

# ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

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A 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization (Tax ID# 95-4453134)

# PARTNERSHIP

SUMMER 2018



## 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

*Dedicated to the people who helped build a legacy.*



# IRUSA.ORG

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Assalamu Alaikum,



It's hard to believe it's been a quarter of a century since Islamic Relief USA was founded, but it's been amazing alhamdulillah. I want to thank you for being part of our journey over the past 25 years.

This organization started with lots of enthusiasm and not much else. The words

that inspired me were from verses 1-3 of surah Al-Maun: "Have you seen those who reject the faith and reject the orphan and urge not the feeding of the needy?" I wanted to care for orphans and feed the hungry.

Many of the people we help are displaced from their homes, and just a few months after our founding, my colleagues and I became displaced ourselves when an earthquake struck the Los Angeles area in January 1994. We slept on the floor of a stranger's house—and it inspired us to work harder for people who were displaced in much worse situations.

In those early days, there were just a few staff members traveling to mosques, conferences, and community activities to spread the word about people who needed our help. I'll never forget the people who listened to us and joined us when no one knew our name. In those days, the bulk of our supporters were teenagers who amazed us with their dedication. Where we are today is a sadaqah jariyah (continuous charity) of their efforts and everyone who came after them, including you.

Some of the same donors and volunteers from the early

days are still working with us, joined alhamdulillah by so many caring new partners. Each of you gives from your heart and soul while staff around the world give their sweat and sometimes even their blood to serve our sisters and brothers in humanity.

Together, we have been given the opportunity to help protect children and widows, to share food and water, to provide medicine and safety, and to offer hope and emotional support to people the world has turned its back on. We are so grateful for this opportunity.

Years ago, we worked mainly with Muslims, and now we work with and serve people of all faiths, here in America and around the world. We share basics like food and shelter, while at the same time using cutting-edge technology so families can build secure livelihoods and communities can build water systems and healthcare centers. And meanwhile, we use the platforms we've been given to speak out for those whose voices aren't heard, to help change policies to protect the vulnerable.

Our goals are the same as they were in the early days, but in some ways our work has come a long way from our origins. We believe that with you working with us, the next 25 years will be even better insha'Allah.

Sincerely, from the bottom of my heart, once again, jazakum Allah khair. May Allah reward you all.

With love,

Anwar Ahmad Khan  
President  
Islamic Relief USA

Assalamu Alaikum,



As we celebrate Islamic Relief USA's 25th anniversary and reflect on all of the incredible work we have accomplished collectively, I encourage you to continue looking forward with the realization that we have not finished our job until all vulnerable individuals living in conflict and disaster-stricken areas no longer need

our assistance. With your support and prayers, we will continue in our quest to empower people to thrive within their communities. Islamic Relief USA has become a leading faith-based humanitarian relief organization and it is our duty to ensure that we carry out our noble mission in the most responsible, dignified, and impactful manner.

Over the past 25 years, we have been able to reach and deliver essential aid to the most remote, disenfranchised, and persecuted communities. Our work has not merely been limited to responding to man-made conflicts, but has also extended to natural and unforeseen disasters that have had devastating tolls on entire regions.

Islamic Relief USA was there to provide relief to victims of conflict in Bosnia when we started in 1993, we have been at the forefront in responding to flooding in Pakistan, and our teams on the ground have risked their lives in trying to provide humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable people inside Syria. Our commitment also extends to our community here at home. Just this past December 2017, with support from our global IR partners, we committed over \$1 million to assist in the long-term recovery of survivors of Hurricane Harvey in Houston, TX.

While we will always remain a relief-oriented organization, we must also be cognizant of our responsibility to provide long-term development solutions to the individuals we serve so they can sustainably overcome these challenges. To do this, we must invest our time and resources in projects that are intended to facilitate and promote self-sufficiency and sustainability within vulnerable and disenfranchised communities. It is no longer sufficient to address only immediate and basic needs in times of emergency, but we must move deeper to examine and address underlying issues and challenges that prevent individuals and communities from fully engaging in social, economic, and civic spheres. By paying special attention to providing truly inclusive solutions, we can actively remove some of the artificial barriers that have unfairly and disproportionately affected the disabled, elderly, women, and minorities. Ultimately, our goal at Islamic Relief USA is to become obsolete, and live in a world where our services are no longer needed.

Allah (SWT) has taught us in surah Al-Isra in verse 70, that, "We have bestowed dignity upon the children of Adam..." When serving our fellow brothers and sisters in humanity, we must do our part to ensure that their dignity is upheld and honored.

I ask you to join me in implementing this vision for the next 25 years so that Islamic Relief USA can continue as a leading and world-class humanitarian institution that is actively working to solve humanity's most difficult challenges.

Your brother,

Sharif Aly  
Chief Executive Officer  
Islamic Relief USA





## OUR VALUES



EXCELLENCE



SINCERITY



SOCIAL JUSTICE



COMPASSION



CUSTODIANSHIP



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# 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.

*Islamic Relief USA is a community of humanitarians—staff, volunteers, affiliates, supporters, partners, donors—who have been working together for a better world for 25 years.*

# SECTORS



**CHILDREN IN NEED**  
Programs that center around helping children thrive in difficult circumstances. Focuses are guardian support, child protection, education, health, and orphan care.



**EDUCATION**  
Programs that provide or improve access to education for children and literacy for adults, and may include vocational training.



**FOOD AID**  
Programs that distribute staple food items to people in urgent need of assistance. Projects include seasonal Ramadan and Qurbani distributions.



**HEALTH**  
Programs that provide or improve access to a wide range of health care, manage malnutrition, and educate about health and nutrition.



**LIVELIHOOD**  
Programs that empower communities to become self-sufficient through economic development, microfinance, vocational training, and more.



**WATER & SANITATION**  
Programs that improve access to water and sanitation facilities and promote environmental health, awareness, and hygiene.



**WINTERIZATION**  
Programs that help families survive through cold winters by providing supplies like clothes, blankets and heaters, and food.



**WOMEN**  
Programs that support and empower women through education, entrepreneurial support, and more.



**EMERGENCIES**  
Programs that provide immediate lifesaving necessities in a disaster, such as clean water, sanitation, food, and temporary shelter.



**REFUGEES**  
Programs that care for refugees around the world with aid such as shelter and food, and in the U.S., with help acclimating families to their new homes.

### THE PEOPLE BEHIND THIS ISSUE

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Thank you to all who contributed imagery and content from around the world.  
Photographs © Islamic Relief





**IT WAS THE FALL OF 1993**—for some Americans, the year may evoke nostalgia: the premiere of Jurassic Park, the cost of rent only an average of \$532, or the release of the very first World Wide Web browser.

For other parts of the world, however, it was the most trying of times. Bosnia, engulfed in a horrible war, was facing death tolls impossible to comprehend. Women, men, and children were being slaughtered. As technology began to widen our window to the outside world, American Muslims began to feel more and more restless. They wanted to help.

The climate was ripe for change, and three passionate young Muslims from the United Kingdom arrived in Los Angeles

just in time to galvanize the American community into action. Their mission was to establish roots for Islamic Relief in the United States. *(Read more about the founders of IRUSA on the next pages).*

They rallied together with a small group of people—mostly recent college graduates—and travelled around the country to raise money for Bosnia. At first, donations came in just a few dollars at a time. The first Islamic Relief USA fundraising appeal was at a mosque in South Central Los Angeles. The community had almost nothing to spare, but nevertheless, dollar bills and coins poured in. There wasn't a bill larger than five dollars in the collection. Many community members donated their bus fare that night and chose to walk home.

The small IRUSA staff and growing volunteer family worked day and night out of the founders' living room, stuffing envelopes by hand, often falling asleep in the make-shift office. The roots were humble, but the dreams knew no bounds.

"It was a dream for us when we started Islamic Relief in the U.S., that Islamic Relief would be at least the equivalent of the Red Cross for the Muslim community as well as for the larger community," said co-founder Dr. Ahmad El Bendary. "Alhamdulillah, this is the beauty of being an active Muslim—that you don't know how to dream small."

For 25 years, the Islamic Relief USA family grew to become first responders in emergencies all over the world, including














at home in the United States. They joined the ranks of the top leaders in the development sector, supporting programs that lift families out of poverty in some of the most destitute communities.

Today, Islamic Relief USA celebrates a legacy of service and hope and aims to complement the incredible humanitarian work being done all over the world.

"Good doesn't compete," El Bendary said. "If you have a dark room and you light a candle—if you light one more candle, it will make the room brighter." 🕯️

# ANSWERING THE CALL TOGETHER FOR 25 YEARS



<p><b>1993</b></p> <p>Islamic Relief USA is incorporated in Los Angeles.</p> <p>IRUSA representatives attend first event: a youth conference in Orange County, CA.</p> 	<p><b>94</b></p> <p>IRUSA's first Ramadan campaign begins in February. Workers make about 30 visits to at least 10 mosques in Los Angeles and raise roughly \$3,000 to support Bosnian war relief.</p> 	<p><b>99</b></p> <p>Kosovo crisis begins in March, sparking a major relief campaign. IRUSA workers travel to Albania in April and help set up first IR camp for Kosovo refugees.</p> 	<p><b>01</b></p> <p>After 9/11 attacks, IRUSA office receives threats. Workers respond by organizing blood drives to help.</p> 	<p><b>02</b></p> <p>First Humanitarian Day is held to serve neighbors in need; this became an annual tradition, now called Day of Dignity.</p> <p>IRUSA spent \$6.6 million on programs to help people in need.</p> 	<p><b>04</b></p> <p>A devastating tsunami hits Indonesia and neighboring countries. IRUSA donors send aid including homes, health clinics, school, and water and livelihood support.</p> 	<p><b>05</b></p> <p>IRUSA expands: Offices open in Texas and New Jersey.</p> <p>Hurricane Katrina hits the Gulf Coast in late summer, and IRUSA enters field of domestic relief work.</p> <p>Pakistan is rocked by an earthquake on October 8, and IRUSA sends large-scale relief.</p> 	<p><b>06</b></p> <p>Famine spreads in Africa, and Lebanon is rocked by violence. Islamic Relief donors send humanitarian aid.</p> <p>Development projects include water in Mali and health initiatives in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Muslim singer Sami Yusuf joins Islamic Relief to launch national Evening of Inspiration tour to benefit people in need.</p> 	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Conflict erupts in countries across the Middle East, including Egypt, Libya, and Syria. IRUSA gears up to provide humanitarian aid to people whose lives are disrupted.</p> 	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>IRUSA spends \$36.5 million on emergency relief, food, water, development projects, and more to help people in need.</p> <p>9,239 orphans sponsored in 22 countries.</p> <p>Ramadan food packages distributed to feed 318,731 people in 23 countries. Udhayah/Qurbani meat distributed to feed 431,506 people in 26 countries.</p> 	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>IRUSA signs memorandum with American Red Cross, becoming its first Muslim partner.</p> 	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>IRUSA responds in eight U.S. emergencies, including delivering water in Flint, MI, for six months. IRUSA team takes part in two U.N. summits, focusing on housing and women's empowerment. Donors share Ramadan food with more than 390,000 people and Eid meat with more than one million people.</p> 	<p><b>2018</b></p> <p>IRUSA celebrates 25 years of working together for a better world.</p> 
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# THE FOUNDERS




Dr. Ahmad El Bendary

Dr. Ahmad El Bendary greeted young Jehangir Malik and Shahin Ashraf with a huge smile when they arrived at the Los Angeles International Airport to begin laying the foundation for Islamic Relief USA in 1993. From that day on, he became a father figure to staff and volunteers alike as IRUSA grew out of an apartment bedroom converted to an office. He was not just helping grow an organization; he was building a family. Whether it was spending the night in

the office to chaperone enthusiastic volunteers, or holding press conferences post-9/11 to bring the organization together in trying times, Dr. Ahmad El Bendary holds a truly special place in the history of IRUSA.

