



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

6120 Baltimore National Pike, Suite 2D

Baltimore, MD 21228

E-mail: mdoutreach@cair.com URL www.cair.com

Tele 410-971-6062 Fax 202-488-0833

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Good evening and peace be upon you,

My name is Kim Syuardi, I am the Maryland Outreach Coordinator for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. I am here before you today as an advocate and a resident of Annapolis who deeply believes in the protection of all human rights. I want to speak briefly about the recent genocide in Palestine and the troubling rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab discrimination in Maryland, including right here in our county.

Anne Arundel County is a county that prides itself on the core values of equity, justice, and inclusion. If these values truly matter to you as our county leaders, I urge you to stop funding groups and companies that play a role in the atrocities in Palestine that have unfolded over the last 15 months. These atrocities have been partly fueled by Islamophobia that has also skyrocketed in Maryland. According to my organization's data, in 2024 alone, CAIR Maryland documented 609 cases of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab complaints, incidents and requests for assistance in our state.

As compared to previous years, our office observed a sharp rise in censorship and harassment targeting individuals who support Palestinian human rights and criticized our government's role in the genocide in Gaza.

This increase in discrimination is not just an abstract statistic—it impacts real people, our neighbors, our colleagues, and our families. These are individuals who face verbal abuse, vandalism, workplace discrimination, and even physical violence, all because of their moral conviction, identity or perceived connection to Palestine.

Of the 609 case reports documented by our office in 2024, approximately 37 percent (228) related to discrimination in government, education, and employment. This includes hostile workplace environments, retaliation against students and employees, and incidents and experiences during actions and lobbying right here in Annapolis on legislation such as HJ2 Gaza Ceasefire Resolution during the 2024 session of the Maryland General Assembly.

We cannot and should not ignore these issues. These incidents are happening in our own backyard. As we continue to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for dignity and justice, we must also ensure that we protect the rights and safety of diverse communities here in Anne Arundel County.

CAIR is respectfully urging you to heed the growing calls of people of conscience, end public funding for groups that don't embody our values and take public measures to acknowledge the rights, dignity and humanity of Palestinian community members and allies who are experiencing this tense and hostile environment.

Thank you.

Kim Syuardi
Maryland Outreach Coordinator, CAIR
Council on American-Islamic Relations
ksyuardi@cair.com

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