

# ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

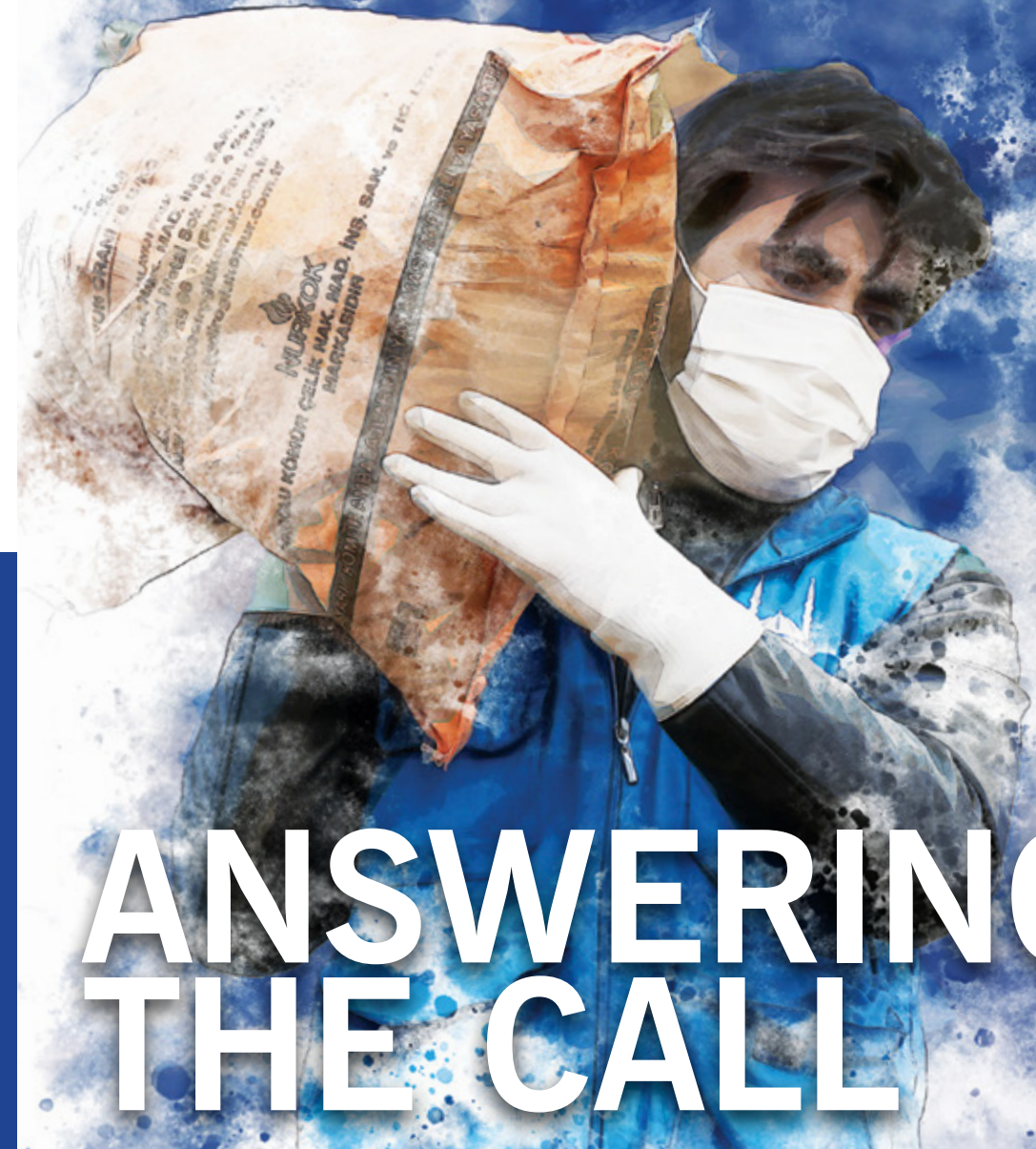
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— 2021 —

# PARTNERSHIP



# ANSWERING THE CALL

STATE OF EMERGENCY IN A POST COVID-19 WORLD



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## ASSALAMU ALAIKUM. PEACE BE UPON YOU.



In the midst of unparalleled challenges, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our supporters who have enabled us to scale up our programs in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In 2020, the world faced the unpredictable consequences of a rapidly spreading and dangerous virus. COVID-19 did not discriminate between developed and underdeveloped countries. Its effects were widespread and catastrophic: millions of lives lost, tens of millions of livelihoods impacted, and hundreds of millions at risk of falling into extreme poverty. During a time of great need, with your support, Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA) was able to rise to the occasion and accelerate its humanitarian mission of alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable communities both at home and abroad.

IRUSA delivered life-saving assistance in over 38 countries across the globe, providing programs that facilitated food security, promoted the growth of financial and sustainable livelihoods, and advanced healthcare and safety among vulnerable communities. These programs met the needs of the hardest hit populations, reaching over 5 million people worldwide. We distributed millions of hygiene kits, medical supplies, and essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to beneficiaries and healthcare workers in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, Sudan, Jordan, and Kosovo. In countries already experiencing humanitarian crises and who are at greater risk of the effects of COVID-19, IRUSA launched several emergency responses to assist the people of Yemen, Syria, and Palestine, and equipped local health facilities with essential materials to battle the pandemic.

In Jordan, you helped Miassar, a widow from the Baqaa Camp, feed her five young children and allowed them to remain enrolled in school with direct financial assistance during the country's lockdown. In Niger, your donations allowed Mariama, her handicapped husband, and their two children to meet their essential needs after losing their sole source of income, weaving home goods in their remote village.

In the United States, IRUSA swiftly addressed and responded to the inflating needs of vulnerable populations. The onset of COVID-19 not only revealed, but further exacerbated the fragility of our communities here at home. As a result, we launched our COVID-19 response in the U.S. and served over 514,000 vulnerable people in 45 states and 143 cities across the country. Through a robust and highly effective collaborative effort, we worked with

210 partners to deliver food aid, hot meals, hygiene kits, and essential PPE to our neighbors and frontline healthcare workers who needed them most.

During these difficult times, our country was also forced to address racial injustice that has fueled disenfranchisement and poverty in America since its inception. For years, IRUSA has dedicated its efforts to working with Black and Brown communities right here at home. In 2020, we took a more vigorous and intentional approach. We actively reached out to leaders within the community to learn how IRUSA can best support critical community work. We've learned a lot and we still have room to grow, but we are proud that IRUSA was able to partner with 68 Black Muslim-led organizations to deliver critical support to communities struggling due to the economic and health consequences of the pandemic. For example, we worked with our friends at Masjid Inshirah on a variety of programs, including our annual Day of Dignity that supports homeless populations to provide food aid, PPE, and healthcare assistance. Additionally, we began working with local community-based organizations to support building their capacity so they are able to contribute to the needs of their communities more effectively.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and in a post pandemic world now, IRUSA's core humanitarian work has been in great demand at both the domestic and international levels--we've seen this recently with emergencies like those in Palestine, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and right in our neighborhoods across the U.S. as we work to serve refugees who've sought safety in our communities. Our unrelenting commitment to alleviating the suffering and promoting the sustainable development of our most vulnerable communities has only grown in the wake of the global pandemic that has united us all to a common cause: protecting and helping our brothers and sisters in their greatest time of need. I am hopeful that together, we can continue to tackle the most challenging problems facing humanity of poverty, disease, and crises.

Thank you for your continued support, love, and partnership. As our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says, "One who is ungrateful to the people is ungrateful to Allah." We share our sincerest appreciation to you and express our deepest gratitude to the Almighty creator.

Your brother,

Sharif Aly  
Chief Executive Officer  
Islamic Relief USA





# SOLIDARITY SHINES LIGHT

## KEEPING SOLIDARITY WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Racial minorities often experience difficulties in obtaining things many others take for granted. Whether it's in obtaining housing, fair justice, quality healthcare, or jobs, the hurdles are often large and little progress is made as each year passes.

One of our most cherished moments from this past year of service was the amplification of efforts to support racial justice further. Our partners, projects, and programs have championed the work of pioneers in the Black community for over two decades.