**“It created a beautiful family and brotherhood/sisterhood environment where all of us were very close.”**



Jill El Bendary

She put her expertise as an accountant to work for the sake of Allah and trained the organization from day one that it is only as strong as its records. This proved to be an incredible blessing eight years down the road, when many Muslim organizations were closed after September 11. When IRUSA was audited, the auditors remarked that they had never before seen such pristine records. One auditor even became a donor. Early staff recalled Jill as having an iron fist not just when it came to receipts, but also when it came to making sure volunteers were eating at least one healthy meal every day.

**“It was the pleasure of doing something for the sake of Allah (SWT), and when everyone’s feeling like that, it creates a momentum that is just—you just cannot recreate that. You feed off of everybody’s energy and love and you could go without sleep and you could go without food. It was just an amazing time, and I’m grateful to having been a part of it.”**





Anwar Khan

The name Anwar Khan has become synonymous with Islamic Relief USA over the last 25 years, though few know the stories of his early sacrifices. He arrived fresh out of college to Los Angeles during the aftermath of an earthquake and slept on the floor of someone’s home for weeks while pursuing the mission of starting IRUSA. He traveled across the country, telling communities what he witnessed in Bosnia and rallying them to get involved in a revolutionary grassroots movement. His fellow activists smile remembering the Anwar who ate McDonalds fish fillets for weeks on the road to save Islamic Relief money—the Anwar who lived and

breathed Islamic Relief USA. Today, as current President of IRUSA, not much has changed. He may keep a healthier diet, but the cause that fueled him then continues to fuel him today.

**“Our plan was surah Al-Maun. We had just graduated from college and we wanted to help anyone in need around the world. We wanted to spread peace and goodwill to all mankind.”**



Shahin Ashraf

Just a month after moving to the U.S. to help start IRUSA, Los Angeles was struck by the historic Northridge earthquake. Shahin and her husband Jehangir lost their apartment, which also doubled as the Islamic Relief office at the time. She found herself standing in FEMA lines with the same people Islamic Relief was trying to help. Rather than being discouraged by such a loss, she only grew stronger in her dedication. She would go on to be instrumental in the early days of IRUSA, living and breathing the work, and loving every

moment. Shahin continues to serve the disenfranchised and champion gender justice at Islamic Relief Worldwide in the United Kingdom.

**“I was probably the only woman in that time doing this kind of work. We planted the seed for this kind of work. We’re proud of that. Women in those early days were the real changemakers.”**



Jehangir Malik

One evening, Jehangir, an Islamic Relief volunteer in the United Kingdom at the time, was giving a ride to Dr. Hany El-Banna, the founder of Islamic Relief Worldwide. Dr. Hany posed a question: Would he be willing to go abroad for a good cause? Jehangir soon found out that abroad meant Los Angeles and the cause was to start Islamic Relief in the United States. He was given two airline tickets, a phone number, and a proposition of starting something great. What was initially supposed to be a six-month contract turned into a six-year adventure of service and sacrifice. He traveled constantly, often sleeping in cars or not at all, to mobilize volunteers and donors all across the country.

**“We should do our absolute best in our endeavor to ensure that the original purpose for which we established Islamic Relief USA—to help transform lives, to help bring back dignity, to help bring relief when there’s pain—is at the core and the center and the purpose of the organization. It’s not the brand, not the identity, but the people that we serve. If we look after the people that we serve, Allah (SWT) will look after everything else. It’s in their name that we exist.”**

## A VISIONARY



Hany El-Banna

When you ask these early founders how they got involved with Islamic Relief, the answer is always, “Dr. Hany El-Banna,” founder of Islamic Relief Worldwide. He always had a dream of seeing it established in the U.S. His mentorship cultivated a love and passion for helping people that still drives the organization today. Before the founders came, it all started with his dream.

**“If you are not my role model, I will never accept you as a mentor. Don’t use people as tools. They are not robots. They are human beings who need to be developed. To be leaders in the community. You have to invest in them. Investment is not money. Investment is time, effort, care, as well as listening, learning, directing, and aligning them to the right path of development.”**

Islamic Relief USA remembers and honors everyone who was involved in helping build the organization to be what it is today. These profiles are highlights of some of the very first staff and volunteers.





# EMPOWERING WOMEN: THE JOURNEY OF AN IRUSA FOUNDER

by **Shahin Ashraf**

MBE, Global Advocacy Advisor, Islamic Relief Worldwide  
Co-founder of IRUSA



Since its founding, representation of women in the IRUSA community—staff, volunteers, donors, featured speakers, influencers—has grown exponentially. We pay homage to the women who have made IRUSA what it is today.

## THE WORLD

In a world where 769 million people live in extreme poverty, women and girls are the most disproportionately affected. And amid humanitarian crises, inequalities escalate. Gender-based violence can increase the effect on women and girls. In conflict situations, girls are 2.5 times more likely not to be attending school.

Over 200 million women with disabilities remain below the poverty line. Despite increasing levels of female labor force participation, there is still a rising level of income inequality. It is estimated that it will take 170 years to close the global gender pay gap.

Men still dominate leadership roles in the workforce. At charities, like other sectors, chief executives are primarily men.

## MY JOURNEY



Shahin volunteering at a toy drive in 1996.

It is against this background that my journey began in 1992, from a small town in the heart of England. Up until this point, I had volunteered for Islamic Relief Worldwide, from organizing fundraising activities to leading some aspects of key events like the Islamic Relief games.

My first recollection of working within the humanitarian sector was with the

first wave of refugees that had been displaced from Bosnia to the U.K. We set up food stations, prepared hygiene kits, gathered clothing, and sent convoys of aid.

This is the first time that I heard words like *sadaqah*, *sadaqah jariyah*, and *zakat*—the first time I learned the art of giving from oneself.

## ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

In 1993, an opportunity presented itself—to set up Islamic Relief USA. My husband Jehangir Malik and I arrived in Los Angeles in December 1993 with one suitcase.

The first mission was to create brand awareness, and starting that first month, we did exactly that, traveling up and down the United States. Sometimes we worked 20 out of 24 hours in those very early days, traveling from coast to coast.

In 1994, Anwar Khan joined us. The three of us, determined, passionate with a cause, would visit mosques, Islamic centers, families' homes—anywhere where people would listen.

To those who helped us at the very early stages, I am ever so grateful. In my eyes, you are the true humanitarians.

I left Islamic Relief USA after 10 years of service, but continued to volunteer. My work on Muslim women's rights began shortly after that. In the 15 years since then, I've worked on 39 different issues that affect Muslim women, from marriage and divorce, to exploitation, trafficking, domestic violence, honor-based violence, and female genital mutilation.

Six months ago, I joined Islamic Relief Worldwide as their global advocacy advisor on gender, climate change, and refugees.

## MY CURRENT WORK

Women and girls have always been at the forefront of our programmatic work—widows' and orphans' programs, economic empowerment projects, health, water and sanitation initiatives, education, and livelihood projects. Women are at the center of our disaster resilience work and our adaptation projects.

It is therefore important for women to be at the heart of meaningful access and participation. It's about ensuring they have a voice and are able to actively and effectively participate in decision-making processes and activities that affect them.

## MY FAITH IS A DRIVER

The Qur'an compels people to stand firmly for justice in all instances. We believe that improving the status of women and girls will in turn alleviate society of many ills. Protecting the rights of women and educating communities will ensure that societies move towards becoming more just and equitable for all.

Islamic Relief has made a commitment to achieving gender justice. It is a reminder of our duty to protect and serve the most vulnerable and marginalized people, and to uphold justice even if it is against our own selves.

**Protecting the rights of women and educating communities will ensure that societies move towards becoming more just and equitable for all.**



Shahin at her home in Birmingham in 2018.

## MY MESSAGE TO YOU

My message to you is that women are still underrepresented at the top, and there is much to be done to make leadership more reflective of its workforce.

So, my friends, you are on a mission. Be confident, be bold, be passionate, don't undersell yourselves, be creative, learn from your weaknesses, and help each other along the way.

I've always benefited from the kindness, encouragement, advice, and solidarity of colleagues both more senior and those who are junior.

Be authentic and also understand that emotional intelligence is just as important as logical reasoning, particularly if you are leading change. I've learned that being vulnerable is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength, and the real strength is in our honesty and integrity.

Keep on learning and most importantly, leave a legacy that you can be proud of.

I am proud to say that I was one of the founders of Islamic Relief USA. Happy 25th anniversary. 🙏



# U.S. REGIONAL OFFICES



**NORTHWEST**



**NORTHEAST**

ALASKA - NW

**CENTRAL**

**NORTH CENTRAL**



**MID ATLANTIC/HQ**

PUERTO RICO - SE

**SOUTHWEST**

VIRGIN ISLANDS - SE

HAWAII - W

**WEST**

**SOUTH CENTRAL**

**SOUTHEAST**



Islamic Relief USA has experienced tremendous growth over the last 25 years. Beginning in a small apartment in Los Angeles, IRUSA's roots have spread to offices in nine regions across the country.

## IRUSA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**KHALED LAMADA**  
*Chairman*



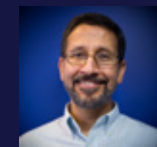
**HAMDY RADWAN, PHD**  
*Vice Chairman*



**HAMADI BENGABSIA**  
*Treasurer*



**NANCY KHALIL, PHD**  
*Member*



**MOHAMED AMR ATTAWIA, MD**  
*Member*

Assalamu alaikum,

On behalf of Islamic Relief USA's Board of Directors, we would like to thank everyone who helped make this organization what it is today. The Prophet (SAW) said, "He has not thanked Allah who has not thanked people."

It is only with your dedication and support that we grew from helping a small number of people in one country with our first donation back in 1993, to helping millions of people in over 50 countries around the world.

It is only with your support that we have grown from a staff of three to a staff of 136 today. And it is only with your support that we have raised millions of dollars and helped millions of people around the world. On our 25th anniversary, we honor you all.

It is a time to recognize those who developed, implemented, and currently deliver rich programs and services in cooperation with our donors, beneficiaries, volunteers, partners, and allies. In the spirit of celebration, we would like to acknowledge each of you for making IRUSA one of the top humanitarian organizations today and for years to come, insha'Allah. We extend our most heartfelt thanks and look forward to your continued partnership.

Sincerely,  
Khaled Lamada  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Islamic Relief USA



# WHERE WE'VE WORKED



## THE IR FAMILY HAS SUPPORTED HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN THESE COUNTRIES IN A LIMITED SCOPE

- |                          |          |            |            |              |          |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|------------|--------------|----------|
| Algeria                  | Colombia | Haiti      | Libya      | Nigeria      | Zambia   |
| Benin                    | Djibouti | Japan      | Madagascar | Sierra Leone | Zimbabwe |
| Burkina Faso             | Ecuador  | Kyrgyzstan | Mexico     | Swaziland    |          |
| Central African Republic | Egypt    | Lesotho    | Morocco    | Syria        |          |
|                          | Ghana    | Liberia    | Mozambique | Uganda       |          |

## ISLAMIC RELIEF AFFILIATE AND FIELD OFFICES IN THESE COUNTRIES SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS

- |                        |           |         |             |              |                |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| Afghanistan            | Chad      | Iraq    | Malaysia    | Pakistan     | Sri Lanka      |
| Albania                | Chechnya  | Ireland | Mali        | Palestine    | Sudan          |
| Australia              | China     | Italy   | Mauritius   | Philippines  | Sweden         |
| Bangladesh             | Ethiopia  | Jordan  | Myanmar     | Singapore    | Switzerland    |
| Belgium                | Germany   | Kenya   | Nepal       | Somalia      | Tunisia        |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Holland   | Kosovo  | Netherlands | South Africa | Turkey         |
| Canada                 | India     | Lebanon | Niger       | South Sudan  | United Kingdom |
|                        | Indonesia | Malawi  | Norway      | Spain        | Yemen          |







# EUROPE



## FROM EMERGENCY RELIEF TO LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY

Twenty-five years ago, a call for help came out of Bosnia. The situation was dire, and a few young men and women decided to do something about it. During the worst of the war, a newly formed Islamic Relief USA traveled across America to shed light on the crisis and mobilize communities to help.

In those early days, there was no social media or high quality footage—only stories. The stories of Bosnia would be told at masjid gatherings in hopes that people would respond to the call. The response proved that Muslims in the United States wanted to help, and IRUSA gave them that chance.

