

# PARTNERSHIP



SUMMER 2017



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD.



*Assalamu Alaikum*  
PEACE UNTO ALL OF YOU

*“Verily by [the test of] time, man is in loss, except those who have believed and done good deeds, and encouraged each other to truth, and encouraged each other to patience.” (Quran 103:1-3)*

Dear humanitarian,

At Islamic Relief USA, we believe in building bridges to connect people. It is important for us at this time in America to be patient when people are trying to divide us. This is a time when we need to work with other like-minded people who believe in social justice for all, here in America and across the world.



Roses delivered from a neighbor to IRUSA office in Virginia

This is a time of patience in East Africa and Yemen, which are experiencing historic emergencies that may be the largest since World War II.

This is a time of patience for refugees from Syria, Somalia and across the world. Numbers of refugees and internally displaced people are also at record highs.

We have seen many here in America showing their love and support for Muslim Americans and others who may feel that they are being neglected.

Our friends of other faiths and backgrounds have reached out to us in solidarity. Let us work together with them to answer people's hate with our love.

Your support—whether financial, as a volunteer with your time and expertise, as a supporter advocating on our behalf, as someone praying with us—it's all essential. May Allah (SWT) help us to come closer to Him by helping others.

Thank you for working with us. May Allah (SWT) reward you for caring for our sisters and brothers in humanity.

Sincerely,

Anwar Ahmad Khan  
Chief Executive Officer

CEO Anwar Khan meets young Rashaad during a field visit in Durban, South Africa.

# CONTENTS

- 03. ABOUT IRUSA
- 04. U.S. EMERGENCIES
- 08. U.S. PROGRAMS
- 12. DAY OF DIGNITY
- 14. REFUGEES
- 18. SYRIA
- 20. YEMEN
- 21. IRAQ
- 22. EAST AFRICA
- 24. SPIRITUAL REPAIR
- 26. 30 FACES, 30 PLACES
- 28. RAMADAN
- 30. QURBANI
- 32. AFRICA
- 36. PAKISTAN & AFGHANISTAN
- 38. PALESTINE
- 40. ORPHANS
- 42. PUBLIC AFFAIRS
- 44. VOLUNTEERS
- 46. SPECIAL EVENTS
- 47. WHAT'S NEW AT IRUSA
- 48. THANK YOU

**Creative Director and Photo Editor:**

Ridwan Adhami

**Editorial:** Lina Hashem and Chancey Gannett

**Design:** Ali Hussain and Ridwan Adhami

**Cover Illustration:** Jahanara Hoque

**Photography:** Ridwan Adhami, Fareeha Amir,

Chancey Gannett

Thank you to all who contributed imagery and content from around the world.

Photographs © Islamic Relief



IR Jordan's Dr. Farah carries little Raed during a surgery followup visit. Islamic Relief donors paid for Raed to have his cleft lip repaired.



## ABOUT ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

### VISION

Working together for a world free of poverty

### MISSION

Islamic Relief USA provides relief and development in a dignified manner regardless of gender, race, or religion, and works to empower individuals in their communities and give them a voice in the world.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD

### IRUSA WORKS WITH FAITH GROUPS TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN AID WORLDWIDE

Amid the current divided political climate, Islamic Relief USA increased interfaith work again in the past year. IRUSA is working together with other faith groups to bring relief to communities from the United States to Ecuador to Liberia.

In Liberia, IRUSA is working with Episcopal Relief and Development to prevent violence against women and help survivors access the support services they need. The program is

doing this by teaching faith leaders, youth group leaders and high schools to protect and advocate for women.

"It's about empowering and equipping Christian and Muslim leaders to serve as agents of change within their congregations and communities," said Robert Radtke, president of Episcopal Relief and Development.

Radtke's group works in close to 40 countries on issues of health, hunger,

economic security and disaster response. "We're very similar to Islamic Relief in many ways," he said in IRUSA's "What a Relief!" podcast last fall. The organizations even have similar values.

Radtke cites a proverb: "If you want to go fast, go by yourself. If you want to get something done, go together."

We're trying to get things done together.

### Here are some other joint projects from the past year with faith-based organizations:

**With Catholic Relief Services** — provided food and medical care for people facing potential famine in Yemen. Also repaired water sources, built bathrooms and provided hygiene kits for earthquake survivors in Ecuador.

**With American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem** — equipped a breast cancer diagnostic center in Gaza.

**With the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** — provided coats for homeless and low-income Americans last fall at Day of Dignity events across the United States.

**With the United Methodist Committee on Relief** — provided more than 200 pounds of food per family for 2,000 families in Yemen, along with health care, clean drinking water, and hygiene kits.

THESE PROJECTS ALONE  
HELPED ALMOST  
100,000 PEOPLE.

# U.S. EMERGENCIES



## TEAM ASSISTS CALIFORNIANS THROUGH FIRE AND FLOODING

### ISLAMIC RELIEF USA DISASTER RESPONDERS FIGHT FIRE WITH FRIENDSHIP

**Beth and Albert watched the news with growing fear as the sand fire grew out of control in Santa Clarita Valley last summer and headed straight for them.**

"I could look out the door and I could see the smoke off in the distance," Albert said.

As the fire roared toward their home, their worries were compounded by Beth's lack of mobility—she uses a wheelchair.

"Next thing I know, we have heavy smoke coming up the canyon and we have sheriff's squad cars pulling into the lot and telling us on loudspeakers that we needed to be prepared to evacuate," Albert said. "... Then they came in with the fire trucks and told us that we had a half hour."

They got out just in time. Albert said the fire sounded like a freight train behind them.

The couple was among 20,000 people displaced by the fire, which burned through more than 41,000 acres. As residents fled, IRUSA's Disaster Response Team went to help.

Beth and Albert went to an assistance center set up by local government officials. There they found IRUSA's team.

"Islamic Relief USA helped us with the lumber that we need for my fiancé to put the ramp together for me to get back into my home," Beth said from her wheelchair. "I'm tremendously grateful ... Thank you all very much."

Albert added, "We had to replace the refrigerator and thanks to Islamic Relief, we are able to do that."

### TEAM CARES FOR EVACUEES AMID FEARS OF FLOODING

Disaster responders have to be flexible all the time, but especially when an emergency changes in the middle of their response.

IRUSA's Disaster Response team set up in California in mid-February after local officials accepted its offer of help caring for residents displaced by the threat of flooding around the Oroville Dam.

Just as they were getting volunteers briefed, California lifted the evacuation order for residents near the dam and let them go back home. It looked like the team would no longer be needed.

But then more storms approached, and the team started preparing an American Red Cross shelter for more expected evacuations. The

team helped care for hundreds of residents at the shelter.

The team also helped a local mosque become certified as an American Red Cross emergency shelter.



IRUSA's team met with 50 clients at the center, and 39 qualified for cash assistance totaling \$15,200. The team also provided psychological first aid as well as referrals to other agencies for services like help rebuilding.

"The greatest impact we were able to make, in my humble opinion, was the fact that we are Islamic Relief helping those who were affected by this disaster," said Disaster Response Coordinator Hani Hamwi.

**"OUR PRESENCE SERVED AS A VERY STRONG MESSAGE THAT MUSLIMS IN THE U.S. ARE GOOD NEIGHBORS," HE SAID. "WE WERE THANKED WITH HUGS, HANDSHAKES AND WARM SMILES."**

A client named John appreciated his cash card—and the team's presence.

He told Hamwi, "This really helps me, thank you — you just don't know." And then he added, "Right now with the times, it is really good to see you guys here."

Albert said, "We're going to pay it forward." 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

## HURRICANE MATTHEW: TEAM MAKES NEWS FOR AID IN N.C.

IRUSA mobilized 10 volunteers in North Carolina in the wake of the devastating Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. The team served more than 800 people at an American Red Cross shelter, provided psychological first aid, and distributed 2,000 hygiene kits and 7,000 water bottles. Several news outlets picked up the story.

### IN THE NEWS

**THE (RALEIGH) NEWS & OBSERVER, Oct. 24, 2016—**  
**"Islamic relief group helps North Carolina recover from Hurricane Matthew"**



**THE WASHINGTON POST, Oct. 20, 2016—** "Their first goal in rural N.C. was disaster relief. The other: Being the face of Islam in a red state"

"The words on their blue vests seemed to catch everyone's eye: 'Islamic Relief.'"

**MSN, Oct. 21, 2016—**"Islamic Relief USA Helps North Carolina Families Recover After Flooding"

"Some of them say this is the first time I've ever seen a Muslim in my life and thank you so much for helping out."

## DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM ASSISTS NEIGHBORS ACROSS UNITED STATES

# 'FORMATION OF UNITY' AFTER ORLANDO ATTACK



### ISLAMIC RELIEF USA DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM CONSOLES FLORIDA COMMUNITY

**A disaster can come in many forms.**

**It can be an unpredictable and swift earthquake, devastating lives in a matter of moments, or an insidious drought, slowly eating away at resources and destroying lives. Or it can come at the hands of man, like it did last summer at the Pulse Nightclub in Florida.**

**Whatever form the disaster takes, the IRUSA Disaster Response Team is trained to help.**

IRUSA was among the first responders to the deadly Pulse Nightclub attack. Fifty people were killed and another 53 were injured in the attack, reportedly committed by a man who identified as a Muslim. As soon as the news reached IRUSA, Hani Hamwi, Disaster Response Team Manager, was on a plane and contacting volunteers in Orlando. "IRUSA wanted to make sure there was a strong presence on the ground from a Muslim organization," he said.

He reached two of IRUSA's star volunteers in Florida, Rasha Mubarak and Imam Azhar Subedar. Together, they worked to provide support to the devastated Orlando community.

"Our primary job was to comfort the families of those affected," Hani said. They were also vigilant about possible backlash that could affect Muslims. The group first arrived at a senior center where families were camped out, waiting to learn the fate of their unaccounted for family members.

"It was a scene of chaos, a scene of confusion," Imam Azhar said, describing the sights and sounds that have stayed with him since that day. "Not only are we trying to comfort them, but our faces are being painted as the perpetrators."

