

**December 8, 2014**  
**For Immediate Release**

## **Bensalem Masjid Files Civil Rights Lawsuit Against Bensalem Township Over Mosque Refusal**

PHILADELPHIA—The Philadelphia Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Philadelphia) and Storzer & Greene, P.L.L.C. filed a federal lawsuit today on behalf of a Muslim congregation called Bensalem Masjid challenging the discriminatory and burdensome zoning system in Bensalem, PA, as well as the township's denial of their variance application to build the first mosque in Bensalem. (*Masjid* is the Arabic word for mosque.)

Bensalem has more than 200 Muslim families who currently pray in a fire hall because the township has no mosque.

“Our community has spent five years simply trying to find an appropriate place to come together to pray,” said Dr. Imtiaz Chaudhry, one of the members of Bensalem Masjid. “All we want is the same freedom to practice our religion that other faith groups have in Bensalem.”

“Bensalem's zoning scheme gives the township unbridled discretion over which religious groups can worship in the township, and they've chosen to deny Muslims the opportunity to build the township's first mosque,” said Roman Storzer, one of the attorneys representing Bensalem Masjid. Bensalem requires religious facilities to be built only on specially zoned lots. The lawsuit alleges that all such lots are occupied or otherwise unavailable to Bensalem Masjid. The congregation sought permission to build the mosque near several other churches and schools on Hulmeville Road. However, the Zoning Hearing Board denied the application, despite having granted similar applications by applicants of other faiths.

The lawsuit alleges violations of the United States Constitution's protections for free expression, free exercise of religion, and equal treatment, as well as violations of federal and state statutory protections for freedom of religion. “Every American has a right to the free exercise of religion on equal terms with other religions, and governments cannot restrict that free exercise without a good reason. Bensalem Township violated those fundamental principles by refusing to allow the construction of a mosque without any compelling reasons for doing so,” said CAIR Staff Attorney Ryan Tack-Hooper, co-counsel for Bensalem Masjid.

Bensalem Masjid is represented by Ryan Tack-Hooper of CAIR-Philadelphia and Roman P. Storzer and Robert Greene of Storzer & Greene, P.L.L.C. More information about today's case, including a copy of the complaint, is available at: [pa.cair.com/bensalem-masjid](http://pa.cair.com/bensalem-masjid)

### **About Storzer & Greene**

Storzer & Greene P.L.L.C. is a law firm specializing in representing religious organizations of all traditions in wide variety of matters throughout the United States, focusing on religious land-use cases and other cases defending the right to practice one's faith without undue governmental interference.

### **About CAIR**

CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

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