After the Bosnian war, much of eastern Europe continued to suffer and IRUSA expanded its campaigns to include emergency relief for Chechnya, Albania, and Kosovo. The first ever IRUSA fundraising dinner was organized for Chechnya.

Today, 25 years later, the situation in eastern Europe has stabilized a great deal. As such, IRUSA has opportunities to focus on livelihood recovery.

Ismail Safi, International Programs Manager for IRUSA, visited promising livelihood projects in the region this year.

Communities there face results of internecine warfare and systematic corruption, and many problems that stretch back decades. IRUSA is working hard to give families the tools to rise despite difficult circumstances.

A beautiful example is a goat farming

project in Kosovo. Under this simple yet life-changing program, farmers have received funding to help produce milk. One farmer went a step further and found a way to produce cheese, a valuable cash crop.

In Bosnia, programs helped build brick houses for families and funded businesses.

In Albania, a livestock program helped provide families with dairy products and taught them ways to raise the animals effectively.

These are all examples of Islamic Relief projects at their best: donors provide a means for families to become self-sufficient.

These communities have survived generations of war and have come out with an incredible entrepreneurial spirit, drive, and work ethic. IRUSA donors have been able to give them the helping hand they need to get started.

The story of eastern Europe and Islamic Relief USA is one of love and triumph—the kind of lasting support that can make a real change. 🙏



A family outside home built by IRUSA donors.



Project Warm Homes in Bosnia.

## WARM HOMES IN BOSNIA

The IRUSA team arrived at a home just past dusk in the beautiful countryside of Bosnia. It was freezing cold outside as they knocked on the door. A woman answered, and a little girl smiled up with rosy cheeks.

Inside, a family gathered around a television set to watch a soccer game. It was a scene of absolute warmth inside a home built by IRUSA donors.

The project, aptly named “Warm Homes,” is an example of the transformative post-war reconstruction efforts that continue into our 25th year. The parents for whom this home was constructed are orphans whose parents were killed in the Srebrenica genocide of 1995 along with more than 8,000 other Muslims.

Healing takes many years and many helping hands. IRUSA is committed to giving communities the tools to become self-sufficient long after the stories have left the popular news. 🙏



Dr. Hany El-Banna, one of the founders of IRUSA, met Semir Velija Kukuruzovi 25 years ago when they worked together during the worst of the Bosnian war. In 2017, on Islamic Relief Bosnia's 25th birthday, the two planted the first of 25 trees in Bosnia between a wartime cemetery and a maternity hospital. They commemorate 25 years of relief and symbolize hope for the future.





# AFRICA

## IRUSA PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITIES TO FUEL CHANGE ACROSS AFRICA

As the saying goes, to be more compassionate, one should walk a mile in someone else’s shoes. Imagine, then, walking over five miles in the smoldering African heat in the shoes of a mother trying to find water. Imagine making this trek daily and often returning to your family empty-handed. For most Americans, this is unimaginable—but it is a reality that entire villages across Africa face.

For these communities in places like Niger, Mali, and Kenya, Islamic Relief USA donors are making a difference. Programs that provide convenient access to water are greatly improving families’ quality of life and allowing farmers to tend to their crops and sustain their livelihoods.

“Even children can know the difference and see the benefit of this project,” one community member said in response to a promising installment of boreholes. Boreholes are drilled over 40 meters deep into the earth until they strike natural water reserves. After that, the same hole is fitted with sealants and equipped with a solar pump. It’s a sustainable solution to a drought problem that has loomed over regions like Niger and Mali for decades.

With new irrigation systems, community members have taken full advantage of cultivating crops. They are even trained to use agricultural tools and create their own

fertilizers and natural biopesticides. Each harvest acts as a crucial source of food and livelihood stability.

Members of the N’Tentobougou Village in Ouelessebougou, Mali shared their thoughts about one local project:

“Previously, we faced issues. We were using wells before, which are dirty and contaminated. We had to use bleach to settle the impurities in the water before using it, which would also take time. We used to have to fetch water twice a day, five cans each time. This [program] has improved our health, food security, and even our income.”

Over the past 25 years, establishing pathways to self-sufficiency has remained an integral feature of programs across Africa. There is still a long way to go, and IRUSA is committed to continuing this important effort. For every new drop of water, there is a new drop of hope. 🌱



Children are often the most vulnerable in drought conditions.



Families collect water from wells in Somalia.

## BUILDING DROUGHT RESILIENCE IN SOMALIA

For the last two years, a severe drought crippled regions in Somalia and forced over 950,000 people from their homes. Political violence added an extra threat to survival. Because of the continued lack of access to water, families fell victim to disease otherwise easily treated. IRUSA responded by sending emergency food aid and repairing nine borehole systems and seven water reservoirs in Qardho, Xida Jurile, Qoyta, and WadaamoGo villages. In 2018, drought conditions are expected to worsen; IRUSA is turning an eye to long-term solutions. Donors are helping communities build resilience through reliable water systems that can withstand the dry season. 🌱



# ASIA



## AFGHANISTAN WOMEN'S LITERACY PROGRAM EXPANDS

When something is working, you stick with it and expand it.

That's why IRUSA donors are giving a fourth group of women the gift of literacy in Afghanistan—and why this time, the graduating class is six times as big.

Education is highly prized in Afghanistan. But schools can be far away from many families, and conflict and cultural issues can keep children from attending—especially girls. So Islamic Relief has been bringing school to illiterate women and older girls since 2010 through a home-based education system.

The first phase taught 900 women, and the second and third enrolled 940 each. Phase 4, from 2016 to 2018, is reaching 6,500 women—more than twice as many as all of the previous students combined.

In this phase, 124 literacy classes were established in three provinces: Balkh, Bamyan, and Nangarhar. Classes started in 2017, with 6,200 women enrolled in the nine-month course (3,100 women each year) and 300 in skill development classes. The participants each received books and supplies as well as a small monthly stipend (300 Afghanis, or about \$5.30) to enable them to attend.

Fatima is one of the students in the program in the Bamyan Province. Two years ago, she could only dream of being able to read and write. When she heard Islamic Relief's classes were coming to her area, she was so excited that she not only signed up, but she convinced other women to join her. Now, after a lot of hard work, she has achieved her dream of literacy.

In addition to literacy classes, the participants also learn about health and hygiene. Another 300 vulnerable women were chosen for something extra—job skill development. They studied either poultry farming or tailoring and received equipment so they could begin to earn a reliable income.



Fatima receiving an appreciation letter.

Fatima worked so hard in her class that she not only learned the subjects, she drew the attention of the Ministry of Education. She was invited to meet Afghanistan's first lady, and the provincial governor presented certificates to her teacher and the local Islamic Relief office that implements the program.

The graduates of this phase of the program can do more than read and write: many of them can now find work to help ease their families' poverty. They've asked for just one thing — the chance to keep learning. 📖



A woman at an IRUSA program in Afghanistan in 2009.

## LITERACY EDUCATION SINCE 2010

PHASE 1, 2010-2012

**900 WOMEN**

PHASE 2, 2012-2013

**940 WOMEN**

PHASE 3, 2013-2016

**940 WOMEN**

PHASE 4, 2016-2018

**6,500 WOMEN**





# GREEN LIVING IN PAKISTAN

Two boys tend to their goats in Pakistan.

Around the world, we all want the same thing—we want to be able to take care of ourselves and our families.

In Pakistan, Islamic Relief USA donors have established effective programs to enable families to do just that. A family struggling with poverty can take a cow or a few chickens, some seeds, and some training, and turn it into a livelihood. Multiply that by a village full of thriving families, and that uplifts an entire community.

Right now, families in Pakistan-administered Kashmir are in the middle of just such an economic development project.

It starts with the local families' needs and plans. Communities hold regular meetings to identify problems, plan solutions, and ensure that many people participate. Then the solutions begin.

To date, through this project, seven dairy farms have been established, and several dairy associations have been organized to bridge gaps between communities, the markets, and policymakers. A milk collection unit has been installed and dairy shops and feed stores established. Farmers have been trained in a range of farming practices, from animal reproduction to organic farming and business skills, and livestock are receiving veterinary care. Farmers are learning to raise bees, cultivate mushrooms, and grow evergreen fodder for their livestock.

Dozens of widows have now received matching grants to purchase hundreds of cows and buffalos, while others received chickens. More than 100 farmers have received supplies to harvest rainwater, and 50 have received gardening kits. Four fermenters have been installed to preserve foods, and five tunnels have been established for off-season gardening.

## *This is all just one project!*

A similar project has now begun in Balochistan. This one aims to help farmers not only increase their productivity but also protect themselves from drought through irrigation systems, drought-resistant crops, climate policy, and drought early-warning systems.

Thank you for being part of all of these solutions! 🙏



A girl holding a goat received as part of a livelihood project in Pakistan.



# RESTORING WATER IN NEPAL

A woman who lost her home in the Nepal earthquake of 2015.

It's been three years since a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal. For much of the world, the disaster is just a vague memory. But for local communities, their world is still upside down. One of the most challenging—and perhaps unexpected—problems is a lack of water.

The April 2015 earthquake killed about 9,000 people and affected one-third of the country's population.

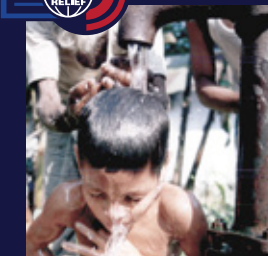
The earthquake damaged infrastructure including drinking water systems and bathrooms, and it shifted the water table, causing springs to dry up. Families must seek new sources to fetch water from for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Some have been forced to bathe in public waters.

A young woman told staff, "Due to limited water availability nearby our house, we visit a nearby river for bathing. Men also go to same place for bathing, I feel uncomfortable and unsafe, but the sad part is there are no other alternatives." The lack of water has kept children out of school as well. Absenteeism is up by

38% and the dropout rate has risen 16% after the earthquake—partly because of damage to schools, but parents have also cited poor sanitation and a lack of water as reasons. Children who drop out are often pushed into child labor or early marriage.

After the earthquake, Islamic Relief USA donors provided emergency shelter and food. Now, a new project is restoring water.

This project aims to repair four community-wide drinking water systems and six school water systems in 2018. Ten bathing cubicles will be constructed for more safe and private bathing. Community groups will be formed to manage the new water systems, and campaigns will provide information on using the systems for improved hygiene and health. 🙏



No matter the year or the advancements of technology, one thing always rings true in humanitarian work: Water is life. Over the past 25 years Islamic Relief USA water projects have grown from interventions as small as wells to large-scale water projects that transform communities, such as sustainable solar-powered water systems in Bangladesh. These two photographs show a water project from the 90s (above) and a project from 2016 (below).





# NEVER FORGET: RELIEF FOR THE PEOPLE OF MYANMAR

Dulu sits in her tent in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh after fleeing the violence in Myanmar

In 2016, violence erupted in Myanmar and I traveled to the capital city of Yangon with my colleague Bilal. We were told before arriving to shave our beards and to not give salaams (the Muslim greeting) to anyone. For our protection and the protection of the people, we were told to hide our Islam. We showed up to the camp after a four hour boat ride, and I remember noticing that it was the first time I saw the security guns pointing inside a camp instead of outside.

I'll never forget the people I met on that first visit—the imam who the community pooled money together for to pay his salary, or the woman who kept a record of every death and missing person. It was inspiring to see how they held on to some semblance of a social structure, despite the structure they knew crumbling around them.

The violence subsided over the coming months, but their living situation did not improve. Nevertheless, the crisis faded from the attention of the world.

Until 2017.

Violence escalated again at alarming rates, and this time we couldn't get into Myanmar. Everyone was fleeing to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh—we were told that 1,000 people a day were arriving. I went to capture the situation again, this time with Imam Khalid Latif.

We drove an hour from our base camp to get to the main camps. Then we had to park the car and walk for an hour to get to where people were living. On this walk, we saw people carrying their loved ones into the camp, or away to get services from the main road.