However we enjoyed and encouraged everyone who represents IRUSA to dig deeper, recognize the urgency of now, and commit to do more, exponentially. Below are reflections from a few key staff members who supported our solidarity efforts.

We are proud to have maintained and strengthened our partnerships with over 100 African American led organizations with a commitment of over \$3,000,000 to growing initiatives yearly.

*I as the President of IRUSA reached out to each of our African American local community partner organizations to listen and learn from their concerns. As a result we as an organization are doing more strategic partnerships with African American led organizations. Allyship can be improved with learning, understanding and practice.*

**-ANWAR KHAN**  
President

*As the sector as a whole moves forward with Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and as IRUSA participated in the Anti Racism work of the Interfaith G20 which has continued to gain momentum, it is important to look at systemic structures that leave communities vulnerable and entrenched in intergenerational poverty. It is important that through our programming and advocacy we address these issues.*

**-CHRISTINA TOBIAS-NAHI**  
Director of Public Affairs

*"Islamic Relief is centered around five core values, one of which is social justice. Social justice is defined in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within a society and solidarity work is an extension of this core value. Unfortunately, a lot of those underserved communities exist within our own backyard. By working with and through our partnership organizations, we are better able to assist those communities with determining their own needs and provide the services as requested."*

**-STEPHANIE THOMAS**  
Talent Acquisition and Engagement Specialist

*Allah redeems us through intentions, repentance, and purifying deeds. If the non-Black Muslim community seeks to redefine its relationship with the Black people of America particularly their co-religionists, they will need to take diligent steps toward what Allah loves, consistency.*

**-TARIQ TOURE**  
Senior Comms Specialist

**JABREEL (AS) DID NOT STOP  
ADVISING ME TO TREAT  
NEIGHBORS WELL UNTIL I  
THOUGHT HE WOULD MAKE  
THEM MY HEIRS.**

**-PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)**

**SAHIH BUKHARI AND SAHIH MUSLIM**



# COMPASSION IN THE COVID-19 CRISIS

For nearly two years now, the entire world has been brought to a brutal standstill by the COVID-19 pandemic. By mid-2020, the virus had crossed continents and infected millions of people. Over 2.2 million people around the globe have lost their lives to coronavirus. We pray that each and every family and person affected by COVID-19 finds comfort and healing. IRUSA is well aware of how disease, infection, and illness can rip hope away from even the strongest people. When COVID-19 took hold, our priority was ensuring that vulnerable people and the communities they belong to are helped.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked in partnership with communities, service providers, religious institutions, businesses, and good samaritans to provide quality support. In March 2020, we launched a \$15 million domestic and global response. Our US response included an emergency grant program, providing support to more than 140 partners across the country to provide critical assistance to communities that are in dire need of assistance. Internationally, we introduced more support to countries like Yemen, Kenya, Afghanistan, and Mali due to the dire conditions many people were already challenged with prior to the pandemic. Across the US and international emergency responses, a total of 2,427,671 vulnerable individuals were provided with life-saving aid, such as personal protective equipment, surgical masks, lab kits, portable X-ray machines, ventilators, medical staffing, and food parcels. This response would not have been possible without the generosity of our community of donors and volunteers who made daily sacrifices to assist their neighbors in humanity. IRUSA's journey to respond to COVID-19 is not done, but we are well prepared thanks to you.



## MIASSAR REBUILDS A LIFE

Like the rest of the world, Jordan has been reeling from the outbreak of COVID-19 since March 2020. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has affected communities across Jordan, including Syrian and Palestinian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian households. Many of them have lost their savings, forcing them to cut down on the most basic needs, including food and medication.

For Miassar, a widow from Al Baqaa camp, the hardships of life after losing her husband have left her family in poor living conditions.

"We used to live a luxurious life. We used to own everything we needed. We never asked anyone for help. Alhamdulillah, my husband was doing well financially, until he got injured. After that, our lives turned upside-down. I had to go to work myself to get some money to feed the children."

"My husband used to work so hard to ensure that our children get the best education in the future. But unfortunately, things didn't go how we planned."

Two of Miassar's children had to drop out of school because she could not afford the fees.

"My eldest daughter and my son have dropped their education to bring money to our family. We depend on what they earn to manage our daily expenses. But unfortunately, after the lockdown, our situation became worse. Due to COVID-19 lockdown, my daughter lost her job as a cleaner at a local school while my son lost his job in a restaurant too." "Actually," she added, "a huge number of households in this camp have been affected by this pandemic as most of them depend on their daily wages to pay for their basic needs like food or accommodations."

Jordan was in total lockdown until August of 2020. After discovering several COVID-19 cases around the country, the government of Jordan took extraordinary precautions, including implementing strict emergency laws. Islamic Relief staff (IR) moved to provide families affected by the pandemic. Miassar and her family were among those served—they received cash assistance to help them cope during the extraordinarily difficult time.

"Recently, I received a message, informing me that [Islamic Relief] will provide us with cash assistance to support us during the quarantine. That moment, I remembered that I raised my hands and asked Allah to reward and bless you for your good deeds. This assistance was a gift from Allah, who will never forget us."

Through the charity of IRUSA donors, Islamic Relief Jordan (IRJ) was able to ease the suffering of Miassar's family along with another 1,519 vulnerable families during the quarantine.



## NO BETTER TIME TO ANSWER THE CALL

IRUSA partners with organizations worldwide to provide food security support to those who need it the most. One such organization is the Tiyya Foundation in California. Although COVID-19 has made direct services challenging, the Tiyya Foundation has managed to check in with nearly all their clients to assess their needs. The staff, interns, and community volunteers have all stepped up to assist with delivering nonperishable food pantry items and other needed goods (i.e. diapers, cleaning supplies, children's books, and toys) to 140 families a month.

In addition to deliveries, they are providing virtual tutoring to thirteen children. Tiyya Foundation's soccer program coordinator Elizabeth Blum has trained ten volunteers and provided a manual with resources to each of them. Youth in the program are in grades K-12 and receive assistance with a variety of subjects incorporating fun activities with each session (dance parties, workout games, acting, etc). One household needed a computer to participate in virtual tutoring and a new one was donated to them.

The staff at Tiyya Foundation is also working on another campaign to provide families with self-care packages, containing community letters, games, hygiene and home care products, and culturally appropriate items.

"The support of Islamic Relief and commitment to aid these families in need has improved their lives significantly during a difficult time. The Tiyya Foundation would not be able to provide these services without your help," says Shukry Cattar, director of operations at Tiyya Foundation. "I truly value our partnership and look forward to many more opportunities to collaborate on projects, ensuring we create a community that fosters the development of self-sufficiency for refugee and low income immigrant families."





# WOMEN MAKING A WAY

IRUSA has remained committed to placing women's empowerment at the heart of our programs and projects since our inception nearly three decades ago. It's an IRUSA core belief that community restoration and upliftment cannot occur if the well-being of women and girls is not prioritized.

And so we make sure that our integrated programming considers and implements initiatives that provide women and girls with the resources they need to thrive and succeed—from education to vocational training to livelihood support.

In Liberia, for example, women are learning how to respond to violence against themselves and young girls. The program trains faith leaders in understanding signs of abuse and conflict mitigation. Women on committees then work to build empowerment groups in their locality.

In Niger, where agriculture is a main source of livelihood advancement, crop cultivation training is provided to prepare women to re-establish themselves after losing income. Participants in

the program have the opportunity to build a solid foundation for their businesses by taking courses in management.

Participants in microfinance programs for women in Bangladesh and Pakistan build upon skills they have honed over time and provide capital for manufacturing their crafts. The investments in their small businesses not only allow them to grow teams of employees but also contribute to the availability of livable wages.

IRUSA understands that gender justice has to include empowerment for women and girls to live to their fullest potential. Their advancement demands a commitment to education, protection from harm, and investing in their future.

Social justice is an important value at IRUSA and we're committed to investing in the success and self-determination of women.



## MANAL HAS HER EYES ON HER DREAM

At 50, Manal has been honing her craft for the last 25 years. She first discovered a love for photography through her husband, and swiftly mastered the basics. She soon felt in complete harmony with the camera.

