

# CAIR

## PHILADELPHIA

Serving the

Muslim Community

in the Delaware Valley



End of Year

Newsletter for

# 2014



**CAIR**  
PHILADELPHIA

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## A Letter from Our President

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

*As-Salamu-Alaikum.* Another year is coming to an end, a year which saw CAIR-Philadelphia continuing its stellar record of providing legal services to the American Muslim community in and around Philadelphia, and advocating for greater understanding of Islam by the media and the American public.

This past year also saw the hiring and integration of two wonderful new staff members, Executive Director Jacob Bender, and Staff Attorney Ryan Tack-Hooper, into CAIR-Philadelphia's operations, with Leena Jaffer, our indispensable Office Manager, continuing in her post.

This End-of-Year Newsletter details CAIR-Philadelphia's many accomplishments in 2014. But great challenges loom ahead:



- The proposed placement of virulent anti-Muslim ads on SEPTA buses;
- Continued biased reporting about Islam and Muslims by the media;
- The public's association of Islam with terrorism further strengthened by the emergence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria;
- Increased discrimination and harassment of American Muslims in both the private and governmental workforce; and
- An epidemic of bullying of Muslim school children by their non-Muslim peers.

We can only respond to these challenges with your help. Please remember that CAIR is the only nation-wide Muslim organization that provides both free legal services to American Muslims, and advocates on behalf of the Muslim community in the media and in the court of public opinion to correct misinformation about Islam.

We have achieved much in 2014, but there is much left to accomplish. With Allah's Blessings and Mercy, and your support, we can continue to serve the Muslim community of the Delaware Valley.

CAIR is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and your donations are tax-deductible and zakat eligible. **Our goal is to raise \$20,000 by December 31st.** To donate online, please go to: [pa.cair.com/donate/](http://pa.cair.com/donate/).

*Jazak Allah Khair,*

*Osama Al-Qasem*

Osama Al-Qasem  
President / CAIR-Philadelphia

# Our Mission

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## DEFENDING CIVIL LIBERTIES

We provide free legal services to American Muslims who face employment or housing discrimination because of their religion; and we defend those who have had their civil rights violated by the surveillance and intimidation committed by U.S. government agents.

## EMPOWERING AMERICAN MUSLIMS

We offer programs that train the Muslim community, especially new immigrants, in civic engagement and the attainment of political influence; and we offer "Know Your Rights" and student anti-bullying workshops to adults and children.

## ENHANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM

We educate the American public about Islam—and its values of justice and peace—through educational programs such as seminars, conferences, and film screenings; and we challenge the media's biased and distorted reporting about Islam and the Muslim world.

## PROMOTING DIALOGUE

We join interfaith and city-wide coalitions that address America's economic, racial, and environmental crises, thereby providing a platform for American Muslims to contribute to the building of a more just, peaceful, and sustainable society.

***"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice;  
as witness to God, even as against yourselves,  
your parents, or your kin..."***

**THE HOLY QUR'AN, SURA AL-NISA, 4:135**

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# What We Did in 2014 / Civil Liberties

## ONE-HUNDRED CASES AND COUNTING

Staff Attorney Ryan Tack-Hooper had a busy year, providing free services in responding to over one hundred reports of anti-Muslim discrimination, or Muslims in need of legal aid for reasons connected to their faith.

## SPEAKING SOFTLY: SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION THROUGH DIALOGUE

The majority of our cases are resolved informally. CAIR's goal is to promote mutual understanding, so when our legal department represents a client, we begin by explaining the situation, often educating about Islam in the process, and seeking an informal resolution to the dispute. This year, we helped community members in this way in over a dozen cases.

**Accommodating religious expression in employment.** We obtained employers' permission for employees to wear hijabs and beards despite contrary employer policies.

**Ensuring fair and equal treatment of Muslim inmates.** We won prison accommodations for an Eid al-Adha celebration and for halal dietary options.

**Battling anti-Muslim discrimination and harassment in schools.** We ensured that a high school coach and a local community college professor would no longer subject students to anti-Muslim harassment.



*Staff Attorney Ryan Tack-Hooper meeting with prospective clients in CAIR-Philadelphia's offices.*

## COURTROOM JUSTICE

Some of our clients have legal issues that must be resolved in court. Cases launched and still ongoing this year include:

**Defending the right to fast during Ramadan.** We are pursuing a civil rights claim against the Department of Corrections for effectively requiring Muslims fasting during Ramadan to break their fast in order to perform drug testing.