This camp was brand new and already in shambles. As soon as you entered, the stench hit you. It was extremely hot and rained throughout the night, and holes in the ground collected rain water combined with bath water and open sewage. People washed themselves with this water, drank from it, and cooked with it. One woman I saw was using her dress to try to filter the water. We knew it wasn't filtering any diseases.

The people arrived with whatever was on their backs. We met a young gentleman who had a bullet hole in his hand. Every conversation consisted of people telling us about someone they lost or something they lost: houses burned down, families killed.

“My home.”  
“My mother.”  
“My father.”  
“My brothers.”

It was heart wrenching to hear the stories of loss over and over. Malnutrition was real. You could see people who were emaciated. One woman, Dulu, was 80 years

old. She told us about her two sons and husband who were taken from her home and slaughtered. Acid was poured on their bodies. She had lost so much.

We did a food distribution, but the sheer magnitude of how many people were coming and how many were in need was apparent. This wasn't going away any time soon.

While walking in the camps, I saw a young girl holding something. I asked her what she had in her hands, and she showed me her Qur'an, very proud. She was headed towards a Qur'an class with about 20 other children. Even in the worst circumstances, the community held on to their faith, even though it was the reason they were there in the first place.

It was one of the most difficult trips I have been on. It was about 95 degrees with 90% humidity. At one point, I was standing on the side of the street wiping the sweat off my face with my shirt. I felt a hand on my back, patting it as if to say, “It's okay.” When I turned around, an older woman was standing there. She said something in Burmese which I didn't understand, but I understood what her eyes said: “You'll be alright.”

I was both humbled and embarrassed that this woman was telling me, a relatively young man, that it would be okay. When I look at her picture and remember this exchange, all I want to say to the people of Myanmar is: “We've got your back.”

We must have their backs and keep working to help them, now and when the world forgets. 🇬🇧

Ridwan Adhami

**“Even in the worst circumstances,  
the community held on to their faith,  
even though it was the reason they were  
there in the first place.”**



A girl walks to Qur'an class in the Ukhiya refugee camp.



Imam Khalid Latif visiting refugees in Bangladesh.

## RELIEF FOR REFUGEES

Imam Khalid Latif visited the Ukhiya Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh in 2017.

Of the 500,000 currently there, it seems like there are more children than anything in these refugee camps. Young boys and girls who have known nothing other than this crisis because they were born into it. I was told that one day 1,100 unaccompanied children crossed the border from Myanmar into Bangladesh, fleeing the violence there.

1,100 children on their own—just take a moment to think about that.

These children had to walk for miles and miles, the lucky ones simply separated or leaving behind loved ones. For most, their parents were likely killed by a bullet, blade, or burned alive by fire.

I can't imagine that it's easy for an adult, but how do children un-see conflict and killing? How do they let go of cries and screams that they have heard since the day they were born and stay within them despite their surroundings being different?

As the narration from the Islamic prophetic tradition states:

**“The parable of the believers in their love, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.”** 🇬🇧

Imam Khalid Latif



IRUSA President Anwar Khan inside Myanmar.





# MIDDLE EAST

## PROGRAM HELPS YOUTH FIND JOBS IN TOUGH MARKET

After Saif graduated at the top of his university class in the software engineering department, he searched for a job for four months.

His odds were slim; Jobs are scarce in Gaza, especially for young adults. Gaza's youth unemployment rate is among the highest in the world at 58%.

He never landed an interview—not even a single reply.

“Staying at home doing nothing makes you feel worthless,” he said.

Another young graduate named Mai was feeling the same way. She wanted to teach computer programming—a dream encouraged by her mother, who had died while she was in college. Mai spent four months job-hunting too. She was invited to some interviews but they didn't go well.

“I didn't know how to present myself and respond confidently to interviewers' questions,” she said. Both of these frustrated young

graduates saw an announcement for a job skills program offered by Islamic Relief USA and Palestine Education for Employment, and they knew that would be a good use of their time. The training focuses on practical tools that teach graduates the soft skills necessary to find and keep a job. Another component focuses on working online.

Through this program, 150 youth including Mai and Saif took classes in virtual jobs, project management, and sales, and 64% of graduates were placed in regular employment, internships, or contract opportunities within three to six months of graduating. Another 660 youth took a class called “Finding a Job Is a Job.”

Through these classes, Saif realized his good grades weren't enough, and he understood the weaknesses in his previous applications.

“Many aspects of my CV and cover letter needed development,” he said. With the help of the trainers, Saif was able to fix them and practice new skills, hands-on. He applied for another position as teaching assistant and he got the job.

Mai focused on her public speaking skills with the help of one-on-one coaching. “This opportunity enhanced my confidence and pushed me to speak my mind clearly with no hesitation,” she said.

She got a job too. She works at the e-learning center at the Islamic University, and she feels proud that she has fulfilled her mother's dream. 🙏



IRUSA helped Saif get a job teaching at a university.



Mai, a student of an IRUSA training course.

## BEYOND BORDERS

The virtual jobs component of the Education for Employment program offers a very important benefit—opening doors to job opportunities outside Gaza, where enough jobs simply do not exist.

Anas had spent two years studying engineering to please his parents, but he couldn't find a job in the field, so he switched to his first love—English literature. But he couldn't find a job there either.

Then he joined this program and learned about virtual jobs. Newly motivated, he collaborated with two fellow participants to develop an idea for a startup company providing translation services. He became a translator, landing a contract with an international client.

Now he plans to expand his company, offering new technical services, which would allow him to employ other Gaza residents.

“I would like to thank Palestine EFE and Islamic Relief USA for giving me the opportunity to meet inspiring people who helped me establish my company and make my dream come true,” he said. 🙏



Anas participated in the Education for Employment program.



A center in Egypt, supported by IRUSA donors for years, helped thousands of children with disabilities. Though it is closed and IRUSA no longer works in Egypt, it was once a signature project in the country. Other work there included vocational training for women and youth, equipment for health clinics, food distribution, orphan sponsorship, and basic assistance for impoverished families unable to find work after the 2011 political uprising. The difference IRUSA donors made there lasts to this day.



# A CUTTING-EDGE MOBILE CLINIC TREATS SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mohammad after receiving surgery for his cleft palate.

Imagine being a refugee who lost everything, living in a new country where you don't know where your next meal will come from.

Now imagine you have a baby with an urgent medical condition. How can you possibly care for him?

That's the situation Mohammad's mother faced. And help came to her from across the ocean—from Islamic Relief USA donors.

Mohammad's family is among more than 600,000 Syrian refugees now living in Jordan. They went there looking for safety after their home in Syria was flattened by a barrel bomb. Then little Mohammad was born with congenital heart defects and a cleft lip and palate.

The cleft palate wasn't just cosmetic—he couldn't eat or breathe normally. And food would become stuck in the holes in his mouth, causing painful infection after infection.

Many refugees arrive in Jordan in poor health, so Islamic Relief USA has been providing free health care for them for years. Doctors examined Mohammad through an IRUSA program that has treated more than 10,000 refugees over two years. Most of those patients received care through a mobile clinic that traveled through areas

from Ramtha and Irbid to Kerak, and from Jordan Valley to Al-Mafraq. But the most serious cases were referred to hospitals for more specialized care—patients like baby Mohammad.

At the hospital, Mohammad underwent testing and imaging, and then the day of his surgery arrived. Alhamdulillah, it was successful. Now he can eat, breathe, and play like any child.

"Islamic Relief covered all expenses incurred," his mother said. "The team visited my house and responded directly to my son's condition. Without the help Islamic Relief offered, many things would go in the wrong direction. Again, thank you!"

A new phase of this project began in late 2017. The goal is to care for another 40,000 patients like Mohammad. 🇺🇸



IRUSA's mobile clinic in Jordan.



A water project in Tunisia.

## CLEAN WATER FOR SCHOOLS IN TUNISIA

There was something little Chahad used to hide from her mother. She wouldn't tell her she had drunk from the water at school.

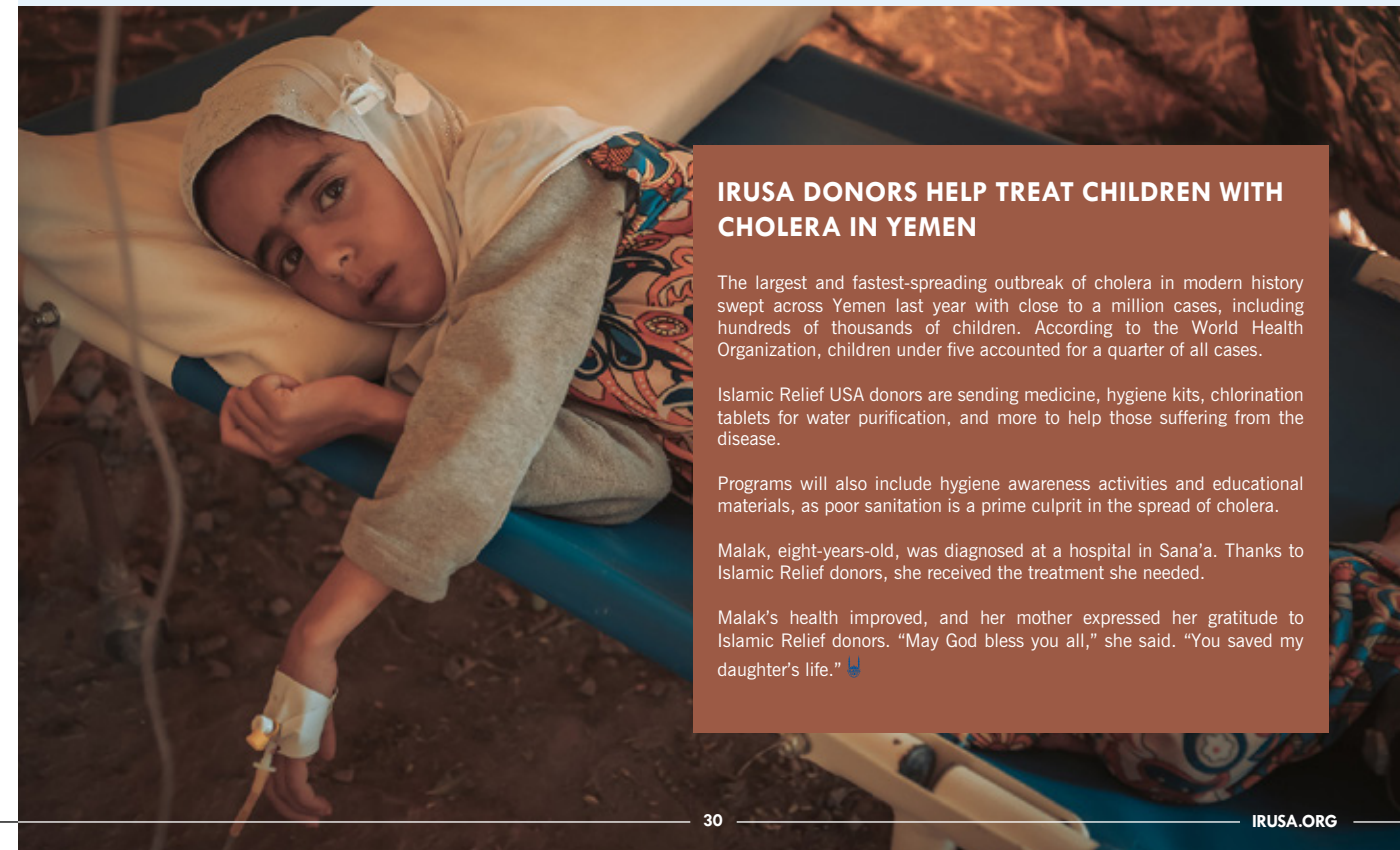
The old, small water tank at her school in Tunisia was uncovered and exposed to dirt and pollution. The children would bring their own water from home. When they ran out, they shared with each other. The last resort was to drink the dirty water at school, knowing it could make them sick.

"I have never told my mother that when I was thirsty I used to drink from that tank," 7-year-old Chahad said smiling.

She's not afraid to tell her anymore, because IRUSA donors gave her school a big, clean new tank that is covered and protected. The water is safe now, and students can focus more freely on their studies. Staff also built hand-washing stations in 57 schools, along with giving all of the children soap and teaching them about washing their hands to stay healthy.