IRUSA's Disaster Response Team assisted for 11 days, providing chaplaincy services to victims and their families. The team also arranged for the American Red Cross to provide emotional care at Muslim community events.

Rasha, a longtime volunteer for IRUSA, described the emotional impact of the experience. "There was shrieking and wailing, and I was overwhelmed emotionally," she said. "That's when I remembered Islamic Relief's training and the emotional and mental aspect of it, of having to take breaks and making sure that you're okay, because if you're not okay, you're not going to be able to help others be okay."

Hani added that he has never experienced a deployment quite like it. He remembers 40 to 50 families weeping at the same time as they waited. "There's sounds that I remember that just stuck with me," he says. "It was very painful to be around. It was extremely painful."

Yet amidst the devastation and despair, a scene of hope also emerged. "It was such a formation of unity," Rasha remembered. She said that what really stood out in her memory was the feeling of solidarity in the community.

"I remember while I was distributing water, I was amazed that so many people came and apologized to me," Imam Azhar said. "I asked what are you apologizing to me for, and they said because you are always thrown under the bus. It's not your faith, it's not you, we totally understand this."

The disaster in Orlando will be remembered as a tragic loss and an inspiring example of what a strong interfaith community looks like when it stands together. 🤝

*Chancey Gannett*



Flint, Michigan



Baton Rouge, Louisiana

### FLINT WATER CRISIS, JANUARY-AUGUST 2016:

As 2016 began, news was breaking about dangerously high lead levels in the water supply in Flint, Michigan. From January to March, hundreds of volunteers conducted 10 water distributions, delivering about 40,000 gallons of water door-to-door in low-income areas each week. From March to August, IRUSA paid about 20 temporary workers to continue the distributions.

### LOUISIANA FLOODING, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2016:

After floods struck Louisiana in August, 12 IRUSA volunteers conducted more than 10,000 disaster assessments with the American Red Cross. The team also distributed 150 food kits, provided psychological first aid, and gave \$34,800 total cash assistance to 99 families.

# U.S. PROGRAMS



Chiquista and her children have a place to call home again, through a program IRUSA is now supporting.

## IRUSA SUPPORTS PROGRAM HELPING HOMELESS FAMILIES IN VIRGINIA

### Chiquista, of Virginia, has been working since she was 16.

She took care of her three children until she found herself without a job—and a home. “That was a storm in my life,” Chiquista said.

Her children became three of 600 in the small city of Roanoke without a home. These children go to school not knowing where they’ll sleep at night. It’s hard on the kids—and it’s hard on the parents who can’t give their children a secure home. It hurt Chiquista’s heart.

Thankfully, that phase is over. Chiquista has a home now. She got it through a United Way program IRUSA is now supporting—Rehousing Youth for Success in Education.

The program helps homeless families get back on their feet. The assistance can include food, academic support, help finding a job, health care and adult education.

IRUSA gave \$40,000 to the program in October. It was the program’s largest grant to date, and it’s enough to help five families back on their feet.

It worked for Chiquista. She struggled for awhile and then found a new job. With the help of this program, Chiquista said, she was able to give her kids the stability she always wanted. And she enrolled in classes to get a better job.

“I’m really trying to show them that education is important,” Chiquista said. “I just really appreciate what this program has done for me.” 🙏

*Lina Hashem*



Syrian refugee Basher with IRUSA regional case manager Wasif Qureshi

## NEW PROGRAM WELCOMES REFUGEES IN NORTH CAROLINA

### In 2017, amid a climate unfriendly to refugees, Islamic Relief USA started a new project to support them.

The project started in North Carolina, focusing on refugees who have the most difficulty settling because of medical conditions or psychological trauma and low English proficiency. Refugees receive rent assistance and case management—guiding them through the services available and filling in gaps.

The program’s first client was Basher. His road to North Carolina was difficult: He was tortured in Syria, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. He’s in the United States with his mother.

Basher is now taking English lessons 20 hours a week, said IRUSA regional case manager Wasif Qureshi. He wants to work with computers or be a translator. His main tasks now are to make

a resume and continue to improve his English. “Then we’ll get him on some job sites,” Qureshi said.

Qureshi is expecting the program to reach 50 families like Basher’s in its first year, identified through the help of volunteers and local mosques. They’re looking for families who are having difficulty settling in.

“It’s important to provide them with the help now so they can get on their feet as quickly as possible,” Qureshi said. “In North Carolina, it’s very important to help the families because of the current climate. If you don’t reach out to them, there is a chance they might go deeper into their insular environment and not want to come out and connect, and they will start having the problems that the other low-income individuals face—they might end up in a shelter. It’s even worse because they don’t have the English competency to find services available to them.”

Qureshi added, “It must be tackled right at the beginning, because the support from the agencies they came in with is still there. If the support disappears, the task of gaining self-sufficiency becomes even harder.”

The program is working with all seven voluntary agencies supporting refugees in the area they’re serving.

Qureshi said he’s been impressed and humbled by the families he’s worked with. As refugees who have been through a long and strict approval process, they’ve been through difficult times.

“They’re very self-motivated, self-dedicated,” he said. “The hardship they faced overseas has translated into additional strength. They’re very resilient people.” 🙏

*Lina Hashem*



Turkey distribution, Washington D.C.



**SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR**

IRUSA staff and volunteers turned out in southeast D.C.'s Ward 7 before Thanksgiving to share 1,000 turkeys and all the sides with families who have a hard time affording the meal.

"This is a great way for people to see ... our Muslim community is about love," said Councilwoman Yvette Alexander.

The annual event was conducted with American Third Pillar Charities.

Resident Josephine came to get a turkey, but she saw the line and hopped across the line to help stuff bags for other residents.

Picking up his turkey, Carl said, "Thank you all very much! This food will come in handy. Believe me, it will come in handy."

**IRUSA SUPPORTS CLINIC IN N.C.**

Amid concerns over losing health care, a newly approved IRUSA grant will offer some relief in North Carolina. IRUSA is supporting a clinic that will provide free health care for hundreds of low-income residents this year.

The grant of nearly \$47,000 will help a clinic run by Winston-Salem State University provide physical and occupational therapy for a diverse local population. The clinic sees more than 17,000 patients per year, and 70% of them live below the poverty line. Without insurance, there are few options to receive this kind of therapy to recover from health problems like stroke and brain tumors.

IRUSA also continues to support two other community health clinics in the United States.



MLK Day at Islamic heritage museum in Washington, D.C.

**VOLUNTEERS MAKE MLK DAY 'A DAY ON'**

They made 1,400 sandwiches. They handed out hot meals and all the produce anyone could come and carry away. They collected canned food and protected trees and cleaned up a community garden, and they delivered supplies to refugees.

Close to 100 volunteers and staff worked together on Martin Luther King Day to serve communities on both coasts. This day of service is an annual event for IRUSA.

"Instead of a day off, it was a day on to commemorate Dr. King's service," said IRUSA U.S. programs manager Naeem Muhammad. "He changed the face of America through his efforts for civil rights and equality for all. He championed the causes of the underprivileged, period. That matches our goal to support people no matter race, religion, gender or creed."

**LUNCHES WITH LOVE**

Dozens of volunteers joined IRUSA at the headquarters to make sandwiches and bag lunches for a Washington, D.C., homeless shelter. The youngest helpers — dropping snacks in bags and carrying boxes—were just a few years old. Later, staff delivered the lunches to the Central Union Mission shelter to be used throughout the week.

Also in Washington, D.C., at America's Islamic History Museum, the day of service coincided with a lively parade that sent crowds right through IRUSA's event. Despite the cold weather, IRUSA volunteers lit up Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue with their blue shirts and bright smiles, offering hot cocoa, coffee, hot meals, and a free produce market to passersby.

Community members remarked on how much it helped. "It's tough out here," said a 24-year-old man, sipping his cocoa.

**TOWARD THE MOUNTAINTOP**

In California, IRUSA's team prepared 400 hygiene kits and dozens of lunches and renovated a community garden. Then, on the way back, they ran into a group of homeless people who did not have any socks or blankets at night, said staff member Farah Kharal. "So we went to a local store and got them socks and blankets."

Naeem said this kind of work—one meal or one hygiene kit at a time—will bring the community closer to our goals of relieving hunger and inequality, even if we won't see it.

"Dr. King said he already envisioned being at the mountaintop even if he's not going to get there," he said. "His selfless commitment to that vision deserves to be commemorated, and we commemorate his service by serving others." 🙏

Lina Hashem

**THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED GET SECOND CHANCE WITH HELP FROM IRUSA GRANT**

About 700,000 people are released from prison each year, and so often the transition back to society is a difficult one.

Islamic Relief USA donors funded a program of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) called Green ReEntry to help with this transition for 25 formerly incarcerated men in Chicago. Green ReEntry addresses the needs of the whole person, which include the physical, mental, spiritual, and social.

The organization recently renewed an agreement with a large metropolitan property management company to hire several formerly incarcerated men once they have been trained by the Green ReEntry program. IMAN will be preparing individuals to be successful in the screening, interviewing, and hiring process by exposing them to actual construction experiences and other related aspects that will be beneficial to their job placement. Ongoing training will include mentoring, life skills, job readiness, industry-recognized certified training, job placement, and physical and mental health services.

IRUSA thanks our donors for playing a part in this important initiative. 🙏

Chancey Gannett

**WHAT YOU DID:**

More U.S. programs in 2016-2017:

- Zakat distribution
- Summer food service for low-income children
- Food pantries
- Assistance for refugees
- Financial education programs
- Support for free community health clinics
- Social services for abused women

## DAY OF DIGNITY

## 'DAY OF DIGNITY' SNAPSHOTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

## SYRIAN REFUGEES SERVE AMERICANS ON DAY OF DIGNITY IN NEW JERSEY AND SEATTLE

**Safa is a Syrian refugee in New Jersey. Her family came to the United States this summer, with only what they could carry.**

Four months later, she came to IRUSA's Day of Dignity—and handed out hygiene kits and school supplies to Americans in need.

