

Refusing to be Silenced

The Council on American-Islamic Relations - Massachusetts

2023

annual report



Flip this booklet over
to read our 2023 Civil Rights Report, "Amplifying Voices for Justice"

Refusing to be Silenced 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

- 3 ❖ From Our Executive Director
- 4 ❖ Implementing Our Vision | Legal Advocacy
- 5 ❖ Youth Advocacy
- 6 ❖ Advocacy with Elected Officials
- 8 ❖ Events
- 9 ❖ Partnerships with Local Leaders
- 10 ❖ Annual Fundraising Banquet
- 11 ❖ Media & Communications | Appreciation
- 12 ❖ Meet CAIR-Massachusetts
- 13 ❖ Financial Summary
- 14 ❖ How to Support Us



Fatuma Mohamed, CAIR-MA Youth Advocacy Director, at U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren's office with Vincent Ware, Boston chapter of the Muslim American Society.

Ready to learn more?

Visit cairma.org to download the interactive PDF of our 2023 Annual Report, which includes clickable links to related stories.

On the cover:

1. CAIR-MA annual fundraising iftar at the Islamic Center of Boston, Wayland. Read more on page 8.
2. Muslim Youth Leadership Program workshop on civic engagement. Read more on page 5.
3. Our faith kept us strong in 2023.
4. Imam Suhaib Webb, keynote speaker at our annual banquet. Read more on page 10.
5. Isha prayers during our annual banquet at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. Read more on page 10.
6. One of many marches in 2023 calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Read more on page 6.
7. Demonstrator demanding justice for Sayed Arif Faisal. Read more in our 2023 Civil Rights report.

From Our Executive Director

Defending Democracy & Protecting Our Community in Challenging Times

In the name of the Almighty Creator, the Most Gracious
Most Merciful: Allah SWT says in the Holy Qur'an

"Verily, the steadfast shall have their reward without measure," Surah 39 Ayat 10.

Dear Friends & Supporters,

Following the events of October 7, 2023, CAIR-Massachusetts served as a vital defender of democracy and safeguard for our community as we faced an unprecedented wave of Islamophobia and silencing tactics.

Muslim voices speaking out against militarism and in support of Palestine faced targeted attacks, fueled by rising anti-Muslim sentiment. The tragic murder of six-year-old Wadea Al-Fayoume in Chicago and the shooting of three Palestinian college students in Vermont exemplified the chilling impact of this violence. Arab, Palestinian, and Muslim families, in Massachusetts and across the country, feared for their safety.

Despite facing serious consequences, our community refused to be silenced. Muslim employees faced job-related threats and terminations, while students endured doxxing, threats, and stalking, jeopardizing their academic and professional journeys. Additionally, at least one local university de-recognized a pro-Palestinian student group and others have been under attack, further contributing to the suppression of dissenting voices.

While these acts of hate and intimidation targeted marginalized communities, they only strengthened our resolve to fight for justice. Thanks to your support in 2023, we provided critical aid during this crisis. Following the violence in Gaza and the subsequent silencing of American Muslims who expressed concern, we experienced a record surge in requests for assistance. To meet this growing need, we are currently expanding our team by hiring three new professionals.

We remain steadfast in our mission to serve the Muslim community and defend democracy in the face of adversity.

Tahirah Amatul-Wadud, Esq.
CAIR-MA Executive Director & Chief Legal Officer

Thanks to your support in 2023, we were able to:

- ❖ Respond to 249 calls for legal assistance;
- ❖ Host our 6th annual Muslim Youth Leadership Program;
- ❖ Hold the first ever Eid-al-Fitr and Jummah Prayer Celebration at the State House;
- ❖ Create a "rapid response" model to join and enhance the community's legislative advocacy in support of a ceasefire in Gaza and defunding militarism;
- ❖ Testify in support of legislation protective of the rights of Muslims;
- ❖ Call for the Mass. Attorney General to create an anti-doxxing task force.

Implementing Our Vision

In 2023, we began seeing successful implementation of the goals set forth in our comprehensive 2021 Strategic Plan:

- ❖ We increased our outreach across the state;
- ❖ We collaborated with an increased number of organizations and other community partners;
- ❖ We had our most successful annual fundraising banquet ever, and are able to hire three additional staff members as a result;
- ❖ To aid our fundraising efforts, we were gifted an autographed basketball by our favorite home team: the Boston Celtics!



Legal Advocacy

The war in Gaza had a profound effect on Massachusetts' Muslim community.

We received 249 requests for legal assistance in 2023, twice the number in 2022 — and the most since CAIR-MA was founded. After October 7, many of these calls were from groups of employees, students, parents, or local residents. Most likely, we served well over 500 people in 2023.

- ❖ Anti-discrimination policies were used against our clients, mainly people of color, as calls for Palestinian human rights were falsely equated with antisemitism. This happened most frequently in the workplace, where calls for help with employment issues increased by 385%.
- ❖ More victims of hate crimes and harassment asked for help in the 4th quarter of 2023 than in all of 2022.
- ❖ College students who criticized the Israeli government over the plight of Palestinians were relentlessly harassed, threatened, and doxxed. Some lost internships or jobs.
- ❖ Muslim children suffered serious discrimination and bullying in the public schools. The number of school-related complaints doubled from 2022.