Islamic Relief's Drop of Hope project gave this gift to more than 9,000 children at 100 schools in Tunisia in 2015-2016. A second phase of the project is bringing clean, safe water to 100 more schools in nine governorates.

Many of these children don't have running water at home yet. But now insha'Allah they will have safe drinking water and a place to stay clean at school. 🇺🇸



## IRUSA DONORS HELP TREAT CHILDREN WITH CHOLERA IN YEMEN

The largest and fastest-spreading outbreak of cholera in modern history swept across Yemen last year with close to a million cases, including hundreds of thousands of children. According to the World Health Organization, children under five accounted for a quarter of all cases.

Islamic Relief USA donors are sending medicine, hygiene kits, chlorination tablets for water purification, and more to help those suffering from the disease.

Programs will also include hygiene awareness activities and educational materials, as poor sanitation is a prime culprit in the spread of cholera.

Malak, eight-years-old, was diagnosed at a hospital in Sana'a. Thanks to Islamic Relief donors, she received the treatment she needed.

Malak's health improved, and her mother expressed her gratitude to Islamic Relief donors. "May God bless you all," she said. "You saved my daughter's life." 🇺🇸



# SYRIA

## WHEN WORDS FAIL

Early in 2018, the United Nations ran out of words to describe the horrors in Syria. The organization released a blank statement to illustrate their loss for words as the death toll began mounting in eastern Ghouta.

Even when words fail, though, the core response must remain steady: We have to keep providing humanitarian aid to one person and one family at a time. And that is what Islamic Relief USA donors have been doing.

Since 2012, the worldwide Islamic Relief community has provided more than \$330 million in aid to Syrians. Supplies like food, clothes, shelter, and other basic necessities reached more than 4.5 million people in 2017, and the Islamic Relief USA community played a huge role in that. In the past year, you've provided food, medical care, clothes, blankets, and more, even in hard-to-reach areas.

Ahmed is a doctor caring for patients in Syria with the help of supplies provided by Islamic Relief. The medical shortages in Syria are catastrophic.

"It's so hard to see whole groups of people in the throes of death because we don't have what's needed to treat them," Ahmed said.

Islamic Relief donors have given Ahmed's hospital dialysis machines, incubators, and X-ray and ultrasound machines. The effect is lifesaving.

"The smiles of children and the prayers of patients keeps me going," he said. "Allah is giving me strength and hope."

"When I save a child's life, I bring happiness to the hearts of their mothers and loved ones. I rarely see my own family now, so this is my only happiness." 🙏

AS THE SYRIAN CONFLICT REACHED ITS 7TH YEAR, THE HORRORS CONTINUED TO DEFY DESCRIPTION.

BUT IRUSA DONORS CONTINUED RELIEVING SUFFERING — ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

YOU HAVE HELPED OVER

**9.3 MILLION**  
**SYRIANS IN NEED.**





*"You feel good about yourself and you feel good helping others."*

Sanjeera



Serving hot meals at a shelter, 2017



Fundraising Dinner, 2001



Alabama Tornado, 2011

*"We are reminded to rush to do good deeds, and we're trying our best to do that."*

Farhaj



Toy Drive, 2017



Hurricane Sandy, 2012



Toy Drive, 1996



Alternative Spring Break, 2017

## VOLUNTEERS: THE FOUNDATION OF IRUSA

What would a tree be without roots?  
What would a rainbow be without colors?  
What would a person be without a heart?

Islamic Relief USA would be nothing without its volunteers—they are the roots of our past, the heart of our work, and the reason for our vibrancy and beauty.

When our name was unknown, a small group of volunteers spoke out to anyone who would listen about people who were suffering in Bosnia. When we had just a couple of staff members looking at enormous needs around the world, volunteers organized dinners and rallied communities. They stayed up all night stuffing envelopes and were out early in the morning distributing flyers.

Our early volunteers were youth who wanted to give and help but had little money. What they gave was their love, their time, their intentions, and their dedication. Out of their sincerity grew an organization that now helps millions of people each year. Today, we have an entire department dedicated to volunteers, and a network of thousands.

On the next few pages, you'll see some of the amazing work of IRUSA volunteers, from disaster response to nationwide days of service.

Volunteers—never underestimate what you do. You build the future. 🙌



**SIGN UP @ [IRUSA.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://www.irusa.org/volunteer)**

# VOLUNTEERS



Hurricane Matthew Long-Term Recovery, 2018



Turkey Distribution, 2014



Volunteers, 2001  
IRUSA.ORG



Greece Refugee Crisis, 2015

*"It's a lot of work but it's such a blessing to be out here and be able to help those in need."*

Lamyaa



Flint Water Distribution, 2016



MLK Day, 2018





# EMERGENCIES IN THE AMERICAS

## PUERTO RICO

“We woke up and saw a different Puerto Rico.”

Tony lives in the mountains in Puerto Rico and witnessed the wrath of Hurricane Maria firsthand. The category 5 storm devastated the island in September 2017.

The destruction was evident at every turn. Trees were uprooted, electric poles broken, homes damaged, roads flooded, and bridges collapsed.

The locals counted the days after the hurricane, as though it marked a new calendar for a new world—one they were ill-prepared for. The resort island that Puerto Rico once was existed no longer.

Without basic needs, people were unable to work and their livelihoods were halted. The community spirit helped ease the losses, though, and neighbors did not hesitate to share food and support.

Life has not returned to normal for many, though the disaster has left national attention. Islamic Relief USA’s Disaster Response Team (DRT) is connecting with local partners on the ground to provide water, food, generators, and more. 🇵🇷



Tony was one of thousands impacted by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.



DRT staff survey wildfire damage.

## CALIFORNIA

In northern California, at least 17 wildfires tore through over 220,000 acres of land in 2017. To put that number in perspective, imagine: the area burned was more than three times larger than Washington, D.C. The destruction was vast. Some 5,700 structures were damaged, and more than 40 people died. Tens of thousands of residents were evacuated.

IRUSA’s DRT worked out of a shelter located in the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, about 20 minutes from the hardest hit area. The mega-shelter spanned three separate buildings and served those with extensive medical needs. 🇺🇸

## MEXICO

A massive earthquake, measured at 7.1 on the Richter scale, struck Mexico’s capital in September 2017—the same day that the country’s biggest earthquake had hit 32 years prior. The quake killed more than 200 people and destroyed buildings.

IRUSA’s DRT worked with local partners to provide emergency aid to communities in need. Construction of six transitional shelters took place to house families whose homes were completely destroyed.

Throughout the project, 1,500 families received supplies to help mitigate significant home damage. Another 250 families were supplied with kitchen replacement kits consisting of items like cooking pots/pans, utensils, and food containers. In response to growing hygiene concerns, over 250 households were given direct education about best practices in sanitation during the recovery phase. 🇲🇽



One of DRT’s first deployments in 2011.



## HAITI EARTHQUAKE OF 2010

Following the devastating Haiti earthquake in January of 2010 that killed over 100,000 people, IRUSA teams went straight to the field to aid survivors. Donors helped construct temporary shelters, deliver emergency supplies, and even rebuild a school.





# U.S. EMERGENCIES

IRUSA volunteer at shelter designed to house 5,500 evacuees from Hurricane Harvey.

## IRUSA'S DRT RESPONDS TO ONSLAUGHT OF HURRICANES

As hurricane after hurricane struck Atlantic communities, Islamic Relief USA staff worked around the clock to bring relief to survivors.

"It's unprecedented," said IRUSA's Disaster Response Team (DRT) Manager Hani Hamwi. "To have such strong hurricanes developing one after another is something that I've personally never seen."

Hamwi has been asked why his team hasn't been seen on the ground doing photo-friendly activities like delivering water after Hurricane Irma. "Imagine somebody who

lost their home due to a hurricane and their home is no longer habitable," he said. "Imagine giving that person a case of water and a hygiene kit. What do they do with that?"

"People need a home. They need stability so their kids can go to school and they can work. That's Islamic Relief's focus.

"Our focus is making sure people have homes to stay in, and that's what real disaster response is for an organization of our scale."

## SHELTER FOR HARVEY EVACUEES

IRUSA'S DRT cared for people forced from their homes by Hurricane Harvey's catastrophic floods.

Harvey slammed into the Texas coast in August as a category 4 hurricane, the most powerful storm to hit the United States in a decade. But the greatest danger and damage came in the form of flooding after it was downgraded to a tropical storm.

IRUSA's team worked with the American Red Cross to run a "mega shelter" hosting thousands of evacuees in the Dallas convention center.

Harvey caused unprecedented damage. J. Marshall Shepherd, director of the atmospheric sciences program at the University of Georgia, told the New York Times, "This could go down as the worst flood disaster in U.S. history."

"Disaster response has three major phases: preparedness, response, and recovery. IRUSA is responsive in all three phases," Hamwi said.

## REBUILDING HOMES FROM NC TO TX

It's been over a year since Hurricane Matthew hit the southeastern U.S., and the storm has long faded from most people's minds. But hundreds of families are still unable to go home.

IRUSA's DRT is working with interfaith partners in NC to repair houses damaged by Hurricane Matthew and to get families back into their homes.

In March 2018, half of the student body of Zaytuna

College spent their spring break volunteering with the DRT in NC. "It is mandatory for Zaytuna students to spend one week volunteering in order to graduate," said Imam Dawood, Zaytuna College's Head of Student Life. The group of students were very enthusiastic about the experience and felt inspired to see the difference they were making.

For Harvey victims in Houston, IRUSA is launching a similar effort: a three-year project to fix and rebuild destroyed homes. This will be the first time IRUSA implements such a project on its own.

"Islamic Relief USA has been around for 25 years, and the impact that it's had on the Muslim community in the U.S. is great," said Hamwi. "We're leading the Muslim community—leading the way into disaster recovery, opening the way for hundreds of volunteers to get involved in rebuilding a home for someone regardless of gender, race, or religion."



Zaytuna students in NC.

## SUPPORTING OUR NATION'S YOUTH IN PARKLAND CONNECTED US

On February 14, 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, killing seventeen people. It was one of the world's deadliest school massacres.

The parents of victims were left to grieve as shock waves were felt through millions of households. Islamic Relief USA's DRT went to Florida to help survivors and their families.

When the shooting took place, students dropped everything they had and ran for their lives. What was left afterwards were hallways crowded with personal belongings like backpacks, jackets, and remnants of what was supposed to be a normal day at school. IRUSA offered assistance to students who lost anything during the incident. A caseworker brought a young girl who inquired about cash assistance. She mentioned the items she lost. DRT staff assured her that she would be helped with reimbursement. After receiving cash cards, she walked away and was approached by her mother. In the distance, a quiet argument began between the two. The student asked her mother tiredly, "What do you want me to do?"

The next day, a caseworker explained what happened. She said that the mother expressed concerns about whether or not her father would be OK with receiving help from a Muslim organization. To which the daughter replied, "I'm not accepting this because I need some help. I'm accepting it as this is a gift to me. They're here to show me that they care."

What she said changed the anxiety of the moment and put in perspective the humanity that needed to be centered. Our walks of life shape us for better or worse. But in times where people suffer, those beliefs we adopt can be changed by one helping hand.

As Parkland struggles to recover, IRUSA will remain invested in touching as many lives as possible. In the process of doing so, we hope to connect more hearts for the sake of our youth. Indeed, their open hearts are leading the way to a more compassionate future for us all.



DRT staff visit Parkland memorial.



DRT staff and volunteers repair a NC home.



## REMEMBERING KATRINA

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, it devastated large parts of the Gulf Coast, including New Orleans. That disaster marked IRUSA's entry into the field of hands-on U.S. disaster relief work.

IRUSA hired a staff member just for this emergency and placed him in the region for two years. Relief work included purchasing a double-wide mobile home to be converted quickly into a clinic for a community that had lost its health-care center.

IRUSA donors also provided emergency relief for residents like Louise Kensey, who lost her home.

"A couple of times I was this far from not having food," she added, pinching her fingers together. "And it came right to the door from you guys. And it was just overwhelming."