"We came to help the American public just like they helped us when we first came," she said. "We wanted to give back some of that kindness. We're one people and our humanity is one."

Safa was volunteering at IRUSA's Day of Dignity—one of 17 events nationwide.

Day of Dignity has been an IRUSA tradition since the first one—then called Humanitarian Day—was held in 2002. This initiative brings people together to serve their local homeless and low-income communities. People come out for food, winter clothes, and other services like health screenings and haircuts, and sometimes even entertainment like songs and face-painting for kids. These events serve around 20,000 people a year.

Here are glimpses into a few of this year's Day of Dignity events:

**NEW JERSEY: 'I WOULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED THIS'**

The New Jersey Day of Dignity was festive, almost like a block party. More than 700 people came out for hot meals, jackets, hygiene kits, school kits and more. Volunteers guided each guest through the stations, carrying their bags. The kids had their faces painted, and a clown and balloon artist made them laugh.

Amid the festivities, though, feelings ran deep.

Seven Syrian refugee families, including Safa's, came to help out, to learn about the community, and to pick up some things they needed as well.

Safa and her family left Dara' Syria to live in Jordan for three years, and then finally to the United States.

In Jordan, Islamic Relief helped her family, giving them food, shelter and winter supplies. "So we came to America and by chance we're reunited

with Islamic Relief, alhamdulillah," she said. "I would never have imagined this."

Another volunteer named Muhammad has only been here two months.

"We're a people of peace and we love to help," he said. "Any person would want to help another person. And especially as Arabs, we like helping people and taking care of people."

"Even if we speak different languages and we're from a different country, through helping each other, we build an understanding without words."

**SEATTLE: 'IT PUTS SMILES ON PEOPLE'S FACES'**

Jason is 39, and he's a Marine Corps veteran.

"Today, I got a sleeping bag and some weather gear," he said.

Jason left the military as an objector, went to college and worked as a nurse. He said an alcohol problem, a bad marriage and unaffordable rents put him on the street. "Housing is a

problem in the U.S.," he said.

Along with his sleeping bag, he also picked up food, a hygiene kit and a poncho. He got a flu shot and was about to get a haircut.

"I'll sleep warmer for sure," he said. "Thank Allah—thank God. ... Thank you so much."

Nearby, Paul enjoyed coffee and a doughnut. "Whatever you want, they got it," he said. His face suddenly crumpled and he wiped away tears.

"It helps people, man," he said. "It puts smiles on people's faces. ... We're taking this to survive."

"When we get sleeping bags and coffee and doughnuts, it makes us feel important."

**PHILADELPHIA: 'IT'S JUST LOVE'**

Under the tent, as the rain fell, one person after another pointed to Lamarr: "I found out about it from him."

The men and women—Lamarr included—were gathered around tables for chicken, pasta and beans. Bags of new winter clothes were at their feet.

"What they're giving out is very helpful," Lamarr said. "That's what I was telling everybody. It's a good thing. It's a lot of people in need in Philadelphia, so why not let somebody else get blessed?"

When Lamarr saw an organizer handing out fliers, he asked for some to share. She gave him 12, and he asked a church to make him 300 more copies. He handed out all of them—after researching IRUSA.

"I ain't promoting nothing bad," he said. "This is all good, honest helping people. It's just love."

A few tables over, Tim said, "We just had a bad fall," he said. "Everybody's here for a different reason."

Tim is 53 and it's the first time he's been homeless. He said an injury cost him his job, and then his wife asked him to leave.

"I need to go back home and be the foundation of my family," he said. "It's miserable. I've never been in this position before. I'm going to get there."

In the meantime, a friendly face means the world—especially from the kids.

"The kids are so cheery and happy," he said. "They could be playing video games at home. They greet us with a smile. ...

"It's not even about the free stuff — it's just that ya'll showed up. ... It shows you care and that makes me feel a little better about myself." 🙏

*Lina Hashem*



Day of Dignity, Philadelphia



Jason, Marine Corps veteran, in Seattle

**IN THE NEWS**

Syrian refugees attending Islamic Relief USA's Day of Dignity in Newark, NJ, were interviewed by TBS's Allana Harkin for a piece on "Full Frontal With Samantha Bee" about refugees and how they give back in the United States.



# REFUGEES



AMID ATTENTION ON REFUGEES, WE CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER

SULEEKHA DIDN'T ASK TO LOSE HER FAMILY AND BE RAISED IN A TENT IN SOMALIA.

QAIS DIDN'T ASK TO GO TO SCHOOL IN A CAMP FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE IN IRAQ.

AHMED DIDN'T ASK TO LEAVE HIS TOYS BEHIND AND CLING TO A BOAT ACROSS A DANGEROUS SEA.

THAT'S WHY AT ISLAMIC RELIEF USA, WE DON'T EVEN ASK WHETHER THEY DESERVE OUR CARE. THEY JUST DO.

**With refugees in the news these days, Islamic Relief USA is continuing to do what we always do — care for refugees with humanitarian aid here at home and around the world. Because they didn't ask to be forced to leave their homes.**

Did you know there are more than 65 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide? It's the highest level of displacement ever on record.

More than 21 million of them are refugees, which means they have crossed borders.

Those still within their countries are called internally displaced people, or

IDPs. They have even fewer protections under international law than refugees do.

More than half of the world's refugees are children under 18.

Almost 1 in 6 of the world's displaced people are Syrians (both inside and outside Syria).

Almost 34,000 people are forced to flee every day because of conflict or persecution.

Did you know that Islamic Relief USA has been working with our donors and partners to care for refugees for more than two decades? Together, alhamdulillah, we were there for Bosnians in the 1990s, then Kosovars later that decade, and then refugees from Africa to the Middle East to South Asia and the United States.

In 2016 alone, together we reached millions of displaced people through three dozen projects in 13 countries on five continents. You reached refugees and internally displaced people in Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Myanmar, Palestine, South Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Yemen and the United States.

Why? Because they didn't ask, and we can't abandon them.

Find Suleekha's story, and Qais' and Ahmed's and more at: [IRUSA.ORG/MYSTORY](http://IRUSA.ORG/MYSTORY).

Please share the link and encourage your friends to support displaced people. Because they didn't ask to be refugees. 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

## SULEEKHA'S STORY

Suleekha is 7. She lost her father when she was just 2 years old. She was raised in this tent in Somalia. Her grandmother takes care of her because her mother is mentally ill and unfit to care for her. Grandmother works hard for \$3 a day—when she even gets paid. Suleekha deserves to feel protected.



## AHMED'S STORY

Ahmed didn't want to leave his home to look safety in Greece—he didn't want to cling to a boat across a dangerous sea. After their journey, his family arrived on the shore of Lesbos, Greece, and stayed at this 24-hour refugee camp. From there, they had to walk to their next destination. They survived the rough Aegean Sea, but the road ahead was still full of uncertainty and danger. He deserves a childhood.



## FAISAL'S STORY

Faisal left one war zone for another one that he thought might be safer. He came from Yemen to Somaliland by boat. The local people were surprised to see Yemenis arriving, but he felt welcomed.



Holding his neighbor's baby Malak, he said, "They gave us what they could, Jazakallah khair to them. We advise and plead with anybody who can help those who have lost their parents, their kids, the orphans. There are a lot of people who need the help. Jazakallah khairun."

## QAIS' STORY

Qais is a 12-year-old from Mosul, Iraq. His family left their home to try to get away from the violence. For two and a half years, he's lived in this camp for displaced people in Erbil, Iraq. He goes to school in the camp now—he's in fifth grade. Qais deserves to go to a real school where he can work toward a stable future.



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR REFUGEES

### CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE:

- Winter supplies for displaced people in Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen
- Aid for people displaced by earthquake in Ecuador
- Emergency food and hygiene kits for displaced people in Iraq
- Health care, education and hygiene in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya
- Health care in Myanmar



MYANMAR

- Water, bathrooms, health care, hygiene and lighting to improve safety for displaced people in South Sudan



SOUTH SUDAN

- Food, water, health care and hygiene kits for displaced people in Yemen
- Support for refugees in Europe



GREECE



MYANMAR



SYRIA



IRAQ



JORDAN



JORDAN

**CARING FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN**  
**NUMBER OF REFUGEE CHILDREN UP 77% IN 5 YEARS**



SOUTH SUDAN



SOMALIA



SOUTH SUDAN



IRAQ

**Twenty-eight million children around the world have been forced to leave their homes in what is the largest movement of children since World War II, according to a UNICEF report.**

A bit less than half of these children—11 million—are refugees in other countries, and that number rose an astounding 77% in five years.

The rest of the children are looking for safety inside their own country, with even fewer protections and less chance of finding help than the ones who cross borders.

“Migrant and refugee children are among the most vulnerable people in the world,” according to the UNICEF report, titled “Uprooted: The Growing Crisis of Migrant and Refugee Children.”

A large part of the increase in the number of refugee children is due to recent conflicts including the one in Syria. In 2010-2015—the time period of the 77% rise in child refugees—15 conflicts broke out or reignited. In 2015, almost half of all child refugees under UNHCR’s mandate were from Syria and Afghanistan.

Many young refugees and migrants are traveling in desperate conditions, without enough food or adequate clothes or shelter. Many are separated from their families, without adults to protect them from the worst kinds of abuse and exploitation.

When they find a place to stop, their problems aren’t over. When they’re lucky enough not to face outright xenophobia, language and legal barriers can prevent them from accessing education and even health care. With setbacks like these, it’s hard to break out of poverty and find a better future.

The UNICEF report poses the question:

**“What can the future hold for these children — denied so much of what they need? If we were to follow the future lives of some of the children — those who have survived — in the pictures that so move us today, what would we find? The answer depends on what we do today.”**

That’s why IRUSA prioritizes humanitarian aid for children. Donors provide emergency relief to children on the move, and more assistance after they’ve settled down, from food to health care and education. Sponsors help guardians care for orphaned children, while other programs focus on livelihood for their families or for adult orphans themselves, so they can support themselves and even thrive. 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

# SYRIA



## 6 YEARS OF PAYING ATTENTION TOGETHER

**Imaan's family stayed in Syria as long as they could. After her father's leg was broken in an airstrike, they went looking for somewhere safer to live. They ended up in a camp in Iraq—in another war zone.**

Imaan has never breathed a breath of air in peace—she doesn't know what it would look like, smell like, sound like.

