



Sharing Ramadan Resource Guide 2016

Council on American-Islamic Relations

www.cair.com

SHARING RAMADAN RESOURCE GUIDE 2016

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Sample event program

Sample media advisory

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Sharing Ramadan 2016

“O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware.” Quran 49:13

Ramadan presents us with an opportunity to share a meal with interfaith and local community leaders you know only informally.

There are many people who might fit into this category: the church or synagogue congregation from down the street that you wave to but have never met, the city council or school board members who have never visited your mosque, or even the people you see on the local news who advocate for issues important to you but you have never talked to outside of a meeting.

Understanding and appreciating one another is a two-way street. We want you to listen and learn about what motivates others as much as you tell them about Islam. To facilitate this, we are providing a few conversation starters below.

Conversation topics

- How do your beliefs motivate you to do good in our community?
- What do you think is a good project for the faith community in [where you live] to come together and work on?
- What do you think is something interesting about your faith that I do not know?
- What do you love about your life?
- Other than tonight, when was the last time you went a place of worship other than your own?

An Exciting Offer

Order copies of the Quran for your interfaith and community partners. In the spirit of cooperation, we invite you to order copies of *The Message of the Quran*, translated by Muhammad Asad.

Visit www.explorethequran.com to request your copies today!

CAIR's Share the Quran project is an educational initiative that aims to enhance the understanding of Islam and Muslims in America.

For more information, email: quran@cair.com

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from God -- all his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Hadith 125)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: Ramadan “is the month of sharing with others.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 614)

Guide to Organizing an Iftar

Form a committee

Form a Sharing Ramadan committee in your community to help in this effort. Once a committee has been formed, please email CAIR at info@cair.com to let us know so we can help keep track how many communities are participating in this nationwide initiative. If your community would like, we can publicize your activities on our website.

Utilize sample forms

We’ve provided sample news release and invitations that you can customize by filling in the bracketed items with your information. Feel free to add or subtract details and change the quotes.

Print brochures and flyers

Add your local information on the sample “Welcome to our Ramadan Fast Breaking” brochure and the flier and print a sufficient number of copies for your guests to take.

Decide who you want to invite and send invitations

Compile a comprehensive list of who you want to invite by researching churches, synagogues, temples or other houses of worship as well as city and state political offices in your area.

To invite prominent civic or religious leaders, a personal phone call from a committee member should follow a formal written invitation.

After compiling your list of local interfaith religious, political and civic leaders, begin mailing out invitations.

Inviting media

If you choose to invite media to cover your event:

1) Build a media list

You can build a media list by calling local media outlets and asking for the names and email addresses of the appropriate people. For television stations, ask about the assignment editors; for newspapers, ask about the city editor, calendar editor, and religion editor; and for radio stations, ask about the news director.

You can go to ap.org to find out if there's an Associated Press bureau in your area. Ask for the name and email of their daybook editor.

It's best if you research your own list, but you may also call CAIR and we can help you with a customized local media list.

2) Send a news release or media advisory

Email the news release to the media outlets on your list. You can call one day before the event to make sure they received your release, but keep your call short. Make sure that the daybook editors in particular get the release.

3) Designate a spokesperson

Appoint a spokesperson who will handle all media interviews related to the actual event. Participants in the iftar should refer interview requests to that designated person.

The committee should discuss what message they want to send with the event. If the spokesperson is new to media interviews, s/he should practice with others beforehand.

Educate members of your local community

If your community questions why such an event is necessary, you might remind them of the importance of building a positive image of the mosque, school or community center in the surrounding area. Let them know that experience of other communities has shown that a positive neighborhood image offers many benefits.

Hosting an open house is a good way to show your neighbors what your community believes and represents and to give them an opportunity to ask any questions they have. A little knowledge about Islam or a look inside a mosque can help remove any curiosity or discomfort people might have about a mosque or Muslim center.

It's also a good idea to ask your community for input on when the iftar should be held and what the event should involve. There are no hard and fast rules for such things.

Prepare the venue

Clean and prepare the mosque or venue -- the first impression is one that will last. Have a mosque clean-up day before the open house. Consider touching up areas that need painting or other minor maintenance.

Set up a reception area

Prepare a reception area where guests can be received, informed about mosque etiquette and served refreshments.

Give guests nametags, and encourage mosque members to wear nametags too. Consider a special designation like a colored dot on the nametags of the hosting committee so guests can approach them if needed.