For a more complete description of the legal issues faced by Massachusetts Muslims in 2023, please flip this booklet over to read our Civil Rights Report, "Amplifying Voices for Justice."

Youth Advocacy



MYLP In front of the Museum of African American History, during the Black Heritage Trail tour.

Muslim Youth Leadership Program

It was our 6th year — and it just keeps getting better! In August, we hosted 26 high school students for another exciting Muslim Youth Leadership Program (MYLP). Our insightful sessions were led by experts and community leaders, covering a diverse array of topics such as public speaking, environmental justice and grassroots organizing, surveillance and policing, and a “know your rights” session on the legal rights and obligations of teens. For the first time, we added a tour of the Arts of Islamic Cultures gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts. This was so popular that we repeated it in December for an expanded group of young people and their families. We extend our sincere appreciation to the dedicated community members whose support contributed to making MYLP 2023 a truly memorable and enriching event, including the Islamic Council of New England, which provided scholarships for participants who had a need.



Youth Advisory Committee

Our Youth Advisory Committee is composed of Muslim youth leaders from across the state who are passionate about issues impacting the Muslim community, especially Muslim youth. Over the course of the one-year leadership training, they help us develop youth-centered programs and long-term youth advocacy goals, and assist with outreach and recruitment efforts.

2023 Youth Advisory Committee members:

- ❖ Simrah Azmi
- ❖ Mayeesha Ghani
- ❖ Hadeeqah Qazi
- ❖ Alma Shawer
- ❖ *Alumni fellow:* Aly Tahoun

Muslim Youth Leadership Awards

Each year at our annual banquet, we recognize exceptional Muslim youth in the Massachusetts area who have made important contributions to their communities while embodying CAIR’s mission of Islam, advocacy, and community. Our 2023 Muslim Youth Leadership Award recipients were Alma Shawer (*below left, with Fatuma Mohamed on left*), a 16-year-old Palestinian-Jordanian-American activist from Lexington, who is dedicated to advocating for often unheard social justice causes, and Aly Tahoun (*below right*), president of the



Newton North High School’s Muslim Student Association and a youth coordinator at his local masjid.

Advocacy with Elected Officials

Much of our legal work involves using existing laws to protect and enforce the rights of Massachusetts Muslims. But effective advocacy also includes meeting with those who are responsible for creating or enforcing the policies that affect our community. In 2023, we met with government officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

Federal

Muslim Lobby Day in Washington, D.C.

CAIR-MA led the Massachusetts delegation for the annual lobbying day organized by CAIR's national office and the U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations. We met with aides to U.S. Senators Warren and Markey and U.S. Representatives Clark, Lynch, and McGovern to

urge their support for a bill to create a State Department office to monitor international Islamophobia and a resolution to recognize July as Muslim Heritage Month. We also distributed CAIR's report calling for an end to the federal government's secret terrorism "watch lists."

Demanding a ceasefire in Gaza

CAIR-MA engaged in numerous activities to advocate for a ceasefire in Gaza and other matters of importance:

- ❖ **Meetings with elected officials:** We met with and/or prepared constituents to meet with the offices of U.S. Senators Warren and Markey, U.S. Representatives Auchincloss, Clark, McGovern, Moulton, and Massachusetts state senators Lewis and Edwards.
- ❖ **Joined interfaith coalitions:** We joined an interfaith coalition that met with and personally thanked U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley for introducing a resolution in the House calling for an immediate ceasefire.
- ❖ **Voter education and mobilization:** We provided resources and training to Muslim voters on effective advocacy using targeted political action alerts and local data.



CAIR-MA joined Muslims from across the country for Muslim Lobby Day at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Photo by Rada Abid.

Meeting with Homeland Security

We met with officials from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in September. This crucial meeting addressed two major concerns: the Biden Administration's Muslim surveillance practices and the safety of Muslim communities in Massachusetts.

Our primary objective was to advocate against the undue surveillance of our Muslim communities. We emphasized the chilling effect such practices have on community trust and religious freedom. We encouraged DHS to focus its efforts on the clear and present danger posed by white supremacist extremism, instead of targeting Muslims. This meeting allowed us to make important connections and for CAIR-MA and DHS to serve as mutual resources for one another.

Massachusetts

Testimony before Mass. legislative committees

- ❖ **Overhaul of hate crime laws.** We opposed a state bill that would merge two existing hate crime statutes. Presumably, the bill is intended to make it easier to prosecute hate crimes, but it would wipe out over 40 years of case law – or, at the very least, create confusion as to the value of prior court decisions.
- ❖ **Alternatives to police response.** On behalf of the family of Sayed Arif Faisal, who was shot and killed by the Cambridge police, we testified in support of a bill to fund unarmed civilian organizations that are trained to respond to people in crisis.
- ❖ **Muslim Commission bill.** Along with JETPAC and other Muslim organizations, we testified in favor of a bill to create a commission to study the issues affecting Muslims in Massachusetts. We described how Muslims are marginalized not only as members of a minority religion, but also as people of color and as immigrants.
- ❖ **Student dress code bill.** We testified in support of a bill to prevent suspensions or expulsions based solely on dress code violations. As part of our testimony, we read a heartfelt and eloquent statement from an 8th grade Muslim student who received a dress code violation for wearing hijab. We joined Mass. Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, which led the advocacy initiative on this subject.
- ❖ **Politicized definition of antisemitism.** We submitted testimony opposing a bill that would add to the state's anti-discrimination law a definition of antisemitism that falsely equates criticism of the Israeli government with anti-Jewish bias. We described how critics of the Israeli government are already paying a heavy price for doing what every U.S. citizen has the right to do: criticize a foreign nation.