In March, the Syrian crisis reached another grim milestone—it turned 6 years old. Older than Imaan.

Syrians are exhausted from the fear, the danger, the hunger. But they can't turn it off and get a break.

That's why Islamic Relief USA is still paying attention. As long as they're suffering, insha'Allah, we'll be there for them. We know you are paying attention too, because we see it in action.

You've sent food and water—the most urgent needs to survive. You've sent health care, shelter, and warm winter necessities like blankets and heaters.

You've sent bathrooms for cleanliness and privacy, along with soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

For babies, you've sent diapers and clothes so at least they can feel clean and warm. For the children who have learned nothing but trauma, you've sent a glimpse of normalcy and hope in the form of education and psychosocial care.

For families far from home in Ramadan and on Eid, you sent gifts of food and meat. The scent of meat cooking brings back happier days at home.

You've reached millions of people since the crisis began. Best of all, you've sent your prayers and your love.

This crisis has reached the most heartbreaking depths of tragedy. We pray that the people of Syria will find relief long before the next anniversary.

*Ya Allah, please lift their suffering and end this violence. Please reward their patience with Your greatest generosity. Please fix what's broken and comfort their hearts. Ameen.*

Keep paying attention and spreading the word. Keep praying and keep giving. They don't have the choice to get tired of suffering, so we don't have the choice to forget them. 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

### CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS FOR SYRIANS:

- Clean water for displaced people in Syria
- Food, mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, and heaters for displaced people in Syria
- Winter supplies for displaced people in Syria and refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon
- Food for displaced families near Aleppo, Syria
- Medical care and/or supplies for Syrians in Syria and refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon
- Psychosocial support for children in Lebanon



### YOUR AID REACHES ALEPPO EVACUEES

**“The last 20 days were the worst days we have suffered,” Rania said. “It’s like the last 5 years of suffering all at once.**

Islamic Relief staff met Rania in Idlib in December after she escaped from Aleppo.

“We had nothing—not even bread, nothing. We left everything behind us. We left with the clothes on our backs. What can we do? We thank God.”

The tragedy in Aleppo caught the world's attention last winter. As the town's residents evacuated, freezing winter weather and snow added to their misery. Your winter supply distributions eased their suffering.

Local Islamic Relief staff handed Rania winter gear sent by U.S. donors. Your winter aid for Syrians included items like clothes, mattresses, blankets and plastic sheeting to help them get through the cold, wet winter.

Staff delivered relief from you to Futeim too. Futeim's husband and their twins Rana and Reem were killed in an airstrike in Syria. She has no way to earn money. When she can't find any food, she tells her surviving children stories so they'll forget their hunger and sleep.

Islamic Relief staff found Futeim and her children in their camp in the southern Aleppo countryside and gave them food provided by U.S. donors.

“We were given fresh baked bread,” she said. “I was very happy that my children would enjoy fresh bread after so long. They ate and really enjoyed it. I am praying that Allah Almighty bless Islamic Relief and the donors.”

Rania in Idlib said, “Here we thank God for the people who greeted us and gave us basic aid, mattresses, towels, clothes—and we thank God for everyone who helped.” 🙏

*Lina Hashem*



### GIFTS OF CLEANLINESS

Imagine being in a situation where a gift you really want is a bathroom and some soap.

That's reality for many refugees and other displaced families. And that's why IRUSA donors recently provided bathrooms for displaced Syrians.

Twenty-five bathrooms (each with seven toilets) were installed at four camps in Aleppo governorate.

In addition, 13,532 hygiene kits were distributed in more than 40 camps and communities in Aleppo and Idlib governorates.

This project helped more than 71,000 people.

Umm Ammar is one of them. She's a widow living with her children in a tent in a camp near the Turkish border. Mud was everywhere in the bare tent and in their luggage when Islamic Relief staff visited them. But she was glad for the new bathrooms and the hygiene kits.

“It protects our dignity,” she said.

YEMEN



IRAQ



## AS FAMINE LOOMS IN YEMEN, YOUR FOOD GIFTS REACH FAMILIES

**As famine threatens 7 million people in Yemen, your gifts of food have been reaching families who need it.**

Islamic Relief staff recently finished distributing nearly 40 pounds of staple foods per family to 3,000 families in Ta'iz, Aden and Saa'da. The packages include flour, rice, beans, oil and sugar. The food was donated by people in the United States.

The same project also equipped medical centers with oxygen tanks to care for patients.

Another project is helping families build up small farms with irrigation systems and livestock, and training young adults in vocational skills, to help the participants earn a livelihood. Recent projects provided additional food, water, health care and winter necessities.

The situation in Yemen is growing increasingly dire. About 6.8 million people are in a state of emergency, one step below famine. Another 10 million are also facing severe food insecurity, according to the United Nations. This is more than a 20% increase in hunger since June 2016.

"Simply put this is nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe," UNHCR's country representative, Ayman Gharaibeh, said in December 2016.

It's difficult to get aid inside the country, but Islamic Relief Yemen staff are on the ground year-round, so they can use your donations to buy supplies and distribute them.

As this magazine went to print, Islamic Relief USA was working with the Yemen office to plan more projects for relief, but funding has fallen short, so please continue supporting this work and spread the word. 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

**MORE CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS**

- Restoring livelihoods by providing irrigation and livestock for farmers, and vocational training for youth
- Distributing food to families
- Provided medical facilities with oxygen tanks
- Distributed winter necessities

## IRUSA DONORS AID DISPLACED IRAQIS

**"We just want to live in safety," Wazera said.**

No one should live in constant fear for their life, but for hundreds of thousands of displaced families in Iraq, that is their reality.

Seventy-year-old Wazera made her simple request for a safe life to IRUSA field workers in the Debaga camp that she fled to with her family to escape bombing in her village. Her age made the eight-hour journey too difficult, so her son carried her on his back.

Another elderly woman named Saliha faced similar circumstances. Her family fled their home near Mosul by car but had to abandon their vehicle when it came under fire.

"In Mosul we had four houses, for the whole extended family to live in, and we had a nice comfortable life," she told IRUSA workers. "Now where we're living is dirty and crowded. There aren't enough tents or enough beds, and it's wet and cold here. Our only wish is to return to our homes and live in peace, but we don't think this will happen for a long time. Our whole lives were there. We have nothing now."

When asked how she felt living in her situation, one woman

simply said, "Thank God for everything."

Decades of instability have affected Iraq's economy, infrastructure, employment and social programs. Violence and fighting in 2016 forced hundreds of thousands of Iraqis to flee their homes. IRUSA donors made it possible for teams to respond quickly and provide urgently needed humanitarian aid including food, soap and mattresses. 🙏

*Chancey Gannett*

**WHAT YOU DID:**  
**IRUSA donors cared for displaced families fleeing conflict in Iraq throughout last winter with food and winter supplies.**

- In Northern Iraq, including areas around Erbil and Mosul, 48,000 people received food, soap and other hygiene and baby items.
- Over 6,000 vulnerable families of refugees in Erbil, Baghdad, Anbar, Kirkuk and Salah Aldin are receiving stoves, heaters, pillows, mattresses, children's boots, children's clothes and hygiene kits.
- Emergency food assistance is being delivered to over 100,000 of the most vulnerable displaced people in Ameriyat al Fallujah and Debaga camp in Northern Iraq.

## DONORS BRING RELIEF AS SEVERE DROUGHT GRIPS THE HORN OF AFRICA



Ethiopia is one of the hardest-hit nations in this famine.



Women wait in line to receive food packages in Somalia.

**For most of East Africa, the nightmare of drought is a recurring one. In the past year alone, the situation has been declared an emergency by Islamic Relief twice. 20 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid.**

While the region has long been prone to drought conditions due to the global forces of climate change, the frequency and intensity has increased severely over the past year, and even more so in the past months. The United Nations is calling it “the largest humanitarian crisis since 1945.” And it’s still raging, killing families and wreaking unimaginable hardship

on those left to fight for their lives.

Islamic Relief was at the forefront of providing vital aid to survivors of the 2011 drought—until now, considered the worst drought to hit the region in 60 years. They were on the ground in places like Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia and distributed aid to over 100,000 people. Recent emergency aid projects have included food distributions, the establishment of boreholes for easier access to water, the construction of household latrines, access to hygiene and sanitation services, including hygiene education, the distribution of dignity kits for women, garbage collection services to keep the environment clean, health services for livestock, and more.

As the situation across East Africa worsens, Islamic Relief is working fast to deliver aid. In Somalia, where more than 6.2 million are affected, 110 people died from starvation and drought-related illness in just a few days this spring.

In March, an Islamic Relief staff member sent a report on a woman he met named Fatouma. She is one of the recipients of Islamic Relief aid in Mogadishu. She was forced to flee her home after the 30 cattle she and her family relied on for livelihood starved to death. Her search for food and water took her on an arduous 10-day journey. She finally reached relief in Mogadishu, but had already suffered the most devastating loss of all: her three children did not survive the journey. This is the reality of drought. A reality that took Nouratu, Khadija, and Osman—three small victims out of

the millions currently suffocating.

Entire harvests have been wiped out, and more are at risk of drying out. Families have left behind their homes in search of food and water, and water-borne diseases are spreading rampantly. One photograph sent from the field shows an eerie sign in the street warning people of the danger of eating decayed food. So often, it is their only choice.

Islamic Relief USA is on the ground now, working with field offices to deliver the aid you have sent and educating the public of this reality in hopes of inspiring more donors to send relief. 🙏

*Chancey Gannett*

ISLAMIC RELIEF USA  
**RAMADAN**  
 1438 | 2017



# Ramadan

## THE MONTH OF SPIRITUAL REPAIR

BY ANSE TAMARA GRAY

### Humans are fragile.

A lack of vitamin A can cause blindness; a lack of vitamin C, scurvy. A cut opens a pathway to staph infections and blood poisoning. Pesticides can cause cancer, and too much sugar can make us fat and lazy. Neuroplasticity tells us that the things we look at and ponder can change the way we think and how we perceive ourselves. Our emotional health is subject to childhood experiences and adult trauma.