Have greeters at the door to direct arriving guests and have knowledgeable people to conduct tours of the facility. Don't leave guests unattended or they may feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Make sure there are volunteers available to give tours through the mosque.

Working with guests on mosque etiquette

You might want to give your guests information about mosque etiquette (such as removing shoes in prayer areas) before they arrive with the idea of helping to make them feel more at ease. Decide whether or not you will ask female guests to cover their hair in the musallah. If yes, make sure you provide extra scarves.

Be ready to answer questions about prayer, separation of men and women during salaah, and other common issues.

Post signs

Put up signs at appropriate locations in the facility to help guests find their way around. Many of them may have never been to a mosque before.

Pamphlets and Handouts

Select literature to be given to the guests. Avoid material with a political or proselytizing message. Make the literature available, but don't push materials on guests. It's a good idea to have a display or make a presentation about Islam and Muslims.

Food

If you are inviting guests from a religious tradition with dietary restrictions, be sure to learn what they are in advance and accommodate them as much as possible.

Document the event

Document the iftar with photos and video if appropriate and if guests are comfortable with it. Count the number of attendees.

The photos and info on your event can later be shared with your guests or with the media (if your guests gave permission for this).

If possible, please send CAIR copies of pictures, videos, and news articles about your successful "Sharing Ramadan" iftar events to help us document the national success of this project. We would only publicize any photos or video with your permission, and would of course credit your mosque or group.

Thanking guests

It's a good idea to send thank you notes to any religious, political, or civic leaders who attended the iftar. This polite gesture will help maintain friendly communication between your mosque and these leaders to help improve interfaith dialogue in your local areas for years to come.

Other materials:

A. Islam and Muslims FAQs

Q: What is Islam?

A: Islam is not a new religion. It is the same truth that God revealed to all His prophets (Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, etc.) throughout history. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness.

Q: Who are Muslims and what do they believe?

A: Muslims believe in one, unique, and incomparable God, creator of the universe. They believe in the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. God's eternal message was reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on them all). One becomes a Muslim by saying, "There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." By this declaration, the person announces faith in all of God's messengers. There are an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide. No more than 20 percent of Muslims live in the Arabic-speaking world. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia.

Q: What is the Quran?

A: The Quran is the record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions. The text of the Quran was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet. The 114 chapters of the Quran have remained unchanged through the centuries. Translations of the meaning of the Quran exist in almost all languages.

Q: What are the "five pillars" of Islam?

A: 1) The Declaration of Faith - This consists of the two sentence declaration described above. 2) Prayer - Muslims perform five obligatory prayers each day. Islamic prayers are a direct link between the worshiper and God. Islam has no hierarchical authority or priesthood. A learned Muslim chosen by each congregation leads the prayers. 3) Zakat - One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and that wealth is held in trust by human beings. Zakat, or charitable giving, "purifies" wealth by setting aside a portion for those in need. This payment is usually two and a half percent of one's capital. 4) Fasting - Every year in the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from first light until sunset. The fast is another method of self-purification. 5) Pilgrimage - A pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, is an obligation for those who are physically or financially able.

Q: What about the American Muslim community?

A: There are an estimated 6-7 million Muslims in America. The Muslim community in America is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins. There are more than 2,000 mosques, Islamic schools and Islamic centers in America. Muslims are active in all walks of life. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.

Q: What about Muslim women?

A: Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education and otherwise take part in community life. Men and women are to be respected equally. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to both women and men equally. (Men cannot expose certain parts of their bodies, wear gold or silk, etc.) If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it.

Q: What is jihad?

A: “Jihad” does not mean “holy war.” Literally, *jihad* means to “struggle,” strive and exert effort. It is a central and broad Islamic concept that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in the battlefield for self-defense (e.g., - having a standing army for national defense), or fighting against tyranny or oppression.

Some facts about Muslims:

- There are an estimated 6-7 million Muslims in America. The Muslim community in America is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins.
- The worldwide population of Muslims is 1.6 billion.
- Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.
- Demographers say that Islam will soon be the number two religion in America. (This may have already occurred.)
- There are more than 2,000 mosques, Islamic schools and Islamic centers in America. Muslims are active in all walks of life.

B. Ramadan FAQs

Q: How did the fast during Ramadan become obligatory for Muslims?

A: The revelations from God to the Prophet Muhammad that would eventually be compiled as the Quran began during Ramadan in the year 610, but the fast of Ramadan did not become a religious obligation for Muslims until the year 624. The obligation to fast is explained in the second chapter of the Quran:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint...Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting...” (Chapter 2, verses 183 and 185)

Q: What do Muslims believe they gain from fasting?