After her husband died, she picked it up as a profession.

In addition to weddings, she began filming other ceremonies like graduation parties. In the old days, she used a camcorder with cassette tapes. Over the years, her video camera became outdated so she started to rent digital cameras from local studios, paying 150NIS (\$43) each time.

Through the Women Can project, funded by IRUSA, Manal got two new cameras—a Canon 80D and a Panasonic AG-UX90. Owning her new gear has allowed her to net a substantially higher rate—700NIS (\$200) per event.

Manal has covered dozens of events since getting her new equipment which has now granted a livelihood to support her and her family.

## BALKISSA BELIEVES

For people in a village in Niger, the 2019 winter was bad—in fact, it was the worst winter they had experienced in all of the 10 years prior. Women and men of the village migrated to the big cities to get by. Balkissa is one of those who decided to stay.

"My name is Balkissa, I have been divorced for six years and care for three of my children. For all this time, I have been the sole breadwinner of my family, including my children and my mother who lives with me. My husband has remarried and no longer takes care of his children. I am a farmer during the winter period."

Balkissa gained entry into a women's empowerment program and pushed herself constantly to make the best of it. "Since December 2019, I am a beneficiary of the project funded by Islamic Relief. I was able to have access to several training sessions in associative life and in management techniques. It helped me understand the importance of teaming up with other women to help each other," She, like many others, has committed to turning her situation around. Balkissa believes that the program can help many more women like her. She mentioned, "I cannot thank Islamic Relief enough for making a positive change in my life in a very short time, through the application of the advice given to me."





# WATER FOR LIFE

Water is a gift from Allah (SWT), a blessing for all of us— every man, woman, and child; a form of sustenance that allows us to stay hydrated and healthy. This is highlighted by the fact that the human body is made of up to 60% water. There is no way around it, water is crucial to our survival. Water is life.

Now, imagine you didn't have readily- available access to water, to this most basic, most crucial of commodities. Imagine that every day, you have to worry about how you're going to find water, and when you find it, you have to consider whether the water is clean enough to drink. That's no way for anyone to live! Clean water should not be something that anyone has to worry about.

This is why IRUSA has put water first time and time again. You will find few resources that change the entire dynamic of a community like water. It affects schooling, livelihoods, food security, and, most importantly, the everyday lives of the people we serve.

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WELL MAKES

Binta is a proud wife and mother of two growing boys who live in a village in Mali. Before the water system project took place in their village, there were only two accessible human motor pumps (hand pump water systems). Both of the pumps went out of service in an eight month span, leaving countless families out of clean water. Binta said, "In the morning as soon as I would wake up, I'd run to fetch water only for drinking and cooking. Although I went out early, I could spend two hours there alone and because of this my family members used to eat late. The process of just getting water caused me to rarely have time to look after my children. Once I had tears in my eyes when I

came to find one of my sons very sick and suffering from a stomach ache—that day I spent the whole day without eating."

Building a resource for clean water in Binta's village was a tremendous success and led to an easing of stress for hundreds of families. "Alhamdulillah today, I am overjoyed because I have enough water for my needs. Thank God. There is a standpipe just 10 meters (11 yards) from my house. Thanks to Islamic Relief, water-borne diseases have disappeared."

## INNOVATION BRINGS HOPE

In Puntland, Somalia, a sand dam water project changed the lives of families across 1,200 households—its success, in large part, due to partnerships with local workers and farmers...farmers like Abdi.

Abdi is a father of seven children, four girls and three boys. Early on, in response to the water scarcity due to the geological and geophysical complexity in their area, Islamic Relief Somalia started and concluded

a pilot project in the target area of Puntland, where people are severely suffering from water shortages from severe droughts. Abdi has a farm near the village where the sand dam was built and was so enthusiastic to participate. During Islamic Relief's visit to the village, Abdi was busy planting onions, cabbages, tomatoes, and other vegetables in the farm. "It is great that Islamic Relief Somalia is supporting us for the construction of the sand dam. As you can see, I am

planting vegetables and I hope that I will harvest a lot from the irrigated water." Like many other farmers in the region, Abdi had been feeling the wrath of price elevation. Cultivating, selling, and buying crops became too costly. But now, rainwater is available to households and farmers because the sand dam traps the flow of water coming from hilly areas beside the village.





# HEALING FOR HUMANITY

The reality for millions of people in communities near and far is that accessing medical care is an unimaginable burden. This can mean that routine exams and procedures are either completely non-existent or unattainable. Far too many people are forced to choose between food on the table or medicine that can save their lives. For the past two years, many healthcare systems have been strained due to the pandemic, making accessibility to care even harder. The gap between the need for healthcare and the resources available has become even greater.



IRUSA is committing its best resources and strategies toward the most impactful and efficient ways to provide medical support to regions under strain. Simple daily availability of a physician or medical professional can mean the difference between life and death. It can stop malnourished children from severely- stunted growth. It can help mothers get prenatal treatment. For those suffering from diseases like malaria, it means a chance at being nursed back to health.



## CARING FOR CONGENITAL HEART DISEASES

In Lebanon, more than 600 babies are diagnosed with heart disease every year, about 400 of whom will need treatment. Unfortunately, many families in Lebanon are compelled to postpone life-saving surgery because of a lack of funds, often destroying their hopes of a full recovery.

Due to government hospitals in Lebanon not performing congenital heart operations, thousands who are suffering from congenital heart disease are left to fend for themselves. This forces people to seek out the help of private hospitals. More often than not, the cost of the operation in private hospitals is far too high.

Dr. Walid Serhan is a Lebanese cardiac surgeon who sought to transfer the expertise of a private institution he was familiar with to the Al Rachaya Governmental Hospital in Lebanon. In 2016, he founded the Pure Heart Foundation (PHF) as an extension of the Novick Cardiac Alliance (NCA). PHF's mission is to save the hearts of each child born with congenital heart disease because every kid has the right to a pure heartbeat.

Islamic Relief teamed up with NCA to develop a sustainable pediatric heart surgery center at the Al Rachaya Government Hospital so that more training could be provided and more children could receive the life-saving treatments and surgeries they'd need. During the first phase, the NCA team screened over 600 children, diagnosed 15 children with heart disease, and supervised seven successful heart operations.

As part of this program, surgeries are performed under the full supervision of the NCA team, which allows local medical teams to learn how to perform similar surgeries.

A representative for Islamic Relief Lebanon noted that the program set a benchmark for more governmental hospitals to strive toward, to improve services and to be centers of excellence in order to serve more and more children across Lebanon.



## HAJ HOLDS ON

Haj, 73, is one of many Syrian refugees and their families forced to flee their home for safety, finding themselves with no place to live. "We never thought that this would happen to us. We used to live in peace. We used to have enough food," said Haj, "But now everything has changed! We are a family of five members living inside a small tent without any source of income. My family relies on 75 JOD (\$105 USD) that we receive as food vouchers. The small amount of food we get is barely enough for five." The challenges that Haj faced were not confined to the lack of food but also the bad health conditions that he and his wife suffered from. "I have suffered from stones for two years, and my wife also has suffered from the same health problem for three

years. I can't find words to describe the pain we used to feel every day. I swear to God the pain kept us awake all night and prevented us from sleeping."

Earlier in 2018, the sharp increase in medical costs for Syrian refugees prevented many Syrian refugees like Haj and his wife from having the proper treatment they needed. Islamic Relief's health team is on the ground in order to provide health-care services for Syrian refugees and families from the host community. Our two mobile clinics reach vulnerable people living in remote or rural areas who are unable to access the medical facilities of the Ministry of Health to get the support needed for medications and treatment. "Your medical doctors with

the mobile van visited our camp one week ago. It was like a surprise for us. Finally, we are able to get medical services without the need to travel a long distance to reach the nearest medical center!" said Haj. "All people living here, especially elderly men and women, and children have received free medical check-ups and got the necessary medications according to their health condition."







# FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

As the world changes, the Islamic Relief family seeks out innovative, creative, efficient, and effective programs that highlight self-determination and sustainable development for the people we serve, now and in the future. It's also difficult to address challenges that are decades in the making without new strategies, such as lack of access to capital for growing entrepreneurs to invest in their dreams, or proper equipment for communities in agricultural trades. Our efforts to address long-standing challenges in the regions we serve remain rooted in innovation and using evidence of program success to propel people forward.