Armed with both knowledge and fear, modern people seek organic food, disinfectant gels, healthy “screen time” and therapy to find health and strength in dealing with modern life.

But what of spiritual fragility? As days come and go with missed prayers, as our relationships strain under the weight of modern life, and as we grow bitter in the face of oppression, injustice and the stuff that does not make sense, what is happening to our spirit?

The spirit, or *ruh*, is the “holder of the spiritual heart,” according to Imam Ghazali, “the metaphor of which is a lamp from which the body lives in its overflowing light.” A weakened spirit, then, causes a dampened and saddened self. Spiritual exhaustion is real.

Ramadan comes like the proverbial knight in shining armor, riding forth through the darkness and despair to whisk us up and out of the darkening corners of our souls. For 11 months of every year we focus on our physical health, our material well-being, and our worldly matters—and in this one month of Ramadan, we focus on our spiritual selves.

The Quran tells us that Ramadan is “to obtain taqwa” (2:183), or in

another translation “learn piety and goodness”—we are told that even if fasting is difficult and we have a choice to break our fast or not, “it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew” (2:184). The Prophet (PBUH) said, “The five (daily) prayers, and from one Friday prayer to the next, and from Ramadan to Ramadan are expiation for sins committed in between, provided one stays away from the major sins” (Al-Bukhari).

Our hearts and souls have been withered into weakness the past 11 months. The fasting and praying of Ramadan can revive us. As our bodies grow weak, our spirits grow stronger and healthier. The removal of a full year’s sin is no small feat, and as they are peeled off one after another, our souls connect more deeply to the Divine, feel lighter, and begin to grow stronger.

Indeed Ramadan is a guaranteed Godsend. It comes for one month a year to give our spirits and hearts rest, relief, nutrition and healing. Fasting alone can revive a deadened heart. Our Prophet (PBUH) tells us that “Whoever fasts during Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah’s rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven.” And certainly it is our past wrongs that weigh heavily on our spirit.

But there is more. Ramadan is opportunity. A man came to Abu Hanifa (God’s blessing be upon him) and asked him when the fast begins. Abu Hanifa said, “When fajr arrives.” The man, seemingly confused, asked, “And what if the middle of the night comes.” Abu Hanifa, with a thunderous answer, tells us all what the nights of Ramadan are for: “Stand up (in prayer) O feeble one!” And with that he reminds us that the nourishment of the spirit in Ramadan is not just found in denying ourselves food for the body. It is a month of nightly prayers, of recitation of Quran,

and of charitable giving.

The extra prayers of Ramadan further the sin-removal process. Much like spot remover in the laundry, the taraweeh prayers scrub away at the stubborn sins of a lifetime. The Prophet (PBUH) said, “Whoever stands (in prayer) in Ramadan out of faith and in hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

We are experts in what our bodies need. We know what to eat and what not to eat. We can wax on for hours about appropriate exercises for weight loss, strengthening, and/or flexibility. We have read many articles about the negative effects of hormones on our systems and the dangers of genetically modified wheat. We plan careful diets for our children that include natural yogurt bites and sugarless snacks. When thinking about our priorities we always include “me time,” which generally includes some type of physical relaxation.

Our knowledge of the spirit is dismal in comparison. Yet we know a few things. We know that Ramadan fasting will uplift us. We know that prayer will lighten our load and that charity will enrich us in this life and the next.

As we live the days of this blessed month, let us remember that it will disappear for another 11 months, and hence we need to soak our weary souls within it. Ramadan is a month of putting things of this dunya on hold. Avoid travel and conferences, avoid optional projects that can wait. Don’t go on vacation, get married or choose Ramadan to move house. Take time to bask in the health of Ramadan. In a month where sleep is considered worship (for the fasting person), this is a month to go deeply within and make sure the lamp is lit, the battery charged, and the spirit is ready for another 11 months of drought. 🙏



Anse Tamara Gray is the founder of Rabata, an organization dedicated to promoting positive cultural change through individual empowerment, spiritual upbringing of women by women, and the revival of the female voice in scholarship.



30  
DAYS



30  
FACES



30  
PLACES



WORDS BY:  
CHANCEY GANNETT

PHOTOS BY:  
RIDWAN ADHAMI



## RAMADAN AROUND THE WORLD

### American Muslims recall favorite childhood traditions

In 2016, Islamic Relief USA delivered food packages to 30 countries in the world during the holy month of Ramadan. As a special blog project, we photographed and interviewed 30 people to capture what Ramadan feels like in each of those countries. For a whole month, we explored Ramadan together through their memories. Here are some of our favorite moments. You can see all of the stories at: [RELIEFLAB.ORG/30FACES](http://RELIEFLAB.ORG/30FACES).

#### USA

“There are two metaphors for the American multiculturalism. One is called ‘the melting pot,’ and that’s where all the ingredients get added to the pot and they all get smushed down into one thing. There’s another metaphor for America that they call ‘the mulligan stew.’ The mulligan stew is when some of the ingredients are in the broth, but you can still pick out the meat from the potatoes, the carrots from the peas. So for us, Ramadan is a kind of mulligan stew. Where in a mosque in America, you can have people from all over the world. We have 37 different languages in Dar Al-Hijrah. That means these people come, all with their different flavors that they bring to Ramadan.” *Imam Johari*



#### PAKISTAN

“They go all out. In the streets, outside of our family home in Lahore, people would put up lanterns and string lights. You would think it’s somebody’s wedding. If you go shopping to the bazaar you see decorations. It’s just a really festive time of year.” *Zainab*



#### MYANMAR

“I think because the stomach is empty, we can focus better. And even though there is physical tiredness, we bring out that inner power.” *Yousuf*



#### PALESTINE

“The kids go out in groups with the lanterns. It was so peaceful. We would take the lanterns and knock on doors. We would say *wahaweeya wahawee*, and they would open the door and give us candy. Every night in Ramadan I looked forward to it.” *Hiyam*

# RAMADAN



## RAMADAN GIFTS

Every year, Islamic Relief USA donors send Ramadan gifts around the world. Last year, you shared food with almost 400,000 people in the United States and 29 other countries.



## RAMADAN FOOD PACKAGES WORLDWIDE:

COUNTRY	BENEFICIARIES
AFGHANISTAN	4,640
ALBANIA	3,925
BANGLADESH	8,245
BOSNIA	3,275
CHAD	14,840
CHECHNYA	38,414
ETHIOPIA	27,400
INDIA	7,420
INDONESIA	6,961
IRAQ	6,680
JORDAN	2,225
KENYA	3,090
KOSOVO	4,450
LEBANON	2,225
MALAWI	16,490
MALI	7,675
MYANMAR	32,980
NIGER	12,365
PAKISTAN	15,900
PALESTINE	60,120
PHILIPPINES	4,310
SOMALIA	7,030
SOUTH AFRICA	1,435
SOUTH SUDAN	1,335
SRI LANKA	2,025
SYRIA	71,810
TUNISIA	1,390
UNITED STATES	18,920
YEMEN	5,315
ZIMBABWE	1,980
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>394,870</b>

\*estimated

## AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE GENEROSITY OF RAMADAN



*“There are many days and nights that passed by us, sometimes we ate and sometimes we stayed hungry. Only God knows what we’ve been through.*

*It’s been three years, and my children suffered from pain, hunger and disappointment. We don’t know when this journey is going to end.*

*It was impossible for us to stay in our house in*

*Aleppo—we ran away under the cover of darkness, seeking safety and peace. Our only concern is to find food and for our children.*

*Now, Ramadan is coming filled with rewards and generosity, which put a smile on my children’s faces—we have an appointment with its generosity.*

*It’s the month that filled with goodness, giving and holiness. I used to spend a*

*good Ramadan in our house in Syria and have good food, but now I depend on food assistance from charities.*

*I am filled with happiness when I cook delicious food for my children.*

*I don’t forget to give my thanks and my gratitude for Islamic Relief for these boxes of food for my children to grow. These boxes have sugar, rice, beans, canned goods,*

*margarine, oil and jam—all the things that little children love.*

*When I cook this food for my children, and I see them eating it with joy and happiness, tears start to fall on my cheeks. It reminds me of the days when we used to live in our house. I remember cooking the most delicious food from the things my husband used to bring home.”*

— Umm Ali,  
Syrian border  
July 2016



# 1 MILLION SMILES ON EID

## IRUSA DONORS SHARE MEAT, MEMORIES AND JOY DURING HOLIDAY

COUNTRY	BENEFICIARIES
AFGHANISTAN	15,212
ALBANIA	2,482
BANGLADESH	34,900
BOSNIA	21,688
CHAD	37,576
CHECHNYA	27,152
ETHIOPIA	29,174
INDIA	189,203
INDONESIA	3,418
IRAQ	17,372
JORDAN	9,105
KENYA	18,283
KOSOVO	6,051
LEBANON	4,180
MALAWI	26,404
MALI	19,507
MYANMAR	45,982
NIGER	54,096
PAKISTAN	58,623
PALESTINE	12,524
SOMALIA	54,300
SOUTH AFRICA	6,484
SOUTH SUDAN	7,740
SRI LANKA	44,712
SYRIA	184,262
TUNISIA	2,305
UNITED STATES	13,824
YEMEN	35,038
ZIMBABWE	20,110
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,001,707</b> <small>*estimated</small>



MALI



IRAQ



ETHIOPIA



BANGLADESH



KOSOVO



INDIA



### 'ALHAMDULILLAH FOR THE EID'

For many people in the world, the Qurbani meat that Islamic Relief distributes is the only meat they eat all year. In the United States, even though meat is more accessible to families, the impact of Qurbani distributions is still significant.