A: One of the main benefits of Ramadan is an increased compassion for those in need, a sense of self-purification, and reflection and a renewed focus on spirituality. Muslims also appreciate the feeling of togetherness shared by family and friends throughout the month. Perhaps the greatest practical benefit is the yearly lesson in self-restraint and discipline that can carry forward to other aspects of a Muslim’s life such as work and education.

Q: Why does Ramadan begin on a different day each year?

A: Because Ramadan is a lunar month, it begins about eleven days earlier each year. Throughout a Muslim’s lifetime, Ramadan will fall both during winter months, when the days are short, and summer months, when the days are long and the fast is more difficult. In this way, the difficulty of the fast is evenly distributed between Muslims living in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Q: What is *Lailat ul-Qadr*?

A: *Lailat ul-Qadr* (“Night of Power”) marks the anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. An entire chapter in the Quran deals with this night: *“We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: and what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by God’s permission, on every errand. Peace! This until the rise of morn.”* (Chapter 97) Muslims believe *Lailat ul-Qadr* is one of the last odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

Q: How can co-workers of other faiths and friends help someone who is fasting?

A: Employers, coworkers and teachers can help by understanding the significance of Ramadan and by showing a willingness to make minor allowances for its physical demands. Special consideration can be given to such things as requests for vacation time, the need for flexible early morning or evening work schedules and lighter homework assignments.

It is also important that Muslim workers and students be given time to attend Eid prayers at the end of Ramadan. Eid is as important to Muslims as Christmas and Yom Kippur are to Christians and Jews. A small token such as a card (there are Eid cards available from Muslim bookstores) or baked goods given to a Muslim coworker during Eid al-Fitr might be appreciated.

Hospital workers should be aware that injections and oral medications might break the fast. Patients should be given the opportunity to decide whether or not their condition exempts them from fasting.

Q: Do people normally lose weight during Ramadan?

A: Some people do lose weight, but others may not. It is recommended that meals eaten during Ramadan be light, but most people can't resist sampling special sweets and foods associated with Ramadan.

C. Appendix

The following section contains sample documents which you may find useful in organizing your local iftar.

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS	PAGE
1. Sample event program	
2. Sample media advisory	
3. “Welcome to Our Ramadan Fast-Breaking” brochure	
4. Sample newspaper ad	

1. SAMPLE PROGRAM

30 minutes before sunset	Invitees arrive <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Welcome/tour of mosque- Mingling/networking
15 minutes before sunset	Welcome and opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is Ramadan?- Significance of <i>iftar</i>
5 minutes before sunset	Handing out of water and dates <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hand out translation of <i>adhan</i>
Sunset (<i>Maghrib</i>)	<i>Adhan</i> (Call to Prayer) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Iftar</i> meal
10 minutes after sunset	<i>Maghrib</i> (Sunset) prayer
15 minutes after sunset	Dinner <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Closing remarks/thank you- Networking

2. SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

[Name of coordinating committee] [Address] [Phone] [Email]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - [Insert Date]

- MEDIA ADVISORY -

Local Muslims to Hold ‘Sharing Ramadan’ Event People of all faiths invited for dinner celebrating Ramadan

WHAT: On [insert day], [insert date], members of the local Muslim community will celebrate reach out to their neighbors of all faiths by hosting a traditional Ramadan *iftar*, or fast-breaking dinner, at [name and location of event].

“As more than one billion Muslims worldwide celebrate Ramadan by fasting and appreciating the blessings given to us, it is equally important for the American Muslim community to reach out to our neighbors as an example of true Islamic ideals,” said [name and title of media spokesperson]. “We are here to show our friends and neighbors that American Muslims will continue to be contributing members of our society,” said [last name of spokesperson].

Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset. The fast is performed to learn discipline, self-restraint and generosity, while obeying God’s commandments. Fasting (along with the declaration of faith, daily prayers, charity, and pilgrimage to Mecca) is one of the “five pillars” of Islam. The end of Ramadan will be marked by communal prayers called “Eid ul-Fitr,” or Feast of the Fast-Breaking, on [insert date]. (Because Ramadan is a lunar month, the actual date is governed by sighting of the new moon. Ask local coordinators for exact dates and times.)

There are an estimated [number of Muslims] in [your area] and some seven million nationwide. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.