From building cutting-edge microfinance programs that help move new entrepreneurs from poverty into success, to harnessing solar power to bring stable electricity to remote villages, innovation is a cornerstone of our strategic programming.

Most importantly, IRUSA understands the profound impact a quality education can have, especially for women. Vocational training can turn an entire family's trajectory away from poverty when given the access to it. Adolescents who've always dreamed of managing businesses in fields they are passionate about only need to be given a chance to succeed. As we continue looking to the future, IRUSA knows that those best educated will be more equipped to participate in the progress it has to offer.



## OPEN DOORS FOR HASAN

"I spent nine years unemployed, with no salary, no profession, and nothing to occupy my time and energy with. It was a really difficult period of time and I felt so much pressure, especially since I'm the elder of my eight siblings who look up to me," Hasan said.

Hasan graduated with a BA degree in Information Technology from the Islamic University in Gaza in 2010 and looked for job opportunities with no success. "After some depressing time, I decided to learn a new skill which I always wanted to learn and it's graphic design. I started learning on my own from YouTube and Google and then I joined the virtual jobs training program, which helps youth find sustainable job opportunities," Hasan said.

During the training, which was supported by IRUSA, students learned how to get jobs through the different platforms of social media. Hasan was able to apply what he learned in designing, helping him find employment opportunities through the freelancers' website.

"Better late than never. I believe that every day is a new opportunity to learn a new thing and develop a new skill, and the success that I made until now is not the end of my journey, but the beginning of a new chapter where I aspire to be a well-known name in the graphic design field and run my own company," Hasan said. Now he has a busy schedule, part-time stable job, and plenty of work in freelance projects.

## A SMALL BUSINESS BLOOMS IN NIGER



Saâ's family has been engaged in their small business for some years now. Now in her 40s, and caring for her five children, she is more dependent than ever on the success of the small enterprise.

Saâ trades in small condiments but barely makes enough to fully support her family. "I struggled to support my family, but now with the support of Islamic Relief, I can," Saâ said. She was one of the many eager participants in a livestock livelihood program that trained people raising cattle in fattening expertise. Through the project, they become some of the best stewards of livestock in their local community. Saâ was given two sheep and one goat to begin with. In three months, when the animals were ready, she sold them at a generous profit.

By establishing a profitable business, Saâ earned a break from the many restless nights she and her family spent worrying about how they would get food and necessities. "Islamic Relief has provided us the necessary support and we wish that this kind of support will continue to assist more poor people," Saâ said.



# RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

Hurricanes, droughts, famine, violence, war, disaster, a pandemic; emergencies, both natural and man-made, destroyed lives and livelihoods this past year.

But when vulnerable communities called out for help, Islamic Relief was on the frontline to serve, not only to provide immediate aid, but to work with community groups to build programming that would bring long-term relief and recovery efforts in the ways they needed them most.

Whether it's providing food assistance, helping refugees settle in new territory, or rebuilding houses in distressed communities, the organization has been quick to respond to the needs of people whose lives were suddenly upended by major disasters.

Several years ago, IRUSA created the Disaster Management Team (DMT) to respond to emergencies in the United States and abroad. This team has provided assistance to areas devastated by wildfires, hurricanes, and even earthquakes.

After emergency relief is provided, IRUSA works with communities, when possible, to assist in long-term recovery. Through these projects, communities are often built back stronger through both resilient infrastructure and spirit.

In the years to come, IRUSA remains strongly committed to disaster relief in emergency areas, providing both immediate assistance and long-term solutions.

## LEBANON EXPLOSION SHAKES THOUSANDS

On August 4, 2020, an explosion in a Beirut port caused havoc and confusion throughout the city: 300,000 people were displaced; 6,000 people were injured; and 190 people were killed.

The explosion came at a time when Lebanese residents were already facing COVID-19 lockdowns, financial crises, extreme electricity outages, massive trash dilemmas, and even famine.

Islamic Relief has had a long history of serving those in need in Lebanon, and, when this emergency set in, IR teams and donors moved quickly to help, providing aid and support to tens of thousands of those affected, including distributing emergency food and hygiene kits to the survivors to address immediate needs, and set up rehabilitation programs to provide effective aid over the long haul.

## A YEAR OF FLOODS

In January of 2020, torrential rains inundated much of India, and the city of Hyderabad saw extensive damage caused by heavy flooding. In addition to submerging houses and cars, the deluge uprooted trees, electricity poles, and damaged overhead cables. Some 40,000 homes were affected, plunging them into darkness.

Sudan is a country that is currently grappling with the impact of COVID-19, in addition to armed conflict and outbreaks of polio. The healthcare system there has received only 15% of the budget that it requires to give adequate care. To make matters worse only 22% of the budget the country needed to address water and hygiene needs was acquired. The dramatic shifts in weather are widely believed to be a result of climate change, and even more worrying, part of an expected trend moving forward. The floods brought an unprecedented level of damage—800,000 people were affected, thousands of homes were destroyed, and more than 100 people were killed.

IRUSA quickly responded to the disasters with an emergency appeal, making sure that amidst the destruction, people who were affected were able to get necessary items, such as safe drinking water, food, health services, and blankets to protect them from the frigid weather.

## HOUSTON RECOVERY ONGOING

IRUSA's Disaster Management Team held two, week-long sessions of its popular, ongoing home-rebuilding project in Houston, TX, repairing houses that were damaged by Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Volunteers lodged at IRUSA's new dormitory, made possible by a grant from the American Red Cross, among other resources. The dorm can house dozens of volunteers, and living and working together further contributes to the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that is built during efforts like these. The first week-long session took place Feb. 23-29, 2020, and the second took place March 21, 2020.

"We are truly grateful for our volunteers and their commitment to service," said Araif Yusuff, IRUSA's Director of Programs. "Recovery is a long process that can last for years. We need to continue to support communities, such as Houston, that are recovering from disasters for as long as we can, because the road to recovery is a difficult one. I am truly proud of IRUSA's volunteers because their commitment to provide assistance and answer the call to service on an ongoing basis is truly inspiring. I also wanted to extend our sincerest gratitude to our partners in Houston, especially the American Red Cross and St. Bernard Project."

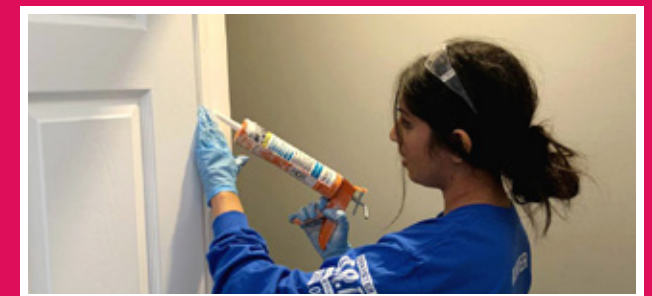
Some of the tasks volunteers do onsite include drywall installation, painting, trim work, and flooring.

Prior construction experience is not required, just a strong willingness to learn, work hard, and to follow instructions.

The dormitory provides an important central location for volunteers from all Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) organizations.

IRUSA is committed to the city of Houston for the long term, as DMT focuses more on rebuilding communities following natural disasters, in addition to rescue and response.

And beyond Houston, the DMT has dedicated time and energy to rebuilding and relief work in Puerto Rico for families still reeling from recent hurricanes, and in Maryland for families whose homes were destroyed from floods in September 2020.





# BEHIND THE VEST:

## INTERVIEW WITH PROGRAMS DIRECTOR ARAIF YUSUFF



\*Photo taken pre-COVID

August 2021: One of the most challenging disaster response months IRUSA has faced since the inception of our humanitarian mission and effort. On one hand, more than 500,000 Afghan refugees were suddenly displaced in Afghanistan and across foreign countries that were put on notice of their arrival just days before—they fled turmoil and increased violence that came on the heels of the US withdrawal after 20 years in the country. On the other hand, category four Hurricane Ida slammed against the southern shores of America, with the gusto of the second most-damaging hurricane in Louisiana history. More than 1,000,000 people were left without power. Forty people died.