Donors provided \$3 million in assistance over two years, paving the way of disaster relief for their neighbors.





Volunteer shares warm meal at Day of Dignity in Las Vegas.

# DAY OF DIGNITY



Islamic Relief USA's Day of Dignity project launched its biggest campaign ever in 2017. The expansion into more cities meant one critical thing: IRUSA could touch more lives. The national event is a hallmark initiative that unites grassroots humanitarian organizations under the banner of service so communities in need can access helpful services.

Day of Dignity has been an IRUSA tradition since 2002 when it was called Humanitarian Day. It brings people together to serve their local homeless and low-income

communities, and more than 20,000 people benefit each year. They come out in large numbers to receive free medical screenings, dental exams, fresh produce, clothes, emergency supplies, hot meals, and more all day long. Each location has its own unique flavor as well. In 2017, Portland featured a haircut station, and Denver offered mobile showers and laundry trucks.

"It's rare you find those services in one place. A one-stop-shop for everything is great," said IRUSA's seasonal project lead.

Though just one day, the communal effort leaves lasting impacts felt by everyone involved.

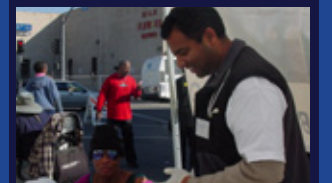
"I've been doing this since 2007," volunteer Omar Abdulalim from Seattle said. "I bring my kids now. I want them to learn that life isn't all about you. People get such false ideas about Muslims, but the Qur'an teaches us to love and give charity, and that's what this event is all about."

For over 15 years, the effort has continued to grow and reach more

places and people. IRUSA is proud to continue a legacy of connecting people from all walks of life in service. 🤝

*"The best neighbor to Allah is the best to his neighbors."*

-Prophet Muhammad (SAW)



Pictured here is the first ever Day of Dignity held back in 2002. It had a different name then—Humanitarian Day—but it had the same mission: to serve neighbors in need.





DRT volunteers repair a home in North Carolina.

# U.S. PROGRAMS

## HOPE FOR REFUGEES

North Carolina is ranked eighth out of 50 states for refugee resettlement—second on the eastern seaboard—due to its low cost of living and availability of low skill labor. In fact, eight out of nine resettlement agencies are based there. Islamic Relief USA is currently spearheading an effort to resettle as many refugees as resources allow in Charlotte, Raleigh, and Greensboro. In 2017, we helped 50 families through the difficult process. In 2018 and beyond, we hope to help even more.

Families are taken in who qualify for this support, and they are given a six-month contract wherein they receive monthly stipends. They are set up with a development plan and case management. This year, over 60% of families are

now employed. Many of the families who struggle to get jobs have severe medical problems. Literacy is often also a huge barrier to employment.

“I’m seeing the people who couldn’t get their bearings,” said Wasif Qureshi, IRUSA Case Manager based in North Carolina.

Despite his difficult job, his outlook is one of hope.

“I never walk into a home feeling sulky or sad,” he said. “We’re trying to bring people out of the jaws of defeat. We’re always trying to refocus them to see the bright side.”

And when it comes to keeping hope alive, he has witnessed countless stories that do just that. One man he worked with had been tortured and was confined to a wheelchair. In just six months, he improved

his English to a level five, enrolled in community college, and obtained a part-time job working in a Bank of America stadium. “He always says alhamdulillah,” Wasif remarked. “He’s very certain he will walk one day.”

Along with gratitude, though, Wasif meets a considerable deal of discontent from refugees who have had a bad experience with resettlement—not an uncommon occurrence in a country that continues to cut funding for refugee programs though the need for resources only increases. “They still have to pay rent, they still have to eat. The good news is, if you donate and support causes like this, that trickles down to the individual,” he said.

“We need constant influence toward policies,”

he added. “Call your senators and tell them you’re not threatened by your refugee neighbors.”

Moving forward, Wasif hopes to expand the program on a national level. “I left a six-figure job to do this work. I wouldn’t do any other job right now.

“They are resilient. I don’t see them as fearful or hopeless. They need guidance and companionship. We call them our friends.”



IRUSA Case Manager, Wasif, with a refugee he works with.



Dr. Rami Nashishi, Executive Director of IMAN health clinic.



The waiting room at the IMAN health clinic in Chicago.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE IN CHICAGO

In the heart of a historic Chicago district and next to a notoriously tough neighborhood, Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) is answering the call to drastically change the health of area residents. Islamic Relief USA has partnered with the community organizing hub to bring the health services it has provided for over two decades further into fruition. At times unfortunately, health insurance and a warm embrace from a physician can be difficult to access for many residents in South Side Chicago. IMAN’s health clinics have become a safe haven for patients needing assurance that their health is a top priority.

“It began with university students volunteering time to put on health fairs and health screenings,” said Rami Nashishi, Executive Director of IMAN. Nashishi is a 2017 recipient of the MacArthur Genius award, an honor given due to the community impact Nashishi has been a part of. For the staff at IMAN there was no way around starting with a health-centered program. The city’s minority population is three times more susceptible to falling victim to illnesses brought on by the lack of preventative care like hypertension and diabetes.

Patrons have an array of services to choose from. Whether it be dental exams, preventative health screenings, substance abuse help, or the new expansion of family behavioral treatment, the health center works as a one-stop-shop for visitors. If “health is wealth,” IMAN’s partnership with IRUSA is mining gold in the middle of Chicago right now.

Donald Ray Miller, a 64-year-old patient, was grateful for what IMAN had to offer.

**“A healthy society is a better society,” he said.**

Thanks to a five year expansion plan supported by IRUSA, IMAN is on its way to becoming a Federally Qualified Health Center.



IRUSA volunteers share turkeys for Thanksgiving.

## TURKEY DISTRIBUTION 2,000 TURKEYS SERVED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

During the fall holiday season, many heads of households are looking for a way to keep up with bills and make sure their families have memorable experiences. When options run thin, stress can take over for thousands of mothers, fathers, and caretakers. Islamic Relief USA’s 2017 turkey distribution was an effort to help neighbors in need. The turkeys were made available in places like southern California, Chicago, Washington D.C., and New Jersey.

On average, over 40 million turkeys make it to the tables of families in the U.S. for Thanksgiving. Many families, however, have a hard time affording the meal.

In total, approximately 2,000 turkeys were distributed along with kits for preparing full meals. In places like Washington, D.C. with our distribution partner United Planning Organization, participants walked away reassured that their families would eat well. “This helps tremendously and it takes pressure off of people that are unfortunate in this society,” said Kenneth Pridgen, a 2017 participant.

2017 marked the fourth year for this distribution, and the hope is for it to continue to grow as another way for IRUSA to show love for its local community.



IRUSA volunteers package fresh produce on MLK Day.

## IRUSA’S ANNUAL MLK DAY OF SERVICE

In keeping with tradition, Islamic Relief USA kicks off the beginning of the year with the annual nationwide Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in January. It’s a project honoring the legacy of the civil rights leader—a legacy very much tied to IRUSA’s.

In the 1950s, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s leadership shed a powerful light on the need for America to examine the inequalities persisting in African American communities.

Nicole, a volunteer at one of IRUSA’s MLK Day locations said, “We’re here to do service for MLK Day, and for me, the day is significant for doing work inside our communities, helping those less fortunate, and being able to provide for some who may not be able to receive today.”

Hundreds of volunteers joined community members, local groups, and humanitarian partners across eight states. From California to Washington, D.C., underserved participants received thousands of items like hot meals, hygiene kits, fresh produce, and resources linked to organizations in their communities.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us in his own words: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”





# A CASE FOR HOPE

Five short years following the hijrah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his refugee community to Madinah—a community still reeling from persecution and sanctions—the young community of Muslims would be presented with their greatest challenge yet. An army over 10,000 strong, the likes of which the Arabian Peninsula had never before seen, converged upon their sanctuary city.

Out-resourced and underequipped, the young community of refugees resolved to dig a trench in an effort to protect themselves from forced removal. This was at the suggestion of one of its members, Salman, an undocumented immigrant from the land now known as Iran. They dug for six days. They tied stones to their stomachs to distract from their hunger. What food they did have they shared. Every single able-bodied individual dug and every single individual who did not dig supported to the extent that their ability allowed. As if their situation was not grim enough, a new obstacle emerged: a boulder

that refused to be broken. As the Prophet (SAW) struck the rock, he saw in a vision a future of freedom from Syria to Persia to Yemen.

From the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) wisdom, we can gain insight about the value of listening. Instead of crumbling under the pressure of fear, anxiety, and helplessness, he listened and held onto hope. That same hope inspired a vision for his followers—a vision that can bring us comfort even today.

## **SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST SURVIVAL**

Fear is necessary. It is fear that activates the brain's fight-or-flight response to danger, ensuring that every available avenue for survival is explored, every resource allocated, every effort exhausted. Fear is functional. It is fear that sheds light on what we truly care about, or at the very least care about losing. Fear is natural. We are born with it, and as we grow we find ways to cope with it, for better

or for worse. Coping, however, is not a word that is ever used to describe how one wishes to see the future. Fear is unsustainable. Left alone, unevolved, unpaired, fear will turn into resentment and apathy.

## ***Fear has never sustained us before.***

Any idea, movement, or cause worth marveling at was sustained by an unrelenting fascination with what could be. And if the events that have overwhelmed our thoughts, conversations, and news feeds have painted in our hearts and minds a bleak picture of what we think is to come, then fear has won. Fear is a reaction, hope is a response. So, let us respond.

Our current political climate has grabbed the attention of marginalized groups, and this presents us with a unique opportunity. Think of all those who resist hate and bigotry. More specifically, consider all those who are its targets. Women marched, Muslims marched,

refugees marched, immigrants marched, indigenous communities marched, other faith communities marched, allies marched, the Black community has never stopped marching, and the list goes on. How do we have goals that help these groups inspired by the legacy of our Prophet (SAW)?

What is the ultimate end of marching with women if we do not amplify their voices within our spheres of influence? What is the ultimate end of opening doors for refugees if we do not learn their names and listen to their stories?

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) took time to listen to an undocumented immigrant. It saved lives, and won a war. This is our faith: a community of devoted listeners whose compassion knows no bounds. Islam is built on a foundation of hope that we still stand upon today. 🙏

*Naeem Baig*





A boy receives a Ramadan food package in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

# RAMADAN

Islamic Relief USA was only a few months old when the Ramadan crescent was sighted back in the 1990s.

The staff knew they wanted to visit Muslims during that month and see if they would help send humanitarian aid to Bosnia. It was all new to the staff of the fledgling organization. They weren't quite sure how to go about it, and nobody knew who they were yet.

The first time co-founder Ahmed El Bendary walked into a mosque with a friend for that purpose, he didn't know what to expect. It was a small mosque in South Central Los Angeles, and the congregation was

young and barely making ends meet themselves.

"All the brothers and sisters who were in the mosque didn't have that much, but ... they were donating, 25 cents, 50 cents, \$1, a few pennies here and there," El Bendary recalled. "And that 50 cents or 75 cents the brother or sister gave us, that was the difference between them walking home or taking the bus. The total funds raised from that mosque was about \$80 but subhanAllah, to me that was the seeds that grew to be Islamic Relief."

That first year, a small handful of staff members visited 10 mosques in Los Angeles—about 30 visits in all.

They raised a total of about \$3,000.

This year, insha'Allah, 28 staff members will visit communities in nearly 40 states—more than 400 visits in all. And now many additional community members seek out Islamic Relief online during Ramadan as well.

Many Muslims like to give their zakat during Ramadan, and the gifts given during this month will provide services that are implemented all around the world. 🌍

**Ramadan food packages help low-income and impoverished families during this blessed month each year.**

**In 2017, your Ramadan food packages helped almost half a million people in 35 countries.**

\*These numbers are estimates based on the number of packages distributed and average number of family members in each country.