At a Qurbani distribution at America's Islamic Heritage Museum in Washington, D.C., Phyllis explained that the money saved from not having to buy meat would go towards buying winter clothes and boots for her children. "This is going to help my bottom line in my budget for this month," she said. "That money can go to something else I need. We appreciate it and you will receive a blessing for it."

Bouncing his son, Nasheed told us he would be taking the meat home to his wife who is expecting. "The service is needed and appreciated," he said "especially within this community. I hope we continue to get the word out, so that families who need it will benefit."

Another woman from the community was picking up meat for her daughter, Malika. "In these days and times," she said, "everybody is just trying to get by. If we miss one paycheck we really have to tighten the belt. So every little bit helps."

She added that the lamb Islamic Relief provided was a delicacy that families could not usually afford to buy. "It's a treat, that's what it is," she smiled. "Alhamdulillah for the Eid. Alhamdulillah for the relief." 🙏

*Chancey Gannett*



### AN EID GIFT FOR UMM MOHAMMED

The burden of taking care of her children alone in a war zone is a heavy one every day for Umm Mohammed, but Eid is especially hard.

Her husband was killed in an airstrike in Syria, and since then, she has moved her three children from place to place, looking for somewhere safe to stay. Sometimes she works in the olive groves, harvesting olives and watering trees, to get food for the children. The memories of the past are strong, and they contrast sharply with life as it is now. Especially on holidays.

"When Eid comes, we feel depressed," she said. "There are no sweets, gifts, and new clothes. I don't have enough money to get the Eid needs, and we hope to get back to our old home one day so I can get everything for my children."

Islamic Relief staff found her near Idlib last year and brought a very special gift from caring people in the United States—Eid meat.

"You have filled my children's hearts with joy and happiness," she said. "May Allah bless you and reward you for putting a smile on my children's faces." 🙏

*Lina Hashem*

## HAND IN HAND IN AFRICA

Islamic Relief USA works together with people in communities across Africa to accomplish the changes they want and need in their lives.

This includes emergency aid during disasters such as droughts—usually food, water, and health care.

But the ultimate goal is to empower people in their communities and help them achieve the self-sustainability that we all want.

Abdel Malik stands with his new cattle on his farm in Somalia

## PROTECTING GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SUDAN

Rania is 23. Like most of the girls in her village in Sudan, she was forced to get married and leave school before age 18. She was unhappy, and she ended up divorced and back home.

An Islamic Relief project *inshaAllah* is helping other girls in Rania's village from being forced down the same path.

Local staff in Sudan developed a project to care for women and girls Rania's village through education for girls, business support for widows, and improved gender equality for all.



With IRUSA donors' support, school classrooms and bathrooms were built and equipped, and school health programs taught students about topics like waterborne illnesses, malaria and HIV/AIDS. More than 100 widows started businesses, from creating a plan to getting loans for the equipment they needed.

But the local staff also wanted to address other needs of the women and girls in the community. Rania says early marriage and female genital mutilation are among the biggest problems facing girls, and many of the young mothers have difficult—even life-threatening—births because of the combination of the two. Staff also noticed that home responsibilities and unequal opportunities made it hard for girls to finish school.

So staff set out to address these problems. Child protection committees were formed, and messages were broadcast about the problems of early marriage and female genital mutilation, and the importance of education for girls. Recreation and sports facilities were set up so girls could take part in some of the activities the boys enjoyed. Students learned life skills first aid, bookkeeping and planning. And the boys were taught to wash their own laundry so they could share chores with their sisters, freeing more time for the girls to study.

After returning home to her parents, Rania was able to finish school. Now she is working as a teacher and she's looking out for the girls in her community. She is glad that this program has raised awareness of these issues.

"Thank you to Islamic Relief and the donors for your generous support," she said, "and for reducing suffering in this village." 🙏  
Lina Hashem

### CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA INCLUDE:

- Providing water, food and health care for communities affected by drought in Somaliland



- Equipping and staffing health care centers in Somalia
- Helping farmers build sustainable enterprises in Somalia and Kenya



- Small-business support and vocational training in Central African Republic
- Combating violence against women in Liberia



## Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital



## 'BIG DREAM' BECOMES REALITY TO CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

A state-of-the-art children's cancer ward funded by Islamic Relief donors is now in service in South Africa's new Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital. The historic milestone was marked with a grand opening ceremony Dec. 2, 2016 full of festivities only fitting to celebrate the coming to life of an idea that Mandela imagined over a decade ago.

The Islamic Relief family — including Islamic Relief USA — was among the hospital's top supporters, contributing a total of almost \$8 million to fully fund the oncology ward. Islamic Relief was honored at the ceremony alongside the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation.

"It is wonderful to see that the world has [come] together to honor the memory of Nelson Mandela in the children's hospital, and we are very honored to be able to participate," Islamic Relief USA CEO Anwar Khan said. "We believe this is a sadaqah jariyah."

Forty percent of children with cancer

in South Africa, and 80% in all of Africa, have no access to specialized treatment. The Islamic Relief oncology ward will use cutting-edge technology to conduct medical research, facilitate training and give sick children from all over Africa the care they need.

The hospital boasts 200 beds and seven divisions of pediatric subspecialties. It will provide much needed access to health care in a country that loses one out of 10 children every year to preventable or treatable diseases. The hospital will double as a center for research and training. Children can receive free high-quality care, regardless of their economic status.

The amount of care that went into the hospital's design goes beyond an impressive number of beds and outstanding technological additions. Around every corner, patients will be greeted with bright designs and inviting murals. From an outdoor play garden to an exam room decorated as a nighttime safari, every lovingly imagined detail helps to soften the intimidating edges

of medical equipment and machines. Dignitaries came from all over the world for the grand opening and to listen to inaugural remarks from the project's curators, including Mandela's widow Graca Machel. Dance troupes and musical performers of all ages took the stage in colorful displays of culture and tradition. Playful illustrations of children decorated the outdoor event pavilion, and cutouts of clouds twirled from the ceiling. The ceremony seemed to welcome the brightness of the future.

For the project's pioneers, the day was a reminder of Mandela's hope for his country. "He gave us a huge challenge," said Sibongile Mkhabela, CEO of the hospital trust. "We never thought it was going to be possible. And his words came true: 'It always seems impossible until it is done.'"

*Chancey Gannett*

**For more information about the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, visit [nelsonmandelachildrenshospital.org](http://nelsonmandelachildrenshospital.org)**

## A SAFE SPACE AMID DANGERS FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the middle of a quiet neighborhood, a modest school sits surrounded by a tall fence. It is the last day of exams at The Learning College (TLC), a school that receives funding from IRUSA in the Manenberg township of Cape Town, South Africa. One by one, a last group of seniors put their pencils down and officially begin their summer break.

On the surface, the scene is not much different from the last day of exams in any high school in America. The bell rings and students spill out into the schoolyard, high-fiving each other and making plans for the break. They wear their relief on their faces and in their body language, but an onlooker would never know that the battle they have faced has been so much more than rigorous final exams.

Indeed, it is the very ordinariness of the scene that shows the extraordinary strides of this program—a shining example of what can happen when a safe space is provided for a vulnerable community.

The township of Manenberg was established in 1966 at the height of the apartheid regime's forced removal program. Today, it is one of the most dangerous regions in Cape Town, suffering from severe and endemic gang violence largely due to the lack of access to quality education. The denial of education access was a way that populations were kept systemically marginalized during apartheid. The lingering psychological effects of that time run deep in South Africa, where children still believe they have no future because many times, no one tells them that they do. As a result, they end up choosing the streets.

Historically, educational programs seek to help children in these areas break free from the cycle of gang violence by sending them to quality boarding schools somewhere far removed from the problems. Mrs. Norton, the principal of TLC, has a different approach. The unconventional model of the program is to bring quality education inside the worst townships with the goal of raising hometown role models who will stay rooted in their communities and eventually, give back. Its mission is simple: to provide a free holistic education compatible with human values, morals and principles to gifted learners from impoverished backgrounds and to nurture them into future leadership positions.

### The model is working.

A remarkable 95% of graduates from TLC applied for university last year while school dropout rates in Manenberg average between 60-80%. And the dreams they nurture there are big: doctors, engineers, social workers. The sky is the limit at TLC.

The school itself was built on a field that formerly hosted gang battles. Now, the tall fence deters passing gangs, who avoid the area altogether. The school is a beacon of hope in a suddenly peaceful community that has suffered for too long.

The program is free, largely due to the funding from Islamic Relief USA. IRUSA donations also allow for teacher training, workshops on topics like HIV and domestic violence, and after-school activities to keep students off the streets.

18-year-old Abduragmaan Ariefdien was shy and lacked confidence when he first entered the program. Now, as a graduating senior, he delivers weekly sermons as the school's designated *khatib*. Just as an onlooker would never know this school sat on gang territory, one would never guess that Abduragmaan, standing tall and commanding the room with his confidence, was once afraid to dream.

When asked what his post-college plans were, he was very matter-of-fact: "I want to come back and teach at TLC."

*Chancey Gannett*

Abduragmaan excited for the future on the last day of classes at The Learning College.

## BUILDING STRONGER AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS, FROM THE GROUND UP



### HEALTH CARE— AND PEACE OF MIND

Islamic Relief USA donors cared for the health of tens of thousands of patients through a recent project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province—including mental health care for people struggling after being displaced by conflict.

Zulaikha is one of them. Her family was living happily on their land in North Waziristan, growing crops and caring for their livestock, until conflict forced them to leave everything behind and look for safety. They traveled a long way—with very little food—before settling in a camp in Bannu.

Zulaikha's family, fearful of the future, decided to marry her off against her will. She lost her appetite and couldn't sleep, and she lashed out with aggression. Her family took her to the IRUSA-supported health clinic, and she saw a psychologist who found her severely depressed with a high risk of suicide. After finding the cause of the problem, the psychologist counseled the family, restoring peace. And on the advice of the psychologist, Zulaikha's mother enrolled her in the camp's vocational center. 🙏

Drought is a chronic problem in Pakistan's Balochistan province. Rural residents rely mainly on agriculture and farming for their livelihood. When rainfall totals fall short and crops fail, many families have little to fall back on. Recent droughts have worsened nutritional deficiencies. In 2011, 40% of children were underweight and even more were stunted in growth.