CAIR-MA joined Rep. Vanna Howard and Sen. Jamie Eldridge after historic Ramadan resolutions were passed by the Massachusetts Legislature.

Ramadan resolutions & proclamation

In April, the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate each passed first-ever resolutions to commemorate Ramadan. The House resolution was sponsored by Rep. Vanna Howard while the Senate version was sponsored by Sen. Jamie Eldridge. Governor Maura Healy also issued an historic proclamation to recognize Ramadan.

Meeting with Mass. Attorney General

During a meeting with Attorney General

Andrea Campbell's top staff, we highlighted the urgent impact of the Gaza conflict on local Muslim communities, specifically focusing on the weaponization of doxxing for harassment. We urged the AG to consider establishing a task force to address this pressing issue and provided concrete examples of how doxxing has compromised the employment, physical safety, and social standing of Muslims and their allies.



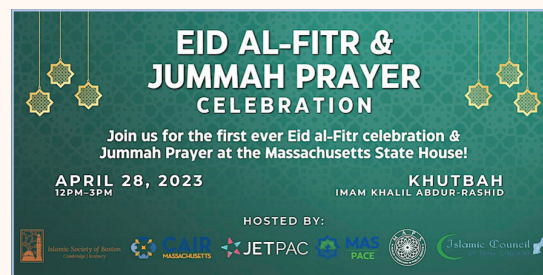
Massachusetts Muslims filled the State House for an historic celebration.

Eid al-Fitr & Jummah Celebration at the Massachusetts State House

CAIR-MA proudly co-sponsored the historic first-ever Eid al-Fitr and Jummah Celebration at the Massachusetts State House. This significant event marked a high point of the year, fostering understanding and inclusivity within the Commonwealth.

Muslim elected officials joined Attorney General Andrea Campbell and state lawmakers in recognizing the essential contributions of

Muslims to the state's social, cultural, political, and economic fabric. The spirit of unity and collaboration was further strengthened by the presence of prominent community leaders and members of the public. The khutbah was delivered by Imam Dr. Khalil Abdur-Rashid. This groundbreaking event served as a testament to the growing significance of the Muslim community in Massachusetts and its ongoing commitment to positive engagement with the state's political and civic landscape. CAIR-MA is proud to have played a role in making this momentous occasion a reality and looks forward to further collaboration in building a more inclusive and equitable future for all.



Iftar at ICB Wayland

The Islamic Center of Boston, Wayland hosted the annual CAIR-MA fundraising iftar. The keynote speaker for the evening was Mubarakah Ibrahim, a renowned author and business owner. In her inspiring talk, Ibrahim spoke about the importance of resilience in the face of challenges, particularly for Muslims who often face barriers to success. She shared her own personal story of overcoming adversity and encouraged the audience to never give up on their dreams.



WAYLAND COMMUNITY IFTAR

Sunday, March 26th, 2023 | 5:30 p.m.
126 Boston Post Rd., Wayland, MA

Featuring special guest
Mubarakah Ibrahim,
health & fitness expert,
author, & businesswoman
of Fit Muslimah, LLC
(FitMuslimah.com)

Doors open at 5:00 p.m. | Program starts promptly at 5:30 p.m.
Details: cairmass.eventbrite.com or www.cairma.org



JFK Library forum with Douglas Emhoff, Second Gentleman

We were honored to participate in a program at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, "Strengthening Civic Infrastructure and Combatting Hate: The Role of Arts Culture, and Faith." CAIR-MA actively participated in the discussion, drawing upon the organization's experience in advocating for the civil rights of Muslims and promoting interfaith understanding.

This engagement aligns with CAIR-MA's ongoing commitment to build bridges, challenge harmful narratives, and promote mutual respect through interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange. We commend the JFK Library for hosting this timely and important conversation.



Tahirah Amatul-Wadud and Fatuma Mohamed (CAIR-MA), Hamzah Henshaw, and Rashad Hussain, Ambassador-at-Large for the U.S. State Department Office of Religious Freedom.
Photo credit: JFK Library Foundation.

Winter Dinner

Dr. Yusef Salaam, a powerful voice for justice and resilience, joined us for an intimate year-end fundraising dinner. It was a moving and inspiring evening, as we heard his firsthand



account of being wrongly convicted as a teenager in the Central Park jogger case, along with four other young men who became known as the Central Park Five. Dr. Salaam's story, which was brought to life in the acclaimed Netflix miniseries "When They See Us," is a testament to the enduring power of faith and the fight for justice. Most recently, Dr. Salaam was elected to the New York City Council.

Partnerships with Local Leaders

Here are just a few of our community-based activities in 2023.