COUNTRY	BENEFICIARIES
AFGHANISTAN	7,500
ALBANIA	5,000
BANGLADESH	9,000
BOSNIA	6,750
CHAD	5,750
CHECHNYA	9,000
CHINA	2,500
ETHIOPIA	35,000
INDIA	28,500
INDONESIA	3,000
IRAQ	15,000
JORDAN	7,500
KENYA	15,000
KOSOVO	5,750
LEBANON	2,800
LESOTHO	1,000
MACEDONIA	2,250
MALAWI	6,750
MALI	8,000
MYANMAR	15,000
NIGER	5,250
PAKISTAN	15,000
PALESTINE (GAZA)	46,383
PALESTINE (WEST BANK)	10,120
PHILIPPINES	4,550
SOMALIA	20,000
SOUTH AFRICA	1,750
SOUTH SUDAN	15,000
SRI LANKA	5,500
SUDAN	9,500
SYRIA	90,000
TUNISIA	2,500
UNITED STATES	22,350
YEMEN	15,000
ZIMBABWE	2,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>456,453</b>





A girl in Yemen receives Qurbani meat

# QURBANI

COUNTRY	BENEFICIARIES
AFGHANISTAN	10,302
ALBANIA	1,080
BANGLADESH	17,469
BOSNIA	9,000
CHAD	53,571
CHECHNYA	13,200
CHINA	750
ETHIOPIA	37,500
INDIA	20,076
INDONESIA	999
IRAQ	5,205
JORDAN	5,176
KENYA	30,000
KOSOVO	4,500
LEBANON	3,000
MALAWI	33,000
MALI	37,500
MYANMAR	58,741
NIGER	45,000
PAKISTAN	32,666
PALESTINE (GAZA)	11,100
SOMALIA	45,000
SOUTH AFRICA	3,750
SOUTH SUDAN	6,000
SRI LANKA	27,148
SUDAN	22,500
SYRIA	86,592
UGANDA	14,400
UNITED STATES	37,371
YEMEN	30,000
ZIMBABWE	13,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>716,096</b>

Islamic Relief USA has distributed Qurbani / Udhiyah meat on behalf of donors for many years. We work with partner offices around the world, who buy and prepare the meat locally and ensure that it goes to people who qualify as truly in need.

IRUSA donors shared meat with hundreds of thousands of people in 31 countries in 2017, including 37,371 people in the United States.

Here are the totals for IRUSA Eid al-Adha gifts by country.

\* These numbers are estimates based on number of packages distributed and average family size in each country.



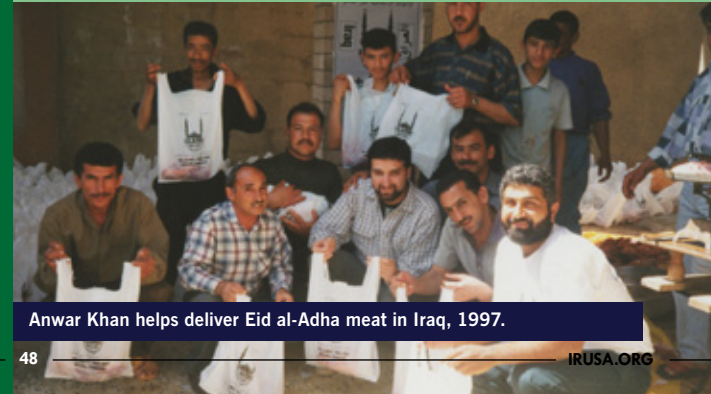
### QURBANI IN CHINA

“I know that as a Muslim, we have two holy days in each year. Eid al-Adha is one of them. Although I don’t have the ability, I still want to uphold my duty as a head of household,” Qurbani beneficiary Ma Hamidong said during a 2017 distribution in China.

In poverty stricken areas in the two Beijing townships of Dongxiang County and Linxia, Islamic Relief USA conducted one of its first Qurbani distributions in the region. It brought a community and organizations together in a dynamic effort to get food to the tables of families who were suffering from hunger. Although some beneficiaries were outside the range of distribution, local partners provided transportation for those unable to make it to the main location. The effort enabled hundreds of families to prepare Qurbani meat for their households.

“This is my first time receiving Qurbani,” said Ma Hamidong. “Thank you very much.” 🙏

Two men in China happily take home their Qurbani meat package.



Anwar Khan helps deliver Eid al-Adha meat in Iraq, 1997.



# OVER 20,000 ORPHANS SPONSORED BY IRUSA DONORS



## A NEW PHASE OF ORPHAN CARE

IRUSA's loving community has been caring for orphans since the organization's founding. In 2003, donors were sponsoring just over 500 orphans. By 2017, that number had reached 20,000.

Those sponsorships have been a lifeline to children, and a chance at a better future. And when one child in a family eats, they all eat, so sponsorships uplift entire families.

Now, IRUSA has begun focusing on a different kind of orphan support—projects that extend critical services to entire communities full of orphans and vulnerable children. Pilot projects in Bangladesh and Palestine have proven successful.

In these programs, instead of each donor's contribution going to one single orphan, they go toward community-wide services like vocational training for widows so they can support their children, and toward free education to break the cycle of poverty for vulnerable orphans.

In the Palestine project, donors are supporting education, vocational training, and social needs such as psychological care for traumatized children. In Bangladesh, the orphan family project focuses on education and helping widows start small business as well as building wells that benefit the entire community.

Srimuta is participating in the program in Bangladesh. She takes care of three orphans along with her own three children. This program is helping her fund their education and helped her expand her small livestock and poultry farm so she can care for their other needs.

She only wishes more families could share in her newfound empowerment.

"If other communities have needs like ours, they should be helped," she said.

Arzina is taking part in this program too, and not only has it helped her, but now she is helping other children get an education.

A good student in 10th grade, she was chosen to be a Child Club leader. She found three 6-year-olds whose parents weren't planning to send them to school, and encouraged them to enroll. The parents agreed. Now, Jahid, Munni, and Iva go to school with Arzina every day.

She said: "This is my great success. If I didn't take the initiative, the children would have lost their chance to go to school this year. I will do this again next year insha'Allah." 🙏



An IRUSA orphan sits outside his home in Adis Ababa, Ethiopia



Rozana studies with her sisters in Gaza.

### ROZANA'S STORY

Rozana and her 10 brothers and sisters lost their father in Ramadan. Amidst shock and grief, they found themselves without any income for the family. If the pain of losing him wasn't enough, they now faced the threat of poverty.

Thanks to IRUSA support, they can afford to live a normal life and Rozana is able to stay in school. She dreams of becoming a nurse, and she even studies at night by candlelight when the electricity in Gaza goes out.

Rozana's family benefits from an innovative approach to orphan support that seeks to provide care that will improve the lives

of whole families. Every month, they receive not only financial support but also training courses, back-to-school supplies, clothes, and more.

Rozana's family had a message for their IRUSA donors:

*"We would not be able to live without the support that we get from Islamic Relief. Since our father died, we have had no income. This is all we get, and we are very grateful for it."*

The IRUSA family has built a legacy of caring for orphans all over the world. As IRUSA turns 25, many of our first orphans are all grown up now. They're pursuing their dreams, all thanks to you. 🙏





IRUSA participates in the Climate March in Washington, D.C.

# PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Over a decade ago, Islamic Relief USA took its commitment to community engagement to a new level and opened a public affairs office in a small suite on Capitol Hill.

Before long, IRUSA had outgrown the space and relocated to our current headquarters across the river in Virginia, though we would continue to walk the halls of Congress. We were there when air strikes were

happening overseas and when the Flint water crisis was happening here at home. We aim to be a voice for the voiceless and to stand for social justice and equal representation.

Through various administrations, IRUSA has become one of the preeminent Muslim voices, articulating its vision for a better world through one-on-one meetings, coalition visits with partners and allies, and public and private briefings. IRUSA has become a

trusted organization and built strong alliances over the years. Highlights have included 10 years of participation at the InterAction forum, over five years of cosponsoring the United States Department of Agriculture iftar, hosting policy briefings in Congress, and representing Islamic humanitarian principles on leading advocacy coalitions, including the Alliance to End Hunger and Coalition on Human Needs. 🌱

## SPEAKING OUT FOR GENDER JUSTICE AT UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

Islamic Relief USA staff moderated and organized sessions at the 2018 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to share ideas for empowering women and advocating for gender justice.

Delegates from around the world joined Islamic Relief staff for panel discussions where they shared recommendations for tackling gender injustice from a faith perspective.

Islamic Relief family staff members spoke at several sessions. Iman Pertek, IRW's Senior Gender Advisor, spoke on how Islamic Relief has used faith-sensitive approaches in its programs and advocacy work, involving religious leaders in efforts to tackle gender injustice.

Along with highlighting Islamic Relief's gender justice policy, Pertek voiced recommendations to policy makers and national delegations. She called on them to recognize that faith can drive positive transformation for dignity in our communities and that faith leaders have great potential to influence behavioral change and promote gender justice. Presenting to a standing room-only audience, Pertek was joined by a panel of policy makers, state delegations, and intergovernmental and civil society organizations.

IRUSA has supported women's empowerment projects

around the world for 25 years. Christina Tobias-Nahi, Director of Public Affairs, said: "IRUSA is pleased to once again ... provide thought leadership on issues of concern to our community and also partner with our many allies on panels to amplify faith voices."

Six IRUSA staff members attended the conference, along with colleagues from Islamic Relief offices in England, Canada, and Ethiopia for multiple events. One event was co-convened with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and another with the United Nations Population Fund. 🌱



IRUSA with OIC at the UN Commission on the Status of Women.



IRUSA hosts intern networking reception on Capitol Hill.



**2ND ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP GALA**

On December 7, 2017, IRUSA hosted its 2nd Annual Partnership Gala at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

The gala honored IRUSA's distinguished partnership with the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church in rebuilding homes in Tarboro, NC. IRUSA awarded the church's regional leader, Bishop Hope Morgan, for outstanding efforts on the ground and mobilization of her community in long-term recovery.

IRUSA recognized the contribution and efforts of the American Red Cross and the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). IRUSA celebrated the work and leadership of the American Red Cross and FEMA.

The gala also highlighted IRUSA's body of work. The partnership between faith-based communities allows for the proper and adequate implementation of the relief and development work on the ground. The gala celebrated and highlighted IRUSA's long tradition of bipartisan support,

with a video message from Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and a letter message from Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA).

The event was also attended by various notable officials from President Trump's administration, such as Tim Lavelle from USAID, Gerri Ratliff of the Department of Justice Community Relations Services, officials from the Environment Protection Agency, staff from the Department of Agriculture, U.S. Institute of Peace, Department of State, among others.

In addition to federal government officials, the event was attended by members of various churches, synagogues, temples, faith-based organizations, and our peer NGOs.



IRUSA awards partners for their work and leadership.



IRUSA working with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for Hurricane Sandy.

**IRUSA HAS WORKED WITH MANY ORGANIZATIONS OVER THE YEARS, FORMED STRONG ALLIANCES, AND ACHIEVED GREAT MILESTONES. BELOW ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE YEARS.**

**MOVING FORWARD**

Our world revolves around advocacy. Whether it's fashion, sports, or politics, every industry in today's world needs it. In this digital era, advocacy has become more crucial than ever.

IRUSA has identified the importance of proper advocacy and the tremendous impact it can have. Throughout the last few years, our organization has faced many political challenges and attacks. Each time, our advocacy team mobilized swiftly to reach various members of Congress, our partner organizations and their constituents, as well as various media outlets.

This type of effectiveness stems from a proper advocacy infrastructure. To ensure we can mobilize swiftly, IRUSA will be launching its advocacy platform. This launch is a major step towards effective and meaningful action. We can now begin to identify which IRUSA constituents have the most potential, and train future advocates and ambassadors. It will even give us the opportunity to acknowledge supporters and issue comments. From strategic targeting to grassroots mobilization, IRUSA is ready to amplify your voice.

**SIGN UP @ IRUSA.ORG/ADVOCACY TO BE AN ADVOCATE TODAY AND TURN YOUR WORDS INTO ACTION!**



IRUSA at Delaware Food Bank.