**Defending the right to be free from housing discrimination.** We represent a family wrongfully removed from their apartment because of a neighbor's anti-Muslim bias in their state court litigation.

**Defending the right to be free from employment discrimination.** We have filed an employment discrimination action on behalf of a security guard who was dismissed because he refused to shave his beard.

# What We Did in 2014 / Civil Liberties

## KEEPING THE GOVERNMENT HONEST

We also continue to advise and represent clients outside of particular legal disputes in order to ensure that they are treated fairly by government authorities. Examples of this include six cases this year in which the FBI or other federal agents sought to interview community members, and two cases in which individuals have been the victims of crimes, or potential crimes, and sought information from the police.

## ADVICE AND RESOURCES

In over seventy additional cases, our staff attorney offered informal advice or assisted the community member in finding other organizations that might be able to help. These cases ranged from asylum-seekers from Syria who were mistreated at the US border, to a Muslim woman who had a gun pointed at her during a routine traffic stop, to domestic abuse cases.

## POLITICAL ADVOCACY

Our staff attorney also acted as our chapter's legal spokesman in a number of contexts. He submitted testimony to City Council on Philadelphia's immigration policies, and met with congressional offices in Washington D.C. on the subjects of the no-fly list and warrantless surveillance of Muslims.



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# What We Did in 2014 / Muslim Empowerment

Encouraging maximum Muslim participation in the American political system—in order to achieve greater political influence—is one of the goals of CAIR-Philadelphia.

## CITY HALL IFTAR

Partnering with Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter and City Councilman Curtis Jones during the sacred month of Ramadan, CAIR-Philadelphia co-sponsored an Iftar Dinner at which the Mayor welcomed nearly 200 Muslims and guests to City Hall for the joyous occasion.

## EXHIBITION ON THE HISTORY OF CIVIL RIGHTS IN PHILADELPHIA

CAIR-Philadelphia was honored to be included in an exhibition at the Philadelphia International Airport titled “The History of Civil Rights in Philadelphia.” The exhibition, which opened in Terminal A in July, includes a photograph illustrating CAIR’s fight against Islamophobia. We were represented at the VIP opening ceremony for the exhibition by Executive Director Jacob Bender and Executive Committee Member Katera Moore. In his remarks at the opening ceremony at the airport, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter extensively praised the contributions of CAIR to the ongoing struggle to protect the civil rights of all the city’s religious and ethnic communities.



*Mayor Michael Nutter of Philadelphia with Dr. Katera Moore, CAIR-Philadelphia Executive Committee Member, and Jacob Bender, Executive Director, at the exhibit opening.*

## “KNOW YOUR RIGHTS” AND ANTI-BULLYING WORKSHOPS

Ryan Tack-Hooper, CAIR-Philadelphia’s staff attorney, and Asheq Fazlullah, executive committee member, conducted many “Know Your Rights” and anti-bullying workshops for both students and their parents. These workshops are an invaluable support for families facing the often traumatic experience of bullying.



*Staff Attorney Ryan Tack-Hooper leading a “Know Your Rights” workshop with the ACLU at the Islamic Community Center of Lancaster, PA.*



*Executive Committee Member Asheq Fazlullah leading an “Anti-Bullying” workshop for students at the Islamic Society of Greater Valley Forge.*



# What We Did in 2014 / Muslim Empowerment

## 8TH ANNUAL CAIR-PHILADELPHIA BANQUET

Nearly six hundred CAIR-Philadelphia supporters and invited guests filled the Springfield Country Club ballroom on March 15, 2014 for our 8th Annual Banquet. It was a joyous affair for all who attended. One of the highlights of the banquet was a multi-media program, narrated by a group of nine CAIR staff and activists, on the banquet theme of "Faith and Freedom." Internationally known Muslim scholar and community leader Imam Zaid Shakir then stirred the hall with his inspired call for social justice. As a finale, comedian Azhar Usman left us laughing uncontrollably with his hilarious routine satirizing everything from Muslim family life to the idiocy of Islamophobia. Due to the generosity of all who attended, CAIR-Philadelphia raised over \$170,000 in donations and pledges.



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## What We Did in 2014 / Educating About Islam

We educate the American public about Islam—and its values of peace and justice—through educational programs such as seminars, conferences, and film screenings; and we repeatedly challenge the media's often biased and distorted reporting about Islam and the Muslim world.

### CHALLENGING THE MEDIA

CAIR-Philadelphia staff and executive committee members appeared dozens of times throughout 2014 in the local, national, and international media, defending the Muslim community against repeated charges of terrorism, and countering the false claims that Islam, alone among all religions, is inherently violent and misogynist.