Aarif Yusuff, IRUSA's Director of Programs, puts in perspective what it means to respond to multiple disasters at the same time, and how there can even be a sense of calm amidst the chaos.

**Q:** IRUSA's Disaster Management Team has, unfortunately, had to deploy for many different types of emergencies across the country. How was the deployment to Louisiana for Hurricane Ida different from some of the others?

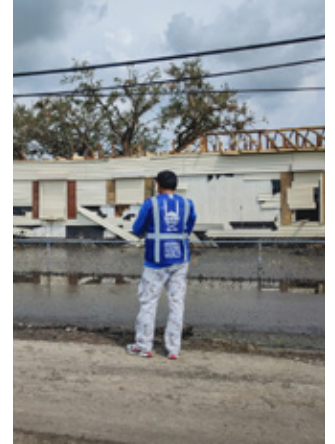
**A:** Every disaster is different, right? They all come with their own context and needs. In terms of protocol, our response for Hurricane Ida was generally in line with others—but a difference I would add was the mental and emotional state of the staff. We had been monitoring Ida for some time before it hit to prepare, but still, being in the middle of what was happening to our Afghan sisters and brothers, and trying to help them, and still trying to plan how to help communities in Ida's path—and we have to decide how to split our resources for both... It was heavy-hearted. And all this while still in COVID-19, pandemic mode. So, in that sense, this was different.

**Q:** The world has certainly been seeing more and more emergencies happening, seemingly, all at once. IRUSA CEO Sharif Aly recently called it "a heightened level of overlap between disasters." How is it from the programmatic side, and from the disaster response side, to now be working to provide aid for survivors of a hurricane and also work to help newly-arrived Afghan refugees, balanced with other emergencies that we have to respond to?

**A:** It's been really tough! There was so much overlap this year. The closest year I can remember to this was 2017, when we had category four, category five hurricanes back-to-back. In this case, IRUSA's DMT, which includes staff and volunteers, had been working to rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Harvey in Houston while also rebuilding homes damaged by flooding in Prince George's County, MD. We were working in Michigan to help families affected by flooding too. Then, there was a tropical storm in North Carolina that our coordinator there was working on. So, about four projects in progress simultaneously...and then came Ida. And, of course, just before Ida, came the crisis facing Afghan families and the subsequent influx of Afghan refugees into the US. Many overlapping emergencies, and, sometimes, coordination becomes really stretched, because everybody's trying to help as much as they can—you're stretched so thin. That's probably the hardest part for us here at IRUSA—we want to help EVERYONE, but, sometimes, we realize we cannot.

**Q:** What is something that you communicate to disaster responders to help keep them positive or OK. How do you keep that all in perspective?

**A:** I emphasize self-care: You have to be able to be able to take care of yourself and make sure that you're in a good mental state, make sure that you're well rested. People are going to rely on you—you may become their hope as they see you, the relief worker, coming in and helping. The other thing that I really encourage staff to do is be prepared. And when I say "be prepared," I don't mean be prepared for disasters—I mean prepare your mindset. Disasters are unexpected...you're going to be called to go X, Y, and Z place or be called to do this or that. So always be prepared.



**Q:** What sort of fulfillment do you think volunteers and staff may get from this work?

**A:** They say the happiest people are the people who are in service to others. And when you're there, all you're thinking about is how can I be of benefit to this person I'm trying to help or this community that I'm trying to help? That comes with its own sort of calm. I call it the tranquility of the heart. It really purifies you as a person because it makes what you're going through, what your life situation is, seem not as important. Right? When you go in and see everybody who lost everything that they amassed, even personal items that got destroyed by a flood, and everything that they have is sitting in the front lawn, waiting for somebody to come pick it up. A survivor is thinking, "How do I rebuild my life?" It puts things into perspective for you... this person in front of me needs a lot of help. And you feel good about being able to help.





# EDUCATION FOR A GENERATION

Education is an important key to success. That's why Islamic Relief has prioritized the building and implementation of education programs around the world.

From classes that teach illiterate community members to read and write, to those that provide vocational training for young people, to programs that open up access to learning for women and orphans to programs that teach soon-to-be entrepreneurs the skills they need to effectively launch and run their own businesses, Islamic Relief's educational programs are powerful.



## BUILDING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS IN SUDAN

In order for students to learn at their highest level, having suitable environments where they can study comfortably can be enormously beneficial. To help facilitate that goal, IRUSA dedicated funds to rehabilitating classrooms and restroom facilities to encourage public health best practices, such as washing hands, sanitizing, and social distancing in an underserved school district.

In addition to completing and furnishing nine classrooms, the project served the rehabilitation of conference rooms, teacher offices, computer labs, and a theater. Students were now able to take part in a schooling environment conducive to learning and achieving their academic goals. Engagement with parents was a mainstay. The main concept imparted to parents was the pressing need to have their young children attend school to break cycles of poverty.



## HUDA'S RELIEF

Huda had long been inspired to make clothes for those less fortunate. Thanks to IRUSA donors, a training program for women on embroidery and crocheting opened up in her village—the program set women up to become entrepreneurs.

Since the training program, Huda has created many crochet pieces, and this hobby has helped her gain confidence and even become a more confident mother. "Sometimes, my husband gets jealous when I spend so much time on my pieces, so I rush to hide them before he walks in," she said with a chuckle.

"The time passes so quickly. Everything seems to fade in the background. I don't care that the TV is on too loudly. I'm grateful that my hands are being used to do something useful. May Allah (SWT) allow me to open up my own shop one day."



# HUNGER

Hunger and food security are among the main areas IRUSA focuses on in the countries where it conducts humanitarian work. Conflict, climate change, and economic shocks, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are the main drivers of the increase in hunger globally.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 2.3 billion people (or 30% of the global population) lacked year-round access to adequate food. This metric was developed to monitor severe food insecurity. Unfortunately it leapt in one year as much as the prior five combined. In June of 2021, the World Food Program warned that up to 41 million people in 43 countries are at imminent risk of famine. This widespread crisis left no region untouched. Right here in America, our most vulnerable populations have been exposed to crippling hunger.

Since the pandemic, the food insecurity rate among Black households with kids has ballooned from 25% to 39%. Among Hispanic households, it has more than doubled from 17% to 37%. A study by Northwestern University using census data found that four out of 10 Black and Brown families struggled to feed their families. They're twice as likely to struggle than white families, a disparity that one of the study's authors described as "appalling."

IRUSA has worked to address these inequities, responding to the needs of vulnerable populations. It has done this by providing food boxes to families on the brink of poverty, delivering food parcels to survivors of natural disasters, distributing hot meals to those suffering from hunger, supporting school food programs for vulnerable students, and devising sustainable agriculture programs to enable them to grow food.

IRUSA can't do this alone. It works alongside interfaith partners and community-based organizations to deliver food aid to some of the most difficult-to-reach areas. This collaboration enables us to curb hunger faster than it would have if it was working alone. IRUSA will continue its mission of empowering communities.



## AKBERT FINDS HOPE

Akbert had a happy life in Ethiopia with her husband and children. Her husband was the breadwinner and owned livestock that earned their income.

But the conflict in Ethiopia ruined Akbert's family.

Akbert's husband was killed and she was left to flee to Sudan with her children in hopes for a better life.

The conflict in Ethiopia has forced 2 million people to be displaced. Akbert and her family now live in a refugee camp in Sudan.

"I was very scared when I first came here, I worry about my children when I run out of food, how can I explain it to them? We are adults, we understand the situation, but they are only children," Akbert explained.

To help Akbert and her family, IR staff provided her with cooking utensils so that she can prepare food; in addition, food boxes and hygiene kits were delivered to families like Akbert's, all throughout the camp.



# CHILDREN ARE OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Through IRUSA's programs for vulnerable children, including orphans, donors have helped enrich the lives of children who have had to overcome extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

IRUSA prioritizes programming that serves children in need and their families, from psychosocial efforts to help children deal with trauma, to support programs that help orphans and their communities build sustainable income, to sponsorships that provide individual orphans with access to education, healthcare, financial aid, and more.