WHEN: [Insert day and date]

WHERE: [Insert location of iftar]

CONTACT: [Names and numbers of media contact people]

- END -

3. 'Welcome to Our Ramadan Fast-Breaking' Brochure

Welcome to Our Ramadan Fast-Breaking

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. This month is special because the Qur'an (Islamic holy scripture) was first revealed during this month. During Ramadan, healthy adult Muslims fast by abstaining from food and drink from dawn until sunset every day. They also strive to spiritually purify themselves by trying to abstain from all that is harmful in speech and action. It is also recommended that Muslims increase their reading of the Qur'an during this month.

Welcome to the Iftar!

The iftar, or "fast-breaking," is an integral part of Muslim community life during the sacred month of Ramadan. At sunset every night during Ramadan, Muslims around the world gather in their homes and mosques to break their fast together with their families and communities.

The Islamic Greeting

The Islamic greeting frequently heard in mosques is the Arabic phrase, "as-salamu alaykum," meaning "peace be with you." The customary response is "wa alaykum as-salaam," which means "and with you be peace."

When will the fast be broken?

We break our fast just after sunset, at which time the *adhan* (call to prayer) will be made. This call to prayer is recited in Arabic and is the signal for Muslims to break their fast, often with the traditional three dates and water. After breaking the fast and before sitting down for a meal, they stand together for the sunset prayer.

The call to prayer (translation)

God is most great, God is most great.
God is most great, God is most great.
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God.
Hasten to prayer, hasten to prayer.
Hasten to success, hasten to success.
God is most great, God is most great.
There is no god but [the One] God.

The sunset prayer

Muslims strive for physical and mental purity before standing in prayer. They wash their hands, faces and feet before prayers as a way to purify and prepare themselves to stand before God.

Guests are welcome to observe the prayers. Your hosts will direct you to an appropriate place to sit and watch. Please remove your shoes before entering the prayer hall and observe silence during the service.

After the call to prayer, Muslims move to the prayer hall and line up for the congregational prayer. They will form tight ranks, a symbol of unity and equality within the Muslim community. Men and women form separate lines for the prayer in order to maintain modesty and concentration during the physical movements of standing, bowing and prostration. Their separation does not, in any way, symbolize any relative superiority or inferiority.

The prayer begins as the imam, or prayer leader, raises his hands and recites the words “Allahu Akbar” (“God is most Great”). From that moment, worshippers devote total concentration to the prayer as they follow the words and actions of the imam. The imam first recites the opening chapter of the Quran, called *Al-Fatiha*, and follows this with more Quranic verses of his choosing. After the recitation, worshippers bow and prostrate in unison, silently praising God.

The prayer ends as worshippers turn their faces to either both sides with the Arabic words meaning, “Peace be with you, and the mercy of God.” After the congregational prayer is complete, some congregants may stand to leave the prayer hall while others add their own personal devotions afterwards.

Al-Fatiha (translation of opening chapter of Quran)

*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Praise to be God, Lord of the Worlds
The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful
Ruler of the Day of Judgment
Only You do we worship, only You do we ask for help
Show us the straight path
The path of those whom You have favored
Not that of those who earn Your anger nor those who go astray.*

Children in the prayer hall

Children will often be present during prayers, whether participating or watching. Their presence continues the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, who was very tender towards

children. The Prophet sometimes held one of his grandchildren on his shoulders while leading the prayer and was also known to shorten the prayer if he heard a baby crying.

The iftar

After completing the sunset prayer, Muslims come together for a joyous meal. Because Islam is a global religion, there are many kinds of foods enjoyed in different cultures and ethnic groups.

Since Islam enjoins modesty in behavior, many mosques will have separate seating areas for individual men and women, or families may choose to sit together as a unit or family members may choose to sit with their friends in their respective areas. Seating arrangements will vary from one community to another. During Ramadan, Muslims begin their meal with the prayer, "O God, for You I fasted, and in You I believe, with Your provision I broke my fast." After eating, Muslims say "Alhamdulillah" ("thanks be to God").

The night prayer

The final of the five daily prayers is said as night falls. Like the other four prayers, it is preceded by the adhan and is carried out in congregation. A special lengthy prayer called *salat al-taraweeh* is said only during the month of Ramadan, after the night prayer. It is optional and includes long recitations of the Quran.

4. SAMPLE NEWSPAPER AD

Sharing Ramadan

with your Muslim neighbors

As your Muslim neighbors fast during this month of Ramadan, you are cordially invited to an *iftar* (fast-breaking) meal at our local mosque.

[Name of Mosque]

[Address]

[Date, Time of Iftar]

[Phone Number]