Kane Regional Center Glen Hazel, to distribute fruits to 45 elderly living in the facility. The girl scouts of the ICP, baked cookies and sang Islamic songs to the elders.

Masjid Attawheed to buy burial plots at Carnegie PA

A message from Masjid Attawheed :

Assalamu Alaikum Rahmatullahi Wa Barkatahu

Alhamdulillah. Attawheed Islamic Center (AIC) has recently signed an agreement with Chartiers Cemetery located at 801 Noblestown Road, Carnegie 15106 (<http://www.aftercareplanning.com/chartiers-cemetery/>) to purchase a total of 319 burial plots at \$495 per plot for the benefit of Muslims in and around greater Pittsburgh region.

Under this agreement Chartiers Cemetery will develop two sections with privacy fences using bushes and mark them as AIC Cemetery Section 1 & 2 for exclusive use. Section 1 will have 78 burial plots and Section 2 will have 241 burial plots. Burial plot layout is being planned and will be made available to the community upon completion.

With the grace of Allah, we have negotiated with Chartiers Cemetery to provide for Muslim burial in compliance with Islamic guidelines for burial. With this arrangement Muslims can be buried without the need for a Casket or vault and in accordance with religious recommendations.

While assessing the need for a cemetery, representatives from various Masaajid from Pittsburgh have expressed their support for this purchase. AIC is planning to reach out to Pittsburgh Muslim community at large to raise the funds required to complete the purchase.

Donations are requested from community members to support this noble cause. While donating towards purchase price for this cemetery, community members will have an opportunity to take part in decision making to utilize the plots or have AIC decide on the utilization of the plots. AIC will allocate the burial

plots and mark them as reserved for use on first come first serve basis. This process would allow us to meet the preferences of our community members.

Donation can be made or pledged for one more burial plots. Community members have flexible options for making donations; pledge it now and pay later, pay in easy installments. 14 burial plots have been sponsored as of now.

AIC will be collecting donations after Friday prayer each week. In addition, we will also be conducting fund raisers at other Masaajid. We invite you to take part in this project and contribute generously and help us spread the word by sharing this information with your friends and families.

We are also in the process of establishing other funeral services and assistance to our community. Anyone interested in volunteering for this effort can contact Br. Saleemuddin Mohammad at mohdsaleem@yahoo.com or (412) 915-1603.

For detailed information on this project, you can contact any one from our current team:

1. Saleemuddin Mohammad (mohdsaleem@yahoo.com)
2. Farooq Ahmed (farooqahmed@gmail.com)
3. Hafeez Ajenifuja (czar15655@yahoo.com)
4. Vijay Mayadam (vmayadam@yahoo.com)
5. Kashan Babar (kashan.babar@gmail.com)

Jazakallah Khairan
Attawheed Islamic Center

AIC Management

From the National Chapter

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

As-salaamu alaykum (Peace be unto you),

To more than 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, the month of Ramadan serves as a season of spiritual renewal and gratitude for the bounties bestowed upon all human beings. It is a month in which families become closer, communities strengthen their foundations and individuals reaffirm their spiritual roots.

In a poll commissioned by CAIR, we found that 1-in-4 Americans has a negative perception about Islam. However, the survey also indicated that most of those who held positive views about Islam had some sort of interaction in the past with Muslims. For these reasons, CAIR is calling on American Muslim communities to take time in the month of Ramadan to reach out to their neighbors of other faiths and traditions in a wonderful nationwide initiative titled "Sharing Ramadan."

"Sharing Ramadan" is an annual campaign started by CAIR for local communities to host iftar dinner receptions and open houses for our neighbors of other traditions. Since sharing and appreciation are essential components of Ramadan, we hope local mosques, community centers and Muslim schools will take this opportunity to invite their neighbors to join them for an iftar meal.

We suggest that each community interested in hosting a "Sharing Ramadan" iftar form a local committee in charge of organizing the event. This committee can be responsible for sending invitations out to local churches, synagogues and civic groups. The committee can also invite the local media outlets who may want to cover the event.

These are only a few of the ways that you can help your local communities successfully share their Ramadan. Visit CAIR website for more info.

Finally, on behalf of all of all the staff at CAIR, we wish you a blessed Ramadan. May this month help reaffirm our spiritual commitment to our families, our communities and our world.

Your brother in Islam,
Nihad Awad
National Executive Director
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

**Ramadan "is the month of sharing with others."
(Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 614)**

ABOUT CAIR

CAIR is America's largest Islamic civil liberties group, with regional offices nationwide and in Canada. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding. The national headquarters is located on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.

(www.cair.com)

Since its establishment in 1994, CAIR has worked to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America. Through media relations, lobbying, education and advocacy, CAIR puts forth an Islamic perspective to ensure the Muslim voice is represented. In offering this perspective, CAIR seeks to empower the American Muslim community and encourage their participation in political and social activism.

CAIR-PA is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), grassroots civil rights and advocacy group, organized under 501 (c) (3) with EIN: 54-2174614 - pa.cair.com

'Sharing
Ramadan'
Message
from

National
Executive
Director

Nihad Awad