More than 70,000 orphans are being sponsored by Islamic Relief's global community, masha'Allah!

When we work together, we can achieve so much for children in need.



## FOR GAZA

The children of Gaza face myriad challenges, not the least of which are poverty and lack of access to a quality education. But thanks to support from our partners we were able to assist more than 3,000 children with financial assistance, school supplies, sign language training for custodians of hearing-impaired children, hearing aids, medicines, clothes, and other items.

Of the 3,000 children enrolled, some 2,500 are orphans. Some 700 of the children in the program have special needs. Without important initiatives like these, vulnerable children, like those in this program, may never have access to the resources they'd need to strive toward success. But, thanks to the generosity of IRUSA donors, these children are able to pursue their educations, with goals of becoming engineers, doctors, social workers, and more.

By working together, these children now have the hope and confidence to propel them forward toward a brighter future.





# ACROSS THE WORLD

IRUSA is often asked what has been the most difficult part of being a relief agency that delivers aid across the world. Our most difficult obstacle is witnessing the vast gaps that still exist for the people we serve. We call on our donors to give, we ask our volunteers to be ready for the call, and trust our partners will be able to deliver programs and projects worthy of the quality that the people we serve deserve. But as climate change, rising conflicts, and natural disasters continue to emerge, we have to be watchful and ready to respond.



# ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST

Our brothers and sisters in the Middle East have not only battled through some of the worst effects of the COVID-19 crisis, but they've also been subjected to some of the most damaging humanitarian situations and crimes. We deployed more aid to the people we serve in places like Yemen due to ruptures in the supply chain that occurred early on in the pandemic. In Palestine during an atrocious outbreak of violence against community members we deployed medical aid, supported hospitals, and ensured survivors could continue to benefit from projects such as job training, despite it all. Lebanon is still being helped to recover the explosion that rocked its city centre, all while hosting refugees. Today IRUSA understands what many of us have come to know, there is much more work to be done, and we can not lose sight of the triumphs along the way.



A photograph of a man with a mustache, wearing a light blue shirt and a brown patterned shawl, looking out of a window. The window frame is dark and the wall is light-colored and textured. The view outside the window shows a hazy, urban landscape. Large white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# EYES ON YEMEN

During a briefing in August 2021, officials from the United Nations (UN) Security Council resoundingly agreed that there was “no end to the Yemen civil war on the horizon.” This war, coupled with economic decline, troubles with supply chains, disease, like cholera and COVID-19, is pushing Yemen to its brink. Called the “world’s worst humanitarian crisis,” in Yemen, more than 20 million people are at risk for famine, and aid agencies are desperately funneling as much aid as possible to at-risk families.

Acute malnutrition for women and children has increased year after year, with a significant deterioration in 2020, driven by high rates of disease, including diarrhea, and rising rates of food insecurity. Nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five are projected to suffer from malnutrition in 2021. Of these, up to 400,000 are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition or die if they don’t receive urgent care.

The situation across Yemen is dire, but we envision a better world for our sisters and brothers in need, and together with you, we are making that vision a reality.

Islamic Relief is a leading humanitarian organization in Yemen, with more than 3,000 field staff and volunteers in the country. Other notable charities depend on us to deliver their aid as well, due to our strong relationships and powerful program infrastructures across nearly all Yemeni provinces.

Through the support of generous humanitarians and donors, health supplies and resources are being boosted; urgent food aid is being sent, and clean water and sanitation systems are being put into place. And, we continue to work to get medical supplies, proper protective equipment, health equipment, and more of our health-related support there to reinforce preventative measures and build medical center capacity for communities in areas including Hodeida, Ta’iz, Saa’da, and Aden.



# EYES ON SYRIA

It wasn't just a decade of long, continuous violence. It was a decade of uncles disappearing, daughters being assaulted, sons never returning from the market, and mothers emptying their tears onto rubble they once called home. In 10 years the world witnessed the agony of living day-to-day in Syria. Every month and every year an entirely new set of dire challenges was set upon the people of Syria. As more lives were lost from constant shelling of residential areas, a more menacing crisis took hold. Syrian families that were displaced then were caught in the midst of one of the most devastating famines in their history. At the very same time the infrastructure that supported hospitals and clinics was vanishing beneath the war. It was 10 years ago that for this emergency, IRUSA took action partnering to build mobile clinics, feeding programs, trauma-informed care, and livelihood rehabilitation inside neighboring countries willing to accept asylum seekers. Despite the darkness they are facing, the future of the people of Syria is bright. We look forward to supporting a better future for them.

## A WINTER OF WORRY

The harsh Syrian winter has made life harder for Mohamed and his family. Their tent got torn and water seeped through. The family did what they could to stay warm, often walking long hours to the top of the mountains to collect firewood.

Mohamed suffers from stomach issues, for which he needs surgery. This is something that he simply cannot afford but that he longs for as the pain keeps him up at night and he worries about who will take care of his family if he isn't able to work. "I am so afraid that I will die and there will be nobody to take care of them and provide for them."

He and his family also faced the growing threat of coronavirus, which reached the camps in northern Syria, leaving poverty-stricken families struggling to protect themselves against the deadly virus.

"We fear infection. We heard that the coronavirus is spreading in the neighboring camps. I worry about the children. I have

bought protective masks for them to keep safe. I'm also scared because of the disease I'm suffering from. I am afraid of leaving the tent or going to the store or anywhere else."

He turned to using some of the money needed for food to buy masks for the children.

IR has provided Mohamed and his family with food parcels, and hygiene kits to ease some of their hardship. Now they are able to eat wholesome food and better protect themselves from infection and illness.

"The baskets that you provide, contribute to the alleviation of this suffering and we are very relieved when we receive them. It makes me feel safe because I know I can provide food for my grandchildren. We cook meals using the food they contain. I hope we will continue to receive this type of aid, because it saves our lives."



# EYES ON PALESTINE

Palestine is a name that is often followed by words like “conflict,” “clashes,” or “situation.” But relegating what is actually occurring on the ground in Palestine to just those terms diminishes the severity of the conditions, violence, restrictions, and long-term trauma that Palestinians have faced day-in and day-out for more than 70 years, and takes away from their resilience as they continue to rebuild and refresh time and time again.

And it is that rebuilding and refreshing that Islamic Relief has been privileged to help Palestinians with since 1997. With a focus on food aid, water and sanitation, orphan support, vocational training, healthcare, access to education, psychosocial work, and livelihood, IR donors have committed to serving vulnerable Palestinians in a way that addresses their immediate needs and sets them up with the right tools to break through the chains of pain and poverty.

This commitment was demonstrated again as Ramadan 2021 was coming to a close. Residents of Al Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem came into focus as families were facing violence and displacement from their homes; the violence carried through to the Al-Aqsa compound where Israeli forces fired upon worshippers and bystanders, injuring more than 300 people. And in Gaza, air strikes destroyed residential buildings and entire neighborhoods. Power and infrastructure was severely degraded, causing fuel shortages and damage to power lines, commercial facilities, and roads. More than 220 Palestinians, including at least 61 children, were killed.

In the midst of a global pandemic, any kind of aggression shocks the conscience and defies international humanitarian standards by further exposing Palestinians, already struggling with limited access to healthcare, to the deadly COVID-19 virus. IRUSA called for an immediate end to all violence and for respect of the freedom of worship guaranteed to all people under international law.

And IRUSA and its donors stood ready, again, to assist Palestinians and worked quickly with partners to deliver much-needed medical supplies, protective equipment, and medicines to hospitals across Gaza and to get urgent wound-care supplies, IV sets and fluids, and more to Jerusalem’s Makassed Hospital, which was the epicenter of aid for many of the Palestinians injured during the May 2021 violence.

In addition to this medical support and other emergency response, IR donors continue to invest in development projects that celebrate and encourage Palestinian resiliency. Some of the most recent efforts have prioritized economic and social empowerment of women-headed households so they can improve their family income; improvement of water and sanitation infrastructure, including constructing water basins, replacing eroded wastewater networks, building wells, providing individual sanitation facilities in households, and hosting training on hygiene preparedness, and trauma-informed systems of care that foster supportive, growth-driven environments for families devastated by violence and loss.