Now, Islamic Relief USA donors are supporting a comprehensive new project that will insha'Allah help farmers weather drought more successfully.

The first part of this plan involves helping farmers choose

crops that are best suited for the environment, and grow them with the help of innovative techniques. Plant choices could include fruits like dates, grapes, pomegranates, figs and olives; vegetables such as onions, garlic and okra; and major crops like wheat and cotton. The plants will be grown using water-efficient irrigation techniques such as drippers that selectively direct the water where it's most needed for less waste and expense. Some fruits may be grown using tunnels.

Once crops are harvested, storage is a problem in the heat, so this project provides solutions to that. Cold storage facilities will be established, as well as a date processing plant that will wash and dry dates so they can be sold over a longer period of time.

The project also will support farmers' business associations. Staff plan to work with research institutes to seek additional expert advice on agricultural practices. The local agricultural department is invited to request support so it can expand services to farmers.

Along with these activities, staff also plan to raise awareness among the public and engage with local officials regarding climate change and disaster risk reduction. Community organizations reactivated and taught social mobilization skills to advocate for beneficial policies in the areas of irrigation, agriculture and water. The messages of water conservation and drought mitigation will be taught to schoolchildren as well. Drought early warning systems are to be strengthened, and local staff members hope their talks with local officials will result in a drought policy. 🙏



Lina Hashem

### DONORS RUSH WINTER AID TO AFGHANISTAN

More than 100 people died as avalanches buried villages in Afghanistan last winter. Days of heavy snowfall and added misery for families who didn't have the means to stay warm or dry.

Islamic Relief USA donors were already providing winter relief in Afghanistan, but with the heavy snow and freezing temperatures, a second winter project brought additional relief.

To give you an idea of what that means, we bring you Itebar's story. IRUSA donors' winter aid reached him last year. Here's his story in his own words:

*"The winter in Afghanistan is very cold. We are living in mud houses and tents. Me and my brother live together. All together, we are 20 family members.*

*"I am a roadside corn seller and my brother is a daily laborer. At the end of the day when I count the money I earned, it's not more than 150 Afghanis (\$2.25). And my brother, sometimes he finds work and sometime he doesn't.*

*"Sometimes we can't even afford three meals a day—bread only—for our family.*

*"During the winter, we send our children to search for papers, leaves, wood and plastic bottles. When they aren't able to find enough heating materials, then I have to buy firewood from the market.*

*"Now we have received 200 kg (440*

*pounds) of firewood from Islamic Relief Afghanistan, which will keep my family warm for at least one month.*

*"The money I was spending to buy wood, now I can spend it on food for my family.*

*"I am really thankful to Islamic Relief and their donors, who helped us during the harsh winter of Kabul." 🙏*



## GROWING NEW OPPORTUNITIES



### MORE CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS

- Emergency food packages for more than 46,000 people
- Winter supply distribution
- Urgent water system repairs
- Improving livelihoods of youth through job training and job placement
- Sponsorship for 2,427 orphans and comprehensive family support for 1,000 orphans' families
- Psychosocial care for hundreds of traumatized children
- Renovated 11 preschools

Farmers harvest onions from restored fields in Gaza.

### PROJECT RESTORES FARMS AND GARDENS TO PRODUCTIVITY IN GAZA

**Three years after the violence of summer 2014 in Gaza, the effects have not gone away.**

Nine in 10 Gaza residents are food insecure, according to American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA). The unemployment rate—45% before the war—has risen to 60%. An estimated 30% of agricultural land was damaged or contaminated and 10% of livestock died.

Islamic Relief USA is working with ANERA to help families regain their livelihood by restoring small family farms and gardens—often run by women—to productivity.

The first step is rebuilding damaged roads so workers can get to the farms with tools and equipment. Then, the land is cleared and leveled, the soil is plowed and fertilized, and irrigation systems are installed or repaired. In some areas, wells need repairs so the water can be used to irrigate the fields.

Then farmers receive help replanting crops. Olives are the main crop, but other crops like vegetables or animal fodder will be planted among the seedlings during the first few years so farmers don't have to wait years for their first harvest. Farmers are also receiving training in these techniques.

Another challenge is storing harvested crops, so this program

is providing processing equipment to community groups, so families can use them to produce cheese, pickled vegetables, tomato paste and other foods to sell. The processed foods will have longer shelf lives, giving poor families a more reliable source of income after harvest time. This is expected to increase incomes by 20%.

This project is also providing solar ovens to reduce the cost of energy used for cooking. Cooking fuel is often in short supply in Gaza. These solar ovens can cook a meal for free in two hours on a sunny day. 🙌

*Lina Hashem*



A farmer picks up an olive tree sapling to be planted on his farm in Deir Al Balah.

ORPHAN  
SPONSORSHIPTHEN AND *NOW*

Dawood when we first met him in 2015.

## WITH A DONOR'S CARE, DAWOOD IS GROWING STRONGER AND GOING TO SCHOOL

When IRUSA staff first met Dawood, he was 5 years old. He had problems with his legs. "They say calcium deficiency," she told IRUSA staff. She wanted him to drink milk. "Sometimes I can afford it and sometimes I can't," she said. Dawood only 1 when his father died. He lives in a camp for Palestinian refugees in Jordan with his mother, brother and sister.

"I wish that Islamic Relief would sponsor my kids," his mother, Amal, said in 2015. "I wish for their situation to be better than this. I wish for a better future for them. Especially education is the most important thing."

Two years later, some of her wishes have come true.

IRUSA staff found Dawood and his family again in March 2017. A generous sponsor in the United States was now helping Amal take care of him. His sister and brother have found IRUSA sponsors too.

"Since the sponsorship started, I have been able to afford medicine for my kids," she said. "Dawood's appetite is really weak. So I try to spend the money that I get between buying medicine for my kids and buying them food."

"When my husband died, my kids were lacking many things," Amal said. "The Islamic Relief sponsorship enabled me to get them some of the things they needed, like clothes, as they are growing."

It's hard for a mother to have to say no to the little things a child wishes for. Now, sometimes, Amal can say yes.

"They sometimes ask me about special foods that they see other kids eat at school. Sometimes they would come home and tell me: Mommy, we saw green apples or yellow apples. Now, I can get them those things, or at least tell say, 'Be patient and we will be able to buy it for you soon.'"

Another wish that's coming true: The kids are in school, and the money helps her pay for school supplies.

"I would like to thank the donors a lot, on behalf of myself and all orphans," Amal said. "Donors might see that the money they give is little, but for us, the situation is dire. I hope that my words will reach them, that they will always be healthy, insha'Allah. May Allah reward them!" 🙏

*Lina Hashem*



Dawood strikes the same pose two years later in 2017.

# 20,000 ORPHAN MILESTONE REACHED

Last winter, we reached a new milestone together:

**20,000 orphans sponsored**  
at once for the first time ever.

**THANK YOU!**



# PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

## IRUSA STAFF SPEAK AT U.N. COMMISSION ON WOMEN

IRUSA CEO Anwar Khan and other staff members spoke for the second year in a row at the 2017 U.N. Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March. Here were their contributions at the commission's 61st session:

- CEO Anwar Khan joined a panel of religious leaders to discuss women's empowerment. Other Islamic Relief representatives came from overseas to join the event as well. An Islamic Relief Worldwide staff member came from England to share Islamic Relief's report about Syrian women and employment and economic issues, and a Canada representative took part in meetings to advance joint efforts in shared advocacy.
- IRUSA's Director of Public Affairs, Christina Tobias-Nahi, spoke on a panel about young female leaders in decision making processes.
- IRUSA programs specialist Bilal Aslam spoke on a panel with other NGOs about promoting women's economic participation through addressing unpaid care and domestic work.



United Nations ministerial panel on women.



## IRUSA TO CO-CHAIR NGO FORUM

IRUSA has been invited to co-chair one of the largest Washington, D.C., gatherings of international development and humanitarian professionals in 2017.

InterAction's annual forum has convened leaders from a variety of sectors for the past three decades. In 2016, more than 1,000 people participated, representing NGOs, governments, the philanthropic community and businesses.

United We Stand is the theme of the 2017 forum to be held in late June, and IRUSA is honored to have been asked to co-chair the event.

CEO Anwar Khan has been serving on InterAction's board for more than a year, and over the past decade IRUSA has led many of the conference sessions, with topics ranging from cultural sensitivity to refugees' right to work.

This year for the first time, we are involved in three separate sessions on the following topics:

- Refugee advocacy
- Using new media to communicate about refugees (which will be podcast through our "What a Relief!" podcast)
- An interfaith NGO workshop on "Following our call as people of faith"

IRUSA will also host an iftar inviting allies from NGOs and government to come together to break bread and reflect on our commitment to displaced peoples around the world.



Rep. Kildee and Rep. Carson at Capital Hill Ramadan welcome

## IRUSA TAKES PART IN U.N. HABITAT SUMMIT

An Islamic Relief USA representative was one of few Muslim voices at a U.N. housing and urban development summit last October in Ecuador, as the United Nations developed its New Urban Agenda.

"Intuitively we think that a city environment has everything to offer," says Islamic Relief USA's Christina Tobias-Nahi. "More and more the offerings are not for everyone. Not the schools, not the health services, not the jobs, not the many opportunities to advance and thrive.

"What they do offer everyone across the spectrum though is the negatives — like water and sanitation management issues and traffic and air pollution/green house gasses leading to climate change."

That's why Islamic Relief USA took part in the summit known as Habitat III (the third summit on this topic since the 1970s), speaking about the needs and rights of refugees.

The conference resulted in the adoption of a New Urban Agenda, which sets global standards for urban development. The agenda acknowledges the need for special attention to be devoted to refugees and other vulnerable groups.



United States Department of Agriculture Iftar

## CEO SPEAKS AT U.N. REFUGEE SUMMIT

Islamic Relief USA's CEO and staff last September participated in the U.N. General Assembly's high-level summit for Refugees and Migrants.