- ❖ Attended more than one dozen Ramadan iftars throughout the state;
- ❖ Partnered with Boston City Council member Tania Fernandes Anderson for a constituent listening session;
- ❖ Participated in countless community meetings and initiatives;
- ❖ Greeted dozens of people at the annual New England Muslim Festival in Medford;
- ❖ CAIR-MA executive director Tahirah Amatul-Wadud introduced the keynote speaker, CAIR National Dep. Director Edward Ahmad Mitchell, at the Islamic Council of New England's annual dinner;
- ❖ CAIR-MA was a founding sponsor and leader of the Ceasefire Interfaith Vigil and Dinners.

Annual Fundraising Banquet



Our annual banquet, held at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center in November, was a heartwarming success. It drew 220 guests eager to connect, and served as a beacon of hope amidst the state's rise in Islamophobia and the violence in Gaza. Imam Suhaib Webb, our keynote speaker, delivered a powerful message emphasizing the crucial role CAIR-MA plays in supporting and advocating for the Muslim community in Massachusetts. The evening filled the room with a palpable sense of unity and resilience, reminding us that we are not alone. Beyond fostering emotional connection, the banquet also raised awareness of the vital role of the organization, further propelling CAIR-MA's mission forward.

- ❖ Boston City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson gave welcoming greetings;
- ❖ Dr. Altaf Hussain, from the Yaqeen Institute of Islamic Research, was our motivational speaker;
- ❖ Community members and students spoke about how the difficult political climate has impacted them.



Tahirah Amatul-Wadud



Dr. Altaf Hussain & Dr. Abdulfatah Elshaar

Media & Communications

In 2023, CAIR-MA served a critical role as a trusted and influential voice for the Muslim community in Massachusetts, garnering significant media attention and recognition for its efforts on various critical issues. As a result, major media outlets turned to us as a source on a wide range of topics:

- ❖ The alarming rise of Islamophobia on college campuses;
- ❖ Condemning antisemitic vandalism and violence;
- ❖ Discrimination and violence against Muslims in schools, communities, and workplaces.

Appreciation

A heartfelt *thank you* to our valued community partners!

We express our deepest gratitude to all our individual donors and our institutional sponsors for their unwavering support during this past year. Their generosity has played an essential role in enabling us to fulfill our mission and make a profound impact on our community. We extend our sincere appreciation to:

- ❖ **Cummings Foundation & Hyams Foundation:** For their generous philanthropic contributions that empower us to serve our community more effectively.
- ❖ **Rahman Family Internship Fund:** For providing funding for our interns.
- ❖ **Islamic Council of New England:** For collaborating with us in advancing the interests of the Muslim community and fostering interfaith understanding.
- ❖ **ICB Wayland, Islamic Society of Western Mass., & Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center:** For their invaluable local support and partnership in strengthening our community infrastructure.
- ❖ **Boston Celtics:** For contributing to our fundraising efforts in a fun and meaningful way.

Our two interns helped make MYLP a great success!



Sagal Are, Boston College
exchange student



Inaya Jamil,
Colby College

To all of our individual donors
and volunteers, we extend a
wholehearted thank you!
Your generosity and compassion
fuel our work everyday, and
we couldn't do it without you.

Meet CAIR-Massachusetts

Our Staff

Tahirah Amatul-Wadud, Executive Director & Chief Legal Officer.

Tahirah Amatul-Wadud is a respected attorney based in Springfield, Massachusetts with over 16 years of experience in corporate, family, and civil rights law. A former staff attorney with Western Massachusetts Community Legal Aid before entering private practice, she served as a commissioner with the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women from 2014-2020. In 2016, she rose to national prominence serving as the principal attorney on behalf of the residents of Islamberg, New York against Robert Duggart, an anti-Muslim conspiracy theorist who had planned a violent attack against the community. More



recently, in 2018 she ran for U.S. Congress in Massachusetts' first district, securing 30% of the vote. Ms. Amatul-Wadud is active in the Western Massachusetts interfaith community and serves on nonprofit executive boards and committees throughout the region. In recognition of her service, she was named a "Top Woman of Law" by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, and in 2021 she received the prestigious Massachusetts Bar Association Community Service Award. She served as the Vice-President of the Board of Directors at CAIR-Massachusetts from 2016-2018 and its President from 2018-2021, and during her tenure has overseen the organization's restructuring and rapid growth. Ms. Amatul-Wadud is a graduate of Western New England University School of Law (2005) and Elms College cum laude (1998). She identifies as an African American Muslim woman, and is a proud married mother of seven.

Barbara J. Dougan, Esq., Legal Director. Barbara J. Dougan brings over 30 years of experience as a civil rights attorney in Boston. She was formerly Director of the Project to Combat Racial Violence at the Boston Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, representing the victims of hate crimes, police misconduct, and discrimination in housing and public accommodations. Most recently, she ran the Massachusetts office of Families Against Mandatory Minimums, where as the Massachusetts Project Director her legislative advocacy helped to reform harsh drug sentencing laws that overwhelmingly impacted minority communities. She was one of the organizers of a 9/11 legal response network in conjunction with the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the ACLU, and National Lawyers Guild, where she presented Know Your Rights talks at mosques and developed attorney referral lists and a help hotline. Along with a team of attorneys, she litigated one of the first post-9/11 airline cases (*Alshrafi v. American Airlines*) on behalf of a US citizen from Jordan. In 2010, Ms. Dougan was named one of the "Top Women in Law" by Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly and has been honored by the NAACP, National Lawyers Guild, Community Change, and Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston.