Rana and her 18-year old son Ali, from Gaza, both benefited from the care programs for those affected by trauma. Through the effort, they were able to receive medicinal care that they otherwise would not have had access to or would have been able to afford.

Rana said, “For so long, Ali seemed to be stuck in the mind of a 12-year-old. He didn’t talk or engage with others and appeared depressed. As he got older, she gave him pills to help him sleep. His condition continued to worsen to the point of failing in school and not even being able to tie his shoes or take a shower. There weren’t proper resources or programs to help Ali with his needs and depression.”

A program, built through a collaboration between Islamic Relief and a partner organization, brought Rana and Ali a solution, and got him the help he needed.

“Everything changed for the better for him and for me!” Rana said.

Working with partners and YOU, we keep our commitment to our Palestinian sisters and brothers, like Rana and Ali, going.

And, as we keep our eyes on Palestine and Palestinian families, we keep our hearts open to showing compassion, sincerity, and support in their times of need and beyond. Thank you for working with us to provide the resources necessary for families there to rebuild and refresh, as many times as it takes.

## HUDA’S HEART

“The first three-four years after my husband died were especially hard on me; I used to feel lost and the big question was: Am I doing well in raising my children? With the family support and orphans sponsorships, sorrow started to diminish and I became more able to provide for our living. I could take care of my children’s needs instead of spending all of my time thinking about how to make [a] living.”

“It is the third time my children are included in IRUSA’s program to support vulnerable children. The project provided cash and psychosocial support that helped provide for their education fees, food, clothes, healthcare, etc. It mitigated huge burden that was occupying much of my time. I now have more time to follow up on their education, skills, and

behaviors as less time is spent on how to make a living.”

Huda and her children live in a small humble home of about 861 sq ft consisting of a hall, two rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The family has access to clean water from her brother who is actually her neighbor. All the children are in good health, thankfully. However, the house is empty of furniture which makes it so cold in winter.

“Our daily life is really simple and normal like others. We all wake up in the early morning, pray and then I make breakfast for my children. After they go to their schools, I sit alone at home tidying it up, washing the dishes, and preparing lunch. After they arrive, they change their clothes, take their lunch, wash the dishes,

and then each of them goes to revise what has been taught at school and do their homework. At night, we have our dinner together; during this meal in particular, we discuss a lot of things, hopes, and ways of reaching the well-being they all are seeking.”





# ACROSS EUROPE

This is the continent where the concept of IRUSA was developed. In 1984, a group of idealistic college students from England raised money to provide life-saving assistance for people in Bosnia, which was in the middle of war. Since then, the organization's presence across the continent has grown to include investments in livelihood programs designed to foster self-sufficiency and to enable the people we serve to develop the skills necessary to generate income.



## ADNA'S RELIEF

Adna lives with her grandmother, mother, and great uncle in a small dilapidated house in Bosnia. She is an excellent 8th grader and loves attending school. Adna wants to continue her education and one day become a physiotherapist.

For Adna, brutal winters made it hard to focus on school work. IR's winterization project provided her family with the supplies needed to keep their modest house warm, and their aspirations for their young scholar high. Heat was the difference between Adna suffering through her lessons; she went from feeling defeated to achieving.

Adna's grandmother shared, "We have been taking care of Adna since she was born. Despite all our problems, Adna is the source of our happiness. We are especially proud that she is an excellent student. Since my eyesight is extremely poor, Adna is always there to help me when I need to go somewhere. She is my eyes when I need to go to the doctor. We all want her to have better conditions for learning and life in general. The house gets extremely cold. Until recently, we didn't even have a bathroom. We don't have water in the kitchen. No matter how much we burn wood, it is cold. And besides that, we have to save wood because firewood is expensive. We buy wood from the sawmill, which is not particularly high quality, so we burn it little by little. This wood that you brought us will help us a lot."

Adna's family is grateful to IR for making this past winter one where she didn't have to suffer. Adna and her family have received aid on different occasions in the past. Last year, Adna attended summer school and that meant a lot to her. She spent some beautiful days during the summer holidays with children like her. Her uncle spoke on the support further saying, "You've made us happy during Ramadan with food, Qurbani meat, clothes for Adna and here is firewood. We are extremely grateful to Islamic Relief and all donors who think of families like ours. May God reward you for good deeds."

## EMERGENCIES ACROSS EUROPE



Since the beginning of 2018, Bosnia & Herzegovina has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of migrants and refugees entering the country. The influx has challenged the human and financial resources of responsible institutions.



Some 11,000 refugees and migrants were registered by national authorities during the third quarter of 2019 alone—almost 70% increase compared to the second quarter of the year. In 2020, IRUSA ensured that IDPs and refugees were equipped with winter gear and food.



# ACROSS ASIA

From flood relief projects in Pakistan and India, to rooftop gardens designed to curb climate change in Bangladesh, to refugee-assistance to those who've been displaced from surrounding nations, Asia remains a focal point of IRUSA's mission in assisting the most vulnerable populations.

## JABELA'S RELIEF

Jabela is a member of the Bamna water-user group in Islampur, Jamalpur in Bangladesh. Her husband fell ill and could no longer provide for their family. Their young son now works in Dhaka as a day laborer to help provide income. Even with the support of their son's work, they still struggle to make ends meet.

Over the years, their family has repeatedly had to deal with natural disasters because their house is very close to a river. In the last flood, their well water was destroyed. They had no water to drink at all. For a long time they had to go back and forth to a neighbor's house to get water.

Jabela attended a community consultation meeting facilitated by Islamic Relief Bangladesh (IRB) where they explained how tube wells could operate. Not long after the meeting she had a staff member from IRB visit their home to assess where and if they could receive a tube well. With great appreciation, Jabela's family now has access to safe water.



## EMERGENCIES ACROSS ASIA



Heavy monsoon flooding in Pakistan struck provinces across the country, with Sindh and its capital city Karachi the worst affected. Pakistan had been experiencing heavy monsoon rains across the country since July 2020, especially in the southern province of Sindh.



The flooding caused landslides across Pakistan, including heavy landslides at Javed Hillview in Sindh, which has damaged 72 apartments and 120 shops, and in a coal mine in Chakwai district in Punjab, which killed three miners. IRUSA deployed assessment teams and aid to provide food security, sanitation, and shelter resources.



A photograph of several Afghan children. In the foreground, a young boy with dark hair and a brown jacket looks directly at the camera with a somber expression. Behind him, other children are visible, some wearing winter hats. The background is out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting.

# EYES ON AFGHANISTAN

In August of 2021, following the US military exit of Afghanistan and the ensuing overturn of power in the cities of Kandahar, Herat, and Lashkar Gah the prediction of a human catastrophe by the UN rang true in mid-August. For years residents and officials have warned that such a move would break the levee on what level of stability was present. They believe the exit broke the water. Taliban forces stormed government offices even causing former President Ashraf Ghani to flee to Tajikistan. The sudden takeover forced a quarter million people out of their homes and into flight within the country. Sobering videos were shared widely of men and women going as far as to climb on the outer shells of airplanes headed out of the country just to seek safety. A significant portion of IDPs entered Kabul and have been putting pressure on local authorities to render aid. At the tail end of August, the UN warned food stocks in Afghanistan may run out. At least \$200 million was needed only for food to ensure delivering essential items to the most vulnerable.

The UN deputy special representative and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ramiz Alakbarov, told journalists the World Food Program (WFP) could be exhausted before October. The depletion of stocks would prevent WFP from getting the requisite supplies to those in need. More than half of Afghan children 5 years of age and younger are already suffering from malnutrition and more than one-third of people do not get enough to eat. Islamic Relief conducted needs assessments on the ground to gauge the level of food insecurity and accurately respond. Nearly 300 families were identified as needing critical shelters, food packs, hygiene and water storage kits, as soon as arrangements were made. Islamic Relief engaged with country officials to remove blockages to aid delivery.