**RECOGNITIONS**

- 14 years of high ratings from Charity Navigator
- BBB-accredited
- Recognized as a top-rated nonprofit for 2017 by GreatNonprofits
- Accredited as a valued partner by Guidestar Exchange

**PARTNERS**

- American Red Cross
- Catholic Relief Services
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- United Methodist Church
- U.S. government agencies including USDA and FEMA
- World Vision
- HIAS
- ANERA

**GOVERNMENT SERVICE**

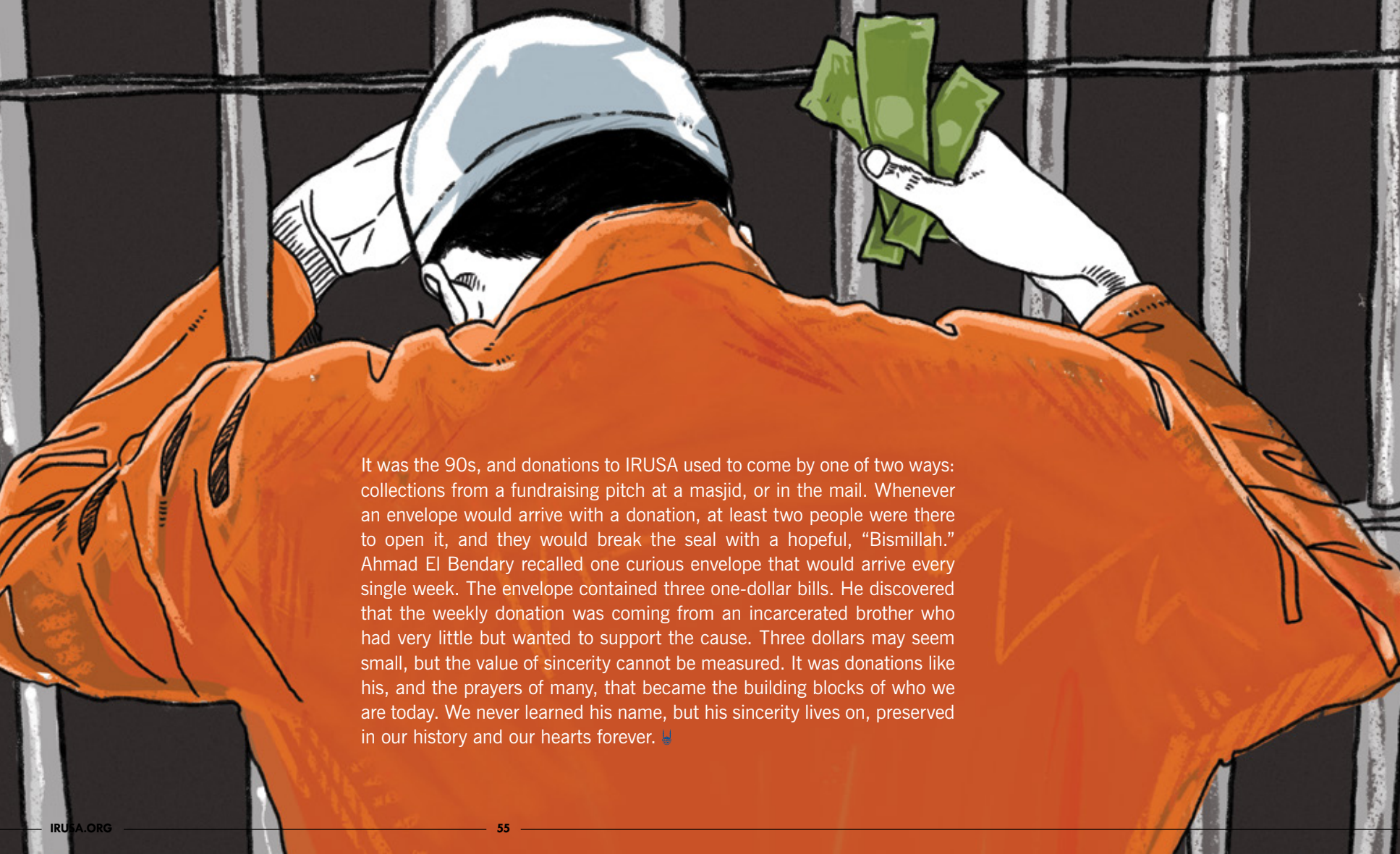
- Secretary of State's Working Group on Faith and Foreign Policy
- USAID's Advisory Council of Voluntary Foreign Aid
- Consultative status on the United Nations

**SAMPLE OF MEMBERSHIPS**

- Alliance to End Hunger
- Charity & Security Network
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Coalition to End Gender Based Violence
- Crisis Action
- Food Policy Working Group
- Inside NGO
- InterAction Board
- Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Interfaith Working Group on Domestic Human Needs
- Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance
- Joint Learning Initiative Board
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
- US Global Leadership Coalition
- We Are All America
- We Will Speak Out



# ONE OF OUR FIRST RECURRING DONATIONS



It was the 90s, and donations to IRUSA used to come by one of two ways: collections from a fundraising pitch at a masjid, or in the mail. Whenever an envelope would arrive with a donation, at least two people were there to open it, and they would break the seal with a hopeful, "Bismillah." Ahmad El Bendary recalled one curious envelope that would arrive every single week. The envelope contained three one-dollar bills. He discovered that the weekly donation was coming from an incarcerated brother who had very little but wanted to support the cause. Three dollars may seem small, but the value of sincerity cannot be measured. It was donations like his, and the prayers of many, that became the building blocks of who we are today. We never learned his name, but his sincerity lives on, preserved in our history and our hearts forever. 🙏

## WAYS TO GIVE

There are many creative ways you can support IRUSA's humanitarian programming. Check out the list below.



Add charitable power to your purchases when you shop through Good Search, Good Shop, where you shop, you save via special discounts, and they (Good Shop) gives. Simply select Islamic Relief USA as your charity of choice, and watch your humanitarian tally grow with every item you buy.



Give towards this endowment fund, and help build the foundation upon which future charity work will grow.



Shop on Amazon using Amazon Smile for Islamic Relief USA, and 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases will be donated to Islamic Relief USA.



STOCK DONATIONS

Donating stocks is a great way to use your securities to help Islamic Relief provide vital aid around the world.



This subscription-based membership platform provides a creative way for the community to engage with and support IRUSA's content.



Ready to get rid of your car, motorcycle, boat or even jet ski? Why not make it a charitable gift instead? Donate your vehicle and the proceeds will go to support IRUSA's humanitarian work all around the world.



Matching Gifts

Through our matching gifts programs, you could double ... triple, ... maybe even quadruple your donation.

Employers often offer their employees the matching-gifts incentive to encourage charitable giving—sometimes, they even extend their matching program to include donations made by an employee's spouse or by retired employees. And in some cases, an employer may even match employees' volunteer hours.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:  
IRUSA.ORG/CREATIVE-GIVING**



# PEER TO PEER

## 2018 CHALLENGES

### CROWDFUNDING

Join our team. Dedicate your birthday, wedding, or aqiqah to people in need. Or start a campaign based on a dare like shaving your head if you raise your fundraising goal! Get creative and use the power of social media.



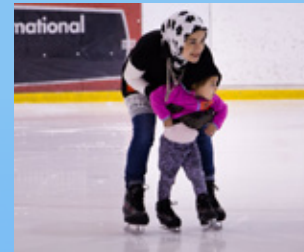
START A CAMPAIGN

[GIVE.IRUSA.ORG](http://GIVE.IRUSA.ORG)

### TEAM CHALLENGES

We've been developing exciting team challenges at Islamic Relief USA. In addition to our traditional fundraising dinners, these offer a chance to challenge your body and mind to support a great humanitarian cause. In January 2018, a few members of our staff and volunteers biked from Cordoba to Granada in Spain to raise awareness and funds for the projects we are doing in Europe, while also learning about the history of Islam in Spain.

We completed 11 Skate for Syria events across the U.S. We have new international challenges planned in Italy and Turkey. These trips and events create unforgettable experiences and make a lasting impact for those in need. They allow us to push ourselves to new heights, while offering a unique way to get involved with IRUSA, meet new people, see the world, and support our brothers and sisters. 🇺🇸



JANUARY

BIKING FOR BOSNIA



JUNE

WATER FOR LIFE IN ITALY



SEPTEMBER

BIKING IN TURKEY



FEBRUARY

BASKETBALL FOR HEALTH PROJECTS

JULY

TOUGH MUDDER IN NEW YORK

OCTOBER

WALK FOR WATER

MARCH

SKATE FOR SYRIA

AUGUST

USA NATIONAL CHALLENGE

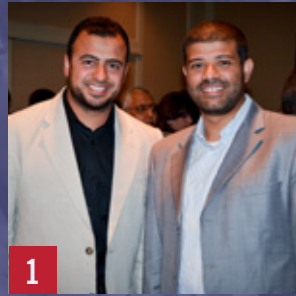
*Travel the world. Challenge your body. Raise money for those in need.*

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEXT ADVENTURE

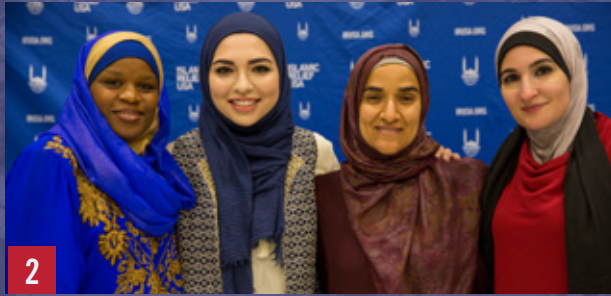
[IRUSA.ORG/TEAM-CHALLENGES](http://IRUSA.ORG/TEAM-CHALLENGES)







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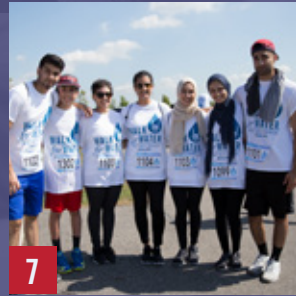


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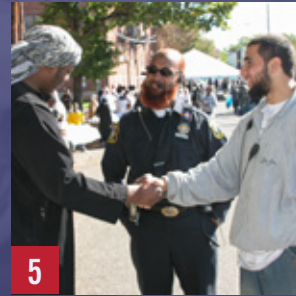
# SPECIAL



7



6



5



8



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10



11

# THROUGH THE YEARS



15



14



13



12

# EVENTS



16



17



18



19



22



21



20

1: Mustafa Hosny (left) with Ahmed Shehata at Arab celebrity event, 2011; 2: leasha Prime (left), Isra Chaker, Dalia Mogahed, and Linda Sarsour at Power of Purpose event, 2017; 3: Anwar Khan and Jehangir Malik at Bloomsburg University, 1994; 4: Shaikh Abdul Nasir Jangda at IRUSA Grand Iftar, 2017; 5: Waleed Gabr at Humanitarian Day, 2006; 6: Maher Zain at Songs for the Children, 2012; 7: Walk for Water in NJ, 2016; 8: Mohammed Assaf at Promise for Palestine tour, 2017; 9: Khalid Bakali (left) with Belkacem Nahi at ISNA Conference, 2012; 10: Imam Johari at East Africa dinner, 2011; 11: Fawad Khan and Najam Shiraz with Daud Mohmand at Pakistan celebrity dinner, 2015.

12: Mudaffar Al Tawash at Humanitarian Day, 2002; 13: Native Deen at Evening of Inspiration, 2006; 14: Sami Yusuf at Evening of Inspiration, 2007; 15: Hanan Turk at Arab celebrity event, 2011; 16: Omar Regan at art gala in CA, 2014; 17: Dawud Wharnsby at Children of Conflict dinner, 2014; 18: Scars and Smiles, 2013; 19: Azhar Azeez at Grand Iftar, 2015; 20: Sheikh Saad El Degwy at Yemen event, 2017; 21: Ibtihaj Muhammad at IRUSA headquarters, 2016; 22: Yusef Abdallah at art gala in NY, 2014.



From our IRUSA family, to yours...



# THANK YOU

TO ALL THE DONORS, VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS, AND STAFF WHO HAVE HELPED SERVE OUR MISSION TO PROVIDE RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT IN A DIGNIFIED MANNER ACROSS THE WORLD.