Fatuma Mohamed, Youth Advocacy Director. Fatuma Mohamed is a committed community organizer and youth advocate passionate about contributing to the creation of a just and equitable society. She graduated from Northeastern University with a major in Political Science / International Affairs and minors in African Studies, History, and Women's and Gender Studies. As a high school student, Ms. Mohamed served as a youth organizer for Boston Mobilization, working on various campaigns such as the campaign to increase the minimum wage in Massachusetts. Her passion for community organizing followed her into college where she served as Vice President and campaign leader for Students Against Institutionalized Discrimination (SAID), advocating for increased culturally competent mental health services for students from marginalized communities, among other projects. Ms. Mohamed is also passionate

about research, and has previously conducted research on Environmental Justice and water system sustainability as well as a thesis project on the experience of Boston Somali youth with policing and surveillance. Additionally, Ms. Mohamed has served as an organizer for Hormar Academy, a mentorship program for Somali High School students in the Greater Boston Area, working to address barriers of access to higher education faced by first-generation low-income immigrant students. Ms. Mohamed is inspired by all the freedom fighters before her.



Sarah Khatib and Raheela Rahman.

Our Board Members

We are grateful for the tireless support and guidance of our Board!

- ❖ Yasmin Abdulatheem
- ❖ Sarah Khatib
- ❖ Othman Ladan
- ❖ Mouaad Lebeche (Secretary)
- ❖ Raheela Rahman (Vice-President)
- ❖ Rev. Corey J. Sanderson (President)
- ❖ Zahid Siddiqui (Treasurer)

Financial Summary

CAIR-Massachusetts is an efficiently run, high-performance nonprofit organization. In 2023, we successfully raised over \$500,000 to support our work on behalf of the Massachusetts Muslim community. Most donations were from local donors in Massachusetts and New England, with the remainder from local nonprofits and mosques eager to support our work. As always, 100% of CAIR-MA's income is from domestic sources.

How to Support Us

Show Your Support

- ❖ Sign up for our mailing list: www.cairma.org
- ❖ Follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CAIRmassachusetts
- ❖ Follow us on Instagram: www.instagram.com/CAIRmass
- ❖ Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/CAIRmass

Give Your Time

- ❖ Volunteer your talents: www.cairma.org/employment
- ❖ Intern with CAIR-MA: e-mail us at info@ma.cair.com

Financial Contributions

Make a general donation to support our legal and advocacy work at www.cairma.org/donate

Our New Mailing Address

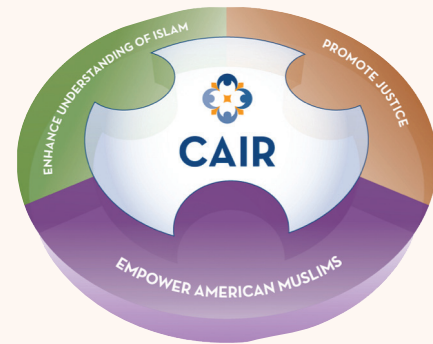
CAIR-MA
800 Boylston Street
P.O. Box 990445
Boston, MA 02199

Contact Us

- ❖ Phone: (617) 862-9159
- ❖ E-mail: info@ma.cair.com
- ❖ Website: www.cairma.org



Guests at our annual banquet. Read more on page 10.



CAIR-MA's Mission

CAIR-Massachusetts is a chapter of CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. CAIR's 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.

Flip this booklet over
to read our 2023 Civil Rights Report, "Amplifying Voices for Justice"

Protecting Students

Ensuring a successful Ramadan for K-12 students

In March, we created an informational handout for parents to give to their children's schools, to help staff understand their Muslim students' rights as well as their practical needs. We also created a template for parents to use when requesting religious accommodations for their children.

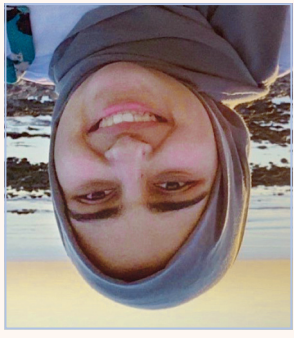
Calling out hostile teachers

We advised numerous parents whose children were targeted by teachers by way of unfair accusations of misconduct or singling out their children for embarrassment in the classroom. One family that could not afford a private school was finally able to remove their child from a toxic environment when a neighboring school district agreed to accept the child.

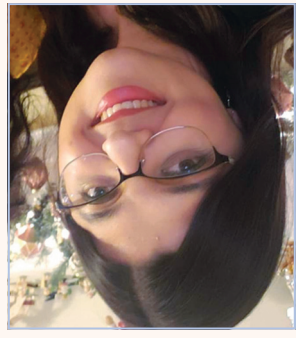


Appreciation

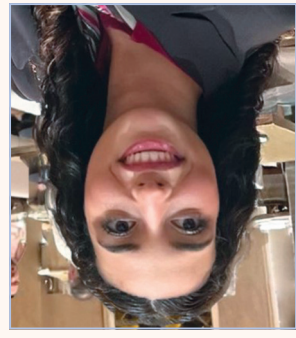
CAIR-MA is grateful to the Rahman Family Internship Fund, created by the Rahman family from the Greater Boston area, which provides funding for our legal interns. In exchange for our interns' invaluable help, we are proud to nurture the next generation of Muslim lawyers and community leaders.