**Jacob Bender was interviewed in:** *The Philadelphia Inquirer, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Jewish Daily Forward, Philly.com, Religions News Service, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, The Jewish Press, Haaretz, Carbonated.TV, Phillymag.com, Jewish Exponent, Washington Times, CBS Philly, The Dom Giordano Show, The Drexel Interview on Drexel University TV, The Marc Steiner Show, Radio Sawa, Aslan Media, Aljazeera Arabic Channel, and Jewish Currents Magazine.*

**Letters-to-the-Editor and Op-Ed Articles by Jacob Bender were Published in:** *The New Yorker Magazine, The New York Times, and The Philadelphia Inquirer.*

## The New York Times

### *Guided by History, a Jew Tries to Unite Two Faiths Divided by War in Gaza*

By SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN  
AUG. 8, 2014

NEWARK, Del. — Shortly after the latest cease-fire expired in Gaza on Friday, Jacob Bender gingerly climbed the steps of the

disagreement over a conflict in the Middle East doesn't permanently damage relationships in the Midwest?" asked Eboo Patel, a leading coexistence advocate who is founder and president of the Interfaith Youth Core. "The core idea of America for me is that

was a sponsor of an iftar dinner at City Hall during Ramadan and was included in a historical exhibit at Philadelphia's airport about the civil rights movement.

Much of Mr. Bender's day-to-day work involves domestic issues — a Muslim pupil

*A profile of Jacob Bender was published in The New York Times on Aug. 9, 2014.*

### "OUT OF CORDOBA"

Jacob Bender continued to present his award-winning film to universities, mosques, churches, and synagogues around our region in 2014. The film explores the life and works of Ibn Rushd and Musa Ibn Maymun, the two most important thinkers to emerge from the "convivencia" (interfaith coexistence) of medieval Muslim Spain. Presenting these screenings parallels our goal of educating the public about Islamic Civilization. Please contact our office if you would like to arrange a screening of "Out of Cordoba."





# What We Did in 2014 / Educating About Islam

## RESPONDING TO CRISES



*Jacob Bender being interviewed on CBS at a Rally for Gaza in August.*

**Gaza.** CAIR constantly reminds both its supporters and detractors that it is an organization primarily concerned with domestic issues, such as discrimination against American Muslims and combating Islamophobia in the media. However, there are moments of crisis when we — as Muslims and Americans — feel obligated to respond to international issues. In the summer and fall of 2014, we responded to crises in Gaza, Syria, and Iraq.

First, there was the Israeli attack on Gaza, resulting in over 2,000 Palestinian deaths, the majority civilians, including over 500 children. CAIR-Philadelphia, as well as many other CAIR chapters around the country, responded by participating in vigils and demonstrations to protest the brutality of Israel's actions, demanding a more even-handed America policy in the Middle East, and urging our supporters to donate to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund ([www.pcrf.net](http://www.pcrf.net)).

**ISIS.** Then in the fall, it was ISIS that came to dominate the news cycle, with its bloody rampage across Iraq and its brutal murders and beheadings. Dozens of Muslim organizations around the world, including CAIR, condemned as “un-Islamic and morally repugnant” the violence and religious extremism of the Islamic State.

CAIR-Philadelphia is currently in the process of planning, together with the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center, a major panel on ISIS and religious extremism in general. The event is tentatively planned for the evening of Wednesday, February 4, 2015. Further information will be forthcoming.



**Syria.** Over two million Syrians have been displaced, and 160,000 killed, by the civil and sectarian conflict now raging in Syria, the worst humanitarian catastrophe of our time, according to the UN. CAIR partnered with SAMS (Syrian American Medical Society) to organize a fundraising banquet that provided medical services to thousands of desperate Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. For more information, visit [www.sams-pa.org](http://www.sams-pa.org).



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## What We Did in 2014 / Building Coalitions



CAIR-Philadelphia joined with other Muslim organizations to organize the Muslim contingent at the People's Climate March in New York City on Sept. 21.



CAIR participated in Islamic Relief's "Day of Dignity" to donate food and clothing to low-income and poor people in Philadelphia.



Collecting food for the city's homeless shelters during CAIR-Philadelphia's Ramadan Food Drive.




CAIR-Philadelphia youth participating in the annual "Philadelphia Interfaith Peacewalk."



CAIR-Philadelphia joined a city-wide interfaith coalition to respond to the bigoted anti-Muslim ads, such as the one to the left, that have appeared in other cities, and that have been paid for by Islamophobic activists for placement on SEPTA buses.





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