The aim of the summit was to bring countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach in regard to refugees and migrants.

"This week in New York, we heard many voices on refugees," said IRUSA CEO Anwar Khan after the summit. "But we did not hear many Muslim voices. IRUSA as a faith-based humanitarian organization is participating in this summit to be a voice for those who do not have a voice."

## IRUSA EVENTS LAST RAMADAN

IRUSA hosted its sixth annual Capitol Hill Ramadan Welcome Dinner last year. The event was one of many IRUSA staff participated in last Ramadan in an effort to amplify the voices of those we serve.

Rep. André Carson of Indiana spoke of IRUSA's past work responding to flooding in his home state of Indiana and thanked IRUSA for its leadership. "Regardless of race or religion," he said, "Islamic Relief works to represent one of the tenets of our community, and that's service to God."

Rep. Dan Kildee of Michigan praised IRUSA staff and volunteers for their efforts, saying, "You've given them more than just relief," he said. "You've given them the most precious thing that a human being can convey to another — you've given them some reason for hope."

### Other events that IRUSA staff attended, hosted or participated in last year included:

- USDA Interfaith Iftar (host)
- Refugee iftar with John Kerry and Angelina Jolie
- Iftar at the U.S. Institute of Peace
- New York City Mayor's Iftar (host)
- The United State of Women White House Summit with Michelle Obama
- White House Summit — Gender Conference (session on U.S. global strategy to empower adolescent girls with Department of State, USAID and others)
- White House meeting discussing the faith community's role in Zika crisis response
- Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill
- U.N. World Refugee Day Reception in New York City

## VOLUNTEERS

## RIDING FOR REFUGEES

CYCLIST EMBARKS ON 100-MILE CHARITY RIDES, INSPIRED BY GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY

Photos courtesy: Michael Anthony Adams

Zaki Hadrami's 100-mile bike rides benefiting refugees sound daunting—until he starts talking about the journeys the refugees and migrants themselves take. Like his grandfather. That puts it all in perspective.

Hadrami's grandfather's journey started at age 10 in his native Yemen. The little boy's father had gone to live in Indonesia, and he sent for his son. The 10-year-old headed out alone with enough money to get him to the border with Saudi Arabia, where he had to work selling gas for a year before he could travel to Indonesia to look for his father.

When he got there, he found that his father had died.

"Back in the day there's no Google maps," Hadrami said. "The stories that I hear from my grandparents, I can't even imagine myself at that time. Imagine what the Syrian people have to go through, borders after borders just to get to their destinations."

That's why he took the initiative to set out on 100-mile charity rides—to raise funds to help make the path a little easier for refugees.

## 'THE PERFECT SPEED'

Hadrami spent most of his childhood in Indonesia before coming to St. Louis at 16 and then to California in his 20s. His job is to "make things pretty" as a UX designer. When he moved to San Francisco, he saw that cycling was popular and he decided to try it—he wanted to lose weight anyway. He joined a group that travels to Europe for cycling, went to Sicily, rode 350 miles in eight days, and fell in love with it.

"Biking is the perfect speed," he said. As the group rode from city to city, he said, "you see the history of the Romans, the Arabs, the architecture, the beauty, the culture, the food."

He was hooked, and today he rides 10 miles a day—followed by a workout—and then 30 to 70 miles every Saturday. He's such an enthusiast that he builds

his own bikes and names them. (The first was Sheherezade, and the second isn't named yet—either Ciel, which is French for "sky," or Andalusia, which symbolizes adventure to him.)

It's an uncommon hobby in the Muslim community. "The first word coming out of their mouths is 'crazy' first, then 'mashaAllah,' he said. "'You crazy, right? MashaAllah.'"

## 'IF THEY CAN DO IT, WHY CAN'T I?'

One day on the news, he heard about refugees buying bikes to ride long distances looking for safety in Europe. When he saw a pregnant woman making that journey, he thought, "If she can do it, why can't I?" And he decided that for his birthday, he would ride for charity to raise money for them.

For his first rides last year, he raised money for UNRWA to help Palestinian refugees in Syria. He looped the San Francisco Bay area one week, and the next week he rode more than 7 hours

from Milwaukee to Chicago, breaking the 100-mile mark for the first time.

This year, he did it again: two more 100-mile rides, and this time he chose to donate through IRUSA.

In fact, he also donated money himself, because riding 200 miles wasn't enough. He set a challenge for donors: he would match the top donation, and his employer would too, tripling the effect.

## INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

Hadrami's rides have gotten worldwide attention. He was featured on AJ+ Arabic last year, and a bike club in Palestine heard about him and asked him to come ride with them. They told him they wish they could ride 100 miles without being stopped by roadblocks, but they can't so they ride off-road.

That inspires him on his mission.

"Some people want to do this so bad and I have the opportunity to do it," he said. "I was humbled by it."

A friend also connected him with a group in Spain, and he'll be heading there in September inshaAllah for a benefit ride for Gaza humanitarian aid.

When Hadrami sets out for a ride, he likes to listen to Quran in the peaceful, quiet mornings, and then he turns to upbeat music to keep him going.

He also has art on his steer tube—a girl trying to reach a balloon, symbolizing hope. "I put it there just in case my head starts messing with me, so I have something to inspire me," he said. "The hardest part is when you hit 60 miles and that 40 miles [that's left] starts messing with your head," he

said. "My mind has almost given up a couple times, but the refugees remind me—those in need keep me going."

Because the refugees don't have a choice, and he's riding for them. 🙏

Lina Hashem



Volunteers wrapped gifts at an annual toy drive in Maryland.

## VOLUNTEER WITH IRUSA

Volunteers create the foundation for Islamic Relief USA. Without volunteers, many amazing projects and programs would not be possible. From responding to disasters to hosting toy drives, it's easy to see the enormous impact volunteers have on individuals in the community and around the world.

We saw you mobilize on MLK Day, pack food boxes for your neighbors, walk (and run!) for water projects, and reach out to find hundreds of orphan sponsorships. More than 600 volunteers handed out water in Flint, Michigan, last year. More than 500 of you made Ramadan food boxes. And

many enthusiastic IRUSA volunteers joined with members of other organizations to help make nearly 1 million meals as part of the 9/11 Day initiative in New York City. You are amazing!

Islamic Relief USA was founded by volunteers. Today, we couldn't do what we do without you. With thousands of volunteers across the United States, IRUSA is able to establish and fulfill projects helping people in need thousands of miles away.

Thank you so much. You truly make a difference.

**JOIN US: [IRUSA.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://www.irusa.org/volunteer)**



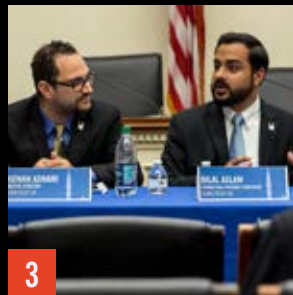
# ISLAMIC RELIEF USA EVENTS



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13

1,2: Team U.S.A. Olympian Ibtihaj Muhammad visits the IRUSA headquarters; 3: IRUSA's Ridwan Adhami and Bilal Aslam give Congressional briefing on the situation in Myanmar; 4,5: 3rd Annual Walk for Water; 6: Volunteers at the Afghanistan Tour; 7: Palestinian Celebrity Mohammed Assaf performs on the Promise for Palestine Tour; 8: Skate for Syria; 9: IRUSA team members visit mobile health clinic in Jordan; 10: Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development Gayle Smith speaks at 1st Annual Partnership Gala; 11: IR Worldwide teams converge at the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital (NMCH); 12: Graça Machel chairman of NMCH at grand opening ceremony. 13: Team IRUSA at the annual Dulles Plane Pull event.

# WHAT'S NEW AT IRUSA

## CROWDFUNDING NOW AT IRUSA

Are you having a baby shower? Perhaps you've recently become engaged and instead of asking for gifts, you'd like to dedicate your special day to raise funds for communities in need?

Islamic Relief USA is proud to announce our new crowd-funding page powered by Launchgood. Now you can create your own fundraising page and dedicate it to providing water in Africa, giving medical aid to refugees in need, or making sure that children around the world are given access to education.

IRUSA also hosts special challenges to summon your athleticism for good. Check on our page for challenge announcements very soon, from annual walks to bike rides and beyond.

How you change the world is entirely up to you. So join us and let's work together for a better world. [IRUSA.ORG/FUNDRaise](http://IRUSA.ORG/FUNDRaise)



LaunchGood



ISLAMIC RELIEF USA



## SHOP AND DONATE AT THE SAME TIME

Amazon smile is among several resources that allow you to make your shopping charitable. Learn more at:

[IRUSA.ORG/CREATIVE-GIVING](http://IRUSA.ORG/CREATIVE-GIVING)



## CHECK OUT OUR NEW DONOR PORTAL

Update your profile and print receipts—one click and you're done. Visit: [IRUSA.ORG](http://IRUSA.ORG).



## BLOG

Islamic Relief USA launched a brand new blog this year, and we think you're going to love it! It's called Relief Lab, and it's a space where a worldwide community of humanitarians can share their stories and ideas with one another—inspiring, learning, growing, and working together for a better world. In short, it's the stories and ideas that move us. Check it out at [IRUSA.ORG/BLOG](http://IRUSA.ORG/BLOG) and share your story.



## PODCAST

It's been more than a year now since IRUSA started what we think is a pretty great new podcast called "What a Relief!" In that year, the hosts have talked with everyone from IRUSA staff to other NGO leaders to imams, activists, and even popular Muslim artists. They've discussed situations from Myanmar to Syria and lots of work here at home as well. They've cried and they've laughed, and their listeners have too.

Co-host R. Mordant Mahon is proud that the podcast isn't just a report on IRUSA's work, but instead it explores a wide range of current issues and puts a human face on them.

"As different as we are—and there are some vast differences here ... we're so much the same," he says.

Take a look at [IRUSA.ORG/PODCASTS](http://IRUSA.ORG/PODCASTS) and dive into the conversations.



# THANK YOU