Ana Ali, Northeastern University Law School



Yasmin Khan, UMass Law School



Riana Yaman, UMass Law School

Flip this booklet over

to read our 2023 Annual Report, "Refusing to be Silenced"

Cambridge police kill college student

Sayed Arif Faisal, a 20-year-old Bangladeshi college student, was shot and killed by the Cambridge police in the midst of his having a mental health crisis. The incident attracted international attention. CAIR-MA helped his devastated family by acting as their media contact, representing family members at investigative interviews with the District Attorney, and recruiting a police misconduct lawyer to represent the family at the inquest (an independent investigation by the courts). We also offered the family's perspective at a legislative hearing concerning a bill to fund unarmed civilian organizations that are trained to respond to people in crisis. In October, the judge presiding over the inquest found that the police officer should not be charged with a crime. The family still has the option of filing a civil lawsuit.

We were honored to work alongside our friends at Muslim Justice League, who addressed the grief and fears of Cambridge youth, and the Bangladesh

Workplace Discrimination

State agency backs off

Despite good annual evaluations, a long-term Muslim state employee has been forced for years to defend himself against unfounded disciplinary action and accusations of being a terrorist threat from certain people within his agency. We sent a demand letter to his employer, recounting the history of harassment and warning of further legal action if the harassment continues. So far, he is being left in peace to do his job.

Eid accommodations for employees

We worked with employees whose requests for time off were denied. While Massachusetts law protects the right to attend religious services, it is not an absolute right and must often be negotiated. In one case, a physician was able to attend early morning services before going to work.

New trial ordered for Muslim man represented by racist, Islamophobic defense attorney

Association of New England (BANE), many of whom had known Sayed since he was a youngster and have been relentless in their efforts to keep public attention focused on this tragedy.

New trial ordered for Muslim man represented by racist, Islamophobic defense attorney

CAIR-MA joined a "friend of the court" brief organized by Lawyers for Civil Rights in support of an African American Muslim prisoner who discovered, years after his conviction, that his defense attorney had been making virulently racist and Islamophobic social media posts during the course of his representation. Massachusetts' highest court ruled that the defense attorney's racism and Islamophobia so "infected" his representation that a new trial was needed. We issued a press release welcoming the court's decision and were quoted in a Boston Globe editorial.

CAIR-MA joins major lawsuit against the federal terrorism watch list

and a New Hampshire resident. Like the estimated 1.5 million people on the watch list, both men have been secretly designated a "known or suspected terrorist," even though they have never been accused of any crime and have no way to contest a label that often causes great harm.

With each case that CAIR litigates, we learn more about how the watch list works. As described in the 185-page complaint, we now know that:

- ❖ Over 98% of the names on the list are Muslim names, while the Dept. of Justice's own analysis shows that less than 1% of those on the list are under active investigation for terrorism.
- ❖ Even when someone is taken off the watch list, their prior placement on the list follows them indefinitely, often with serious consequences. In other words, they become permanent second-class citizens.

Working with Congress to end the watch list

We joined CAIR National in a meeting with aides to U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, in response to the Senator's request for more information about the federal government's terrorism watch list and its discriminatory focus on Muslims. The Senator and several other members of Congress then sent a letter to the Biden Administration, asking for extensive data about the workings of the watch list.

Aggressive surveillance on domestic flights

For those on the terrorism watch list, their mistreatment typically occurs when leaving or returning to the U.S., at the hands of both the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Customs & Border Protection. Unfortunately, in 2023 we saw this kind of harassment expand to domestic flights. One Muslim professional is routinely met at the boarding gate by five TSA agents who subject him to public and humiliating searches, even though TSA already did the same thing to him at the security checkpoint. He has become increasingly fearful of traveling for work, which is affecting his job.



The CAIR-MA team at the Boston press conference announcing the watch list lawsuit.

Woman sentenced for assaulting City Councilor's husband

A woman shouted anti-immigrant slurs at Melrose City Councilor Maya Jamaledine at a gas station and then assaulted her husband. We provided victim advocacy, including consulting with the District Attorney's

office over the appropriate charges and helping the Jamaledine family draft a Victim Impact Statement for the perpetrator's sentencing. The perpetrator, who had no prior criminal record, was given six months' probation and ordered to take an online class about Muslims in America.

High school student attacked by other teens

A Muslim student was attacked by two teenaged girls who grabbed her hair and slammed her head against a wall, threw her to the sidewalk, and kicked her. The student suffered a split lip and bruises. The assailants' friends posted video of the attack on social media, which helped police identify the two teens.

Bill to overhaul hate crime laws

In December, we opposed a state bill that would merge two existing hate crime statutes. Presumably, the bill is intended make it easier to prosecute hate crimes, but it would wipe out over 40 years of case law – or, at the very least, create confusion as to the value of prior court decisions. This was a good example of “don't fix what's not broken.”



CAIR-MA Legal Director Barbara J. Dougan, City Councilor Maya Jamaledine, and Abdallah Jamaledine spoke to the press outside Malden District Court.



SPECIAL SECTION

❖ We joined forces with the National Lawyers Guild's Massachusetts chapter to coordinate requests for help with college-level disciplinary hearings in response to pro-Palestinian activism. We created a referral list of lawyers who handle disciplinary cases. However, most students cannot afford to hire a lawyer, so we are in the process of creating "know your rights" materials about school discipline hearings.

We were contacted by residents of two communities where the town flew the Israeli flag on public property while their requests to fly the Palestinian flag were met with controversy and special public hearings.⁴ Yet First Amendment law is clear that a local government cannot favor a particular political viewpoint.

❖ In North Andover, town officials approved a college student's request for the Palestinian flag to be flown after the Israeli flag was raised. In response, local residents doxxed the student, which led to threats, harassment, and even a complaint to her college, seeking to have her disciplined for exercising her right to petition the government.

❖ When a community group in Milton asked for the Palestinian flag to be raised, elected officials' responses ranged from an outright refusal to suggesting alternatives, such as flying a peace flag or calling for dialog. In the end, the town took down the Israeli flag.



Interfaith demonstrators march to the offices of U.S. Rep. Jake Auchincloss in Attleboro.

⁴ Residents of Worcester also succeeded in getting the town to raise the Palestinian flag, after the Israeli flag was flown.

As the war progressed, we saw anti-discrimination policies being used against our clients, mainly people of color, as support for Palestinian human rights, even outside of the workplace, was falsely equated with antisemitism.³ As a result, some employees paid a heavy price for criticizing a foreign government.

- ❖ A physician who created a nonprofit organization to assist low-income patients posted on social media about the war in Gaza. In response, anonymous critics flooded the nonprofit's board and donors with false claims of antisemitism, resulting in a loss of funding and resignations from her board.

- ❖ Several law students had job offers rescinded in light of their pro-Palestinian activism on campus.
- ❖ A teacher who led diversity efforts at her school mentioned to other staff her concerns about the

Students of all ages were affected by the war. Younger students, already struggling to comprehend events in the Middle East, were bullied by their peers and even targeted by their teachers. The greatest wave of activism in support of Palestine took place on college campuses – and was also met with the harshest backlash.

- ❖ Harvard University was “ground zero” for the epidemic of doxxing that slammed pro-Palestinian activists, falsely labeling them “Harvard’s leading antisemites” and much worse. The students were inundated with threats and slurs, leading many to fear for their safety. While much of the online harassment was from anonymous sources, one organization proudly claimed ownership of the infamous “doxxing trucks” with large LED screens showing students’ names and faces.
- ❖ Several public schools issued one-sided statements supporting the Israeli government, recognizing only the grief and fear of their Jewish students while ignoring the same impact on their Muslim and Arab students. We drafted a sample letter for parents to adapt for their children’s schools, reminding school officials of their legal obligation to meet the needs of all students, regardless of religion or national origin.

³ To be clear, CALR has always and unequivocally condemned antisemitism.





Impact of the War in Gaza

The war in Gaza had a profound effect on Massachusetts' Muslim community (and which continues in 2024). It affected almost every area of law we handle – and added a few new ones, including the potent weapon of “doxxing” that was unleashed against critics of the Israeli government.¹

More victims of hate crimes and harassment asked for help after the onset of the war than in all of 2022.

- ❖ A young Muslim woman was attacked by an older male co-worker, who tried to forcibly unzip her uniform vest. She was wearing a scarf with the colors of the Palestinian flag, but had tucked it under her hijab and blouse so it could not be seen while on the job.
- ❖ When a Muslim customer at a café pointed out that he had been given the wrong order, a male employee became furious, swearing and screaming at the customer, then chasing him with scissors. The police arrested the employee at the scene. Afterwards, the victim noticed a sign posted on the store’s window that said, “Glory to the army of Israel.”
- ❖ In a widely circulated video, a woman can be seen following and harassing a Muslim student who was leaving a building on Harvard University’s campus. She accused the student of “making families feel unsafe with [her] terrorist scarf,” referring to the student’s keffiyeh, the traditional Palestinian scarf.²
- ❖ Many other callers reported threats, menacing behavior, and assaults related to the war in Gaza, although the perpetrators were not identified. Callers included a Muslim woman who needed an escort to her car after she was followed into a store by a man who threatened her about Gaza and her hijab, a Palestinian woman whose car was smeared with feces, a Muslim father who received sexually explicit threats against his activist daughter, and a Muslim woman who was spit upon by a group of young men on her bus.

In the workplace, many employers issued pro-Israel statements that ignored the staggering loss of life in Gaza. We created a sample letter for employees who were willing to risk responding, noting the war’s effect on Arab and Muslim workers as well as the need for an even-handed approach in the workplace.

¹ Doxxing is the malicious release of someone’s personal information, usually by online posting, which is done to generate harassment, threats, and harm.
² The three college students who were shot in Vermont in November were also wearing keffiyehs.

A devastating year for a determined community

For Muslims in Massachusetts, 2023 unfolded as a year marked by adversity. It was bookended by the tragic fatal police shooting of young Sayed Arif Faisal in January and the local repercussions of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza at the end of the year. October ushered in a deluge of challenges with the onset of the Gaza conflict. In the fourth quarter alone, there was an unprecedented surge, with 145 calls for help, 78% of which were tied to the Gaza crisis – a staggering record.

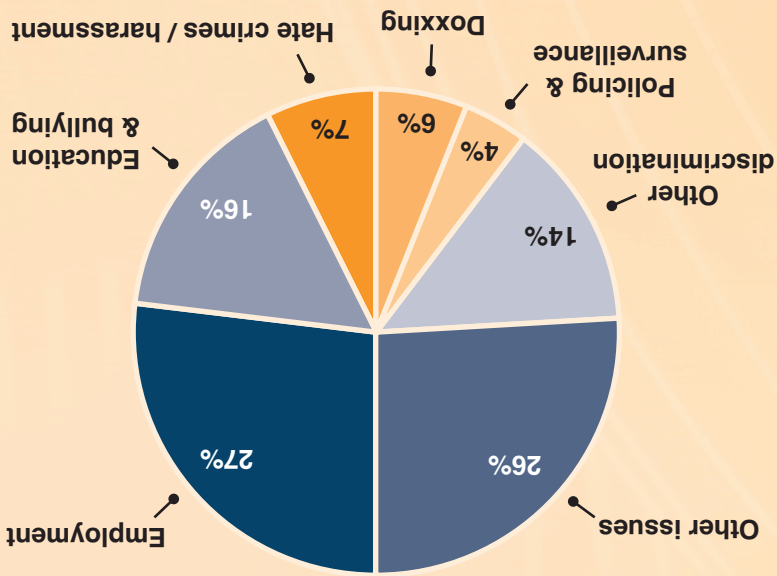
CAIR-MA was inundated with 249 requests for legal assistance in 2023, doubling the figures from 2022 and marking the highest number of calls for help since our inception.

Notably, over 20 calls emanated from various groups, comprising employees, students, parents, and local residents. It is with profound honor and humility that we acknowledge the trust placed in CAIR-MA by the Muslim community, having supported well over 500 individuals during this tumultuous year.

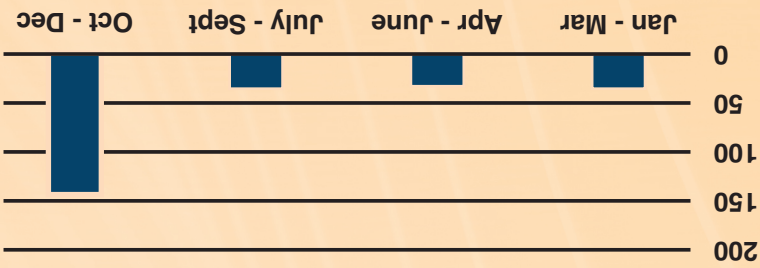
❖ Reports of hate crimes increased by 40%, from 12 in 2022 to 17 in 2023. This continued an alarming upward trend that started in 2022, after several years of diminishing numbers.

- ❖ The most dramatic spike, however, was the number of calls for help with employment issues, which increased by 385%, from 14 in 2022 to 68 in 2023.
- ❖ While Muslim parents struggled in the workplace, their children continued to suffer serious discrimination and bullying in school. The number of education-related complaints doubled, from 20 in 2022 to 41 in 2023.
- ❖ Finally, calls for help exploded in the fourth quarter of 2023, following the onset of the war in Gaza. See our special section that follows.

Community needs in 2023



Requests for help in 2023



2023 CIVIL RIGHTS REPORT

Amplifying Voices for Justice



3 ❖ Overview

4 ❖ *Special Section: Impact of the War in Gaza*

7 ❖ Hate Crimes & Harassment

8 ❖ Travel Abuse

9 ❖ Policing & the Criminal Legal System |

Workplace Discrimination

10 ❖ Protecting Students | Appreciation

Ready to learn more?
Visit cairma.org to download the interactive PDF of our 2023 Civil Rights Report, which includes clickable links to related stories.

Above: TOP — Rev. Corey J. Sanderson, CAIR-MA board president, spoke at the "Our Faith Demands Ceasefire" rally in Boston. Also shown: Raheela Rahman, CAIR-MA board member, and Tahira Amatul-Wadud, CAIR-MA executive director.

BOTTOM — CAIR-MA greeted the public at the annual New England Muslim Festival in Medford.

On the cover: TOP — Barbara J. Dougan (at left, with microphone), CAIR-MA legal director, spoke at a demonstration following the shooting death of Sayed Arif Faisal by the Cambridge police in January 2023. Read more on page 9. *Photo by Tom Week/Cambridge Day, used with permission.*
BOTTOM — In November 2023, the Boston Coalition for Palestine shut down Massachusetts Avenue as they demanded a ceasefire in Gaza. *Photo by Lita Xu Ling Kelley, used with permission.*

Flip this booklet over
to read our 2023 Annual Report, "Refusing to be Silenced"



Amplifying Voices for Justice
The Council on American-Islamic Relations - Massachusetts

2023
civil rights report