The outpouring of IDPs also created a simultaneous challenge on American shores as thousands of Afghan refugees entered the US. IRUSA's Disaster Management Team mobilized food parcels and culturally competent items such as prayer rugs as the new arrivals entered airports, military bases, and temporary shelters. Islamic Relief continues to monitor the situation as time reveals more challenges and successes for the people of Afghanistan. IRUSA's engagement with relief efforts in Afghanistan spans across decades featuring programs like Assisting Out-of-School Girls Access to Education (AGE), which is responsible for the education of thousands of Afghan women and girls formally unable to attend school. This effort, combined with the Women's Entrepreneurship Project (WEP), another staple program providing livelihood training and development for mothers, have remained a source of hope for the future in their localities. IRUSA looks forward to the stabilization of the region and partnering to sustain the diligent efforts of the people of Afghanistan.



# ACROSS AFRICA

IRUSA's projects in Africa are vital. We support both long-term development and emergency aid in countries suffering from natural disasters, water shortage and contamination, food insecurity, and political crisis. Our projects in countries like Niger, Somalia, Mali, and Ethiopia, seek to achieve long-term stability, increase education, and aim to change the quality of life of people in need.

## EZBON'S RELIEF

In South Sudan a small village was facing dire challenges to gain access to basic services, including clean drinking water, schools, and health facilities. Women were traveling for several miles in dense forest in search of water from seasonal streams putting their protection at risk. IRUSA supported a water sanitation and health project in the country. Teams drilled two boreholes and rehabilitated another 10 boreholes that were no longer operable. On hearing the news of a possible new borehole, community members cleared their own road to their village where vehicles couldn't pass through just days before. It enabled the drillers to access the site and begin their work. The community members then offered security to the project staff while on site. The women were elated about the drilling of a borehole in their village. Anan from the village said, "At first we did not believe that it would happen, our prayers have been answered. We have never had a motorable road leading to our village and was surprised to see how patient these people were to wait for us to clear bushes to create a road past a stream for the drilling machines to reach our village and I don't believe we now have clean water right at our door steps. It is indeed a lifetime miracle that has come to pass." Ezbon, the village elder said, "Now I will die a happy man. I have made countless monthly trips for the last 10 years requesting assistance for my people to get water. God is great. This will reduce the heavy burden our women and girls have had to travel for long distances in search of water. May God bless the people who made this project possible!"

## EMERGENCIES ACROSS AFRICA



Thousands of people were being displaced after ordered attacks were waged against the forces of the ruling party of Tigray Region, one of 10 autonomous regions of Ethiopia, raising the possibility of a full-blown conflict.



Within the region, there were already 2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, this is expected to double and even those who have money are not able to access cash at the moment. The situation required IRUSA to mobilize partners on the ground to provide critical aid.



# ACROSS THE AMERICAS

The end of 2020 brought the sharpest rise in the US poverty rate since the 1960s, according to a study by the University of Chicago and the University of Notre Dame, placing the poverty rate now at 11.8%.

Much, but not all of this can be attributed to the coronavirus pandemic, as the suffering of so many American families extends well beyond that:

For instance, “Black Americans were more than twice as likely to be poor as their White counterparts in December—an improvement from the summer months when they were nearly three times more apt to live in poverty—but an increase from before the pandemic, when the differential was under 2,” reports Bloomberg.

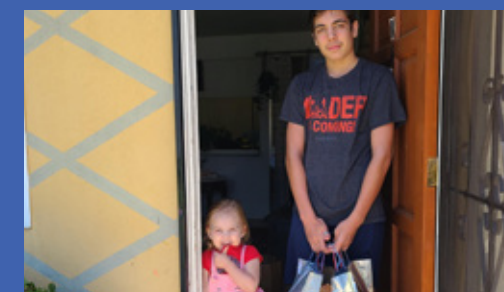
That is why IRUSA develops partnerships with local community groups, including 68 Black-Muslim-lead organizations in 2020 alone, and works with them and within communities to learn the most-dire needs and to build adequate solutions. By building these networks and working together with humanitarian groups throughout the US, we were able to serve vulnerable families across 350 cities in 2020!

As Islam teaches us, charity starts at home, and that’s why IRUSA is dedicated to supporting work across America that makes sure families have shelter, kids have food and clean water, healthcare access is opened, and disaster survivors and refugees get the support they need.

## TIYYA’S RELIEF

Part of what makes IRUSA’s domestic programs successful is its partnerships with respected community-based organizations around the country. One example is the Tiyya Foundation, a California-based agency that assists refugee and low-income immigrant families find their footing in American society.

Tiyya was one of the organizations awarded a \$12,000 COVID-19 relief grant. The organization put it to good use, as it provided life-saving aid to some 140 families each month. Besides nonperishable food, families were given diapers, books, cleaning supplies, even virtual tutoring so the kids wouldn’t miss out on their education. One household was provided with a computer to enable them to receive online lessons. Other things the grant helped fund were online workshops and self-care packages to families.



## US DEEP FREEZE EMERGENCY

An unusual winter storm sent a wave of freezing temperatures across Texas in the middle of February. On the 14th of the month the state saw multiple locations drop below -10 F. Millions were caught completely off guard while witnessing their neighborhoods be enveloped in ice. They faced state-wide power outages, pipes bursting, and hypothermia.

IRUSA’s DMT team launched an emergency and headed into some of Texas’s worst hit cities. In Dallas, together with our partners, we provided emergency items such as blankets, water, hot meals, hygiene kits, masks, and groceries to over 700 refugees without power and water. In Houston, 2.5 pallets of water, face masks, and hygiene kits were distributed to six partners and masjid’s serving as warming centers.





# RAMADAN

## FOOD PACKAGES HELP MEET POPULATION'S NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

During Ramadan, working to alleviate hunger for the most vulnerable takes on added importance. In Gaza, hunger is particularly acute. But thanks to the support of IRUSA donors, nearly 24,000 people in Gaza received food aid last Ramadan. Items like jam, macaroni, beans, lentils, chickpeas, cheese, tea bags, rice, and dates were included in the food packages.

In addition to alleviating hunger for thousands of people, the Ramadan food packages enabled them to commemorate the spirit of the holy month. It also created some temporary jobs, as 32 people were employed to package the meals.

Ramadan is one of the holiest months in the Islamic calendar. People often identify it as a time when practicing Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown each day throughout the month. However, abstinence from food and drink during the day is just one aspect of the month. Ramadan is also a time to give back, to help some of the people struggling most in our society, many of whom don't have enough to eat, lack financial resources, or other basic needs like sufficient clothing to keep warm during the winter months.

IRUSA conducts several programs to address food insecurity, ensuring that people avoid hunger as much as possible during this sacred period. During the early months of the coronavirus pandemic, which coincided with Ramadan 2020, IRUSA awarded a total of \$1.9 million in grants to over 50 community-based organizations, mosques, and social services agencies.





# QURBANI

When a man asked Prophet Muhammad (SAW) which aspect of Islam is among the best, the Prophet replied: “Feeding people and greeting those you know and those you don’t know.”

It’s with that spirit that the concept of Qurbani/ Udhiyah was created, to honor the willingness of prophets Ibrahim (as) and Ismail (as) to sacrifice, and to encourage serving our neighbors in need.

As per tradition, Qurbani is distributed on or around Eid al-Adha.

In many parts of the world, access to high-quality, nutritious meat is a luxury. As part of celebrating Eid al-Adha, donors have the opportunity to send Qurbani meat to residents in several countries around the world.

As Islamic Relief’s largest food aid program, some 3.5 million people received meat for Eid al-Adha in 2021.

2021  
Programme  
MALAWI



## DILBAR RELIEF

Dilbar describes fleeing Myanmar and coming to Bangladesh as a dark cloud that descended on her family. She became a widow in the camp after her husband died from an illness. She had no way to support her family and was reliant on the aid organization in the camp for food. Managing meals for her six children is always a struggle.

With the limited food the family has, Dilbar’s children experienced malnutrition especially with the lack of protein in their diet.

Through Islamic Relief’s Qurbani program, she’s able to feed her children.

“Eid is the day of joy for everyone, but I was worried whether I would be able to feed meat to my children. My heart was filled with joy when I received the meat pack from Islamic Relief.”



# BUILDING WITH THE BLUESHIRTS

The world went under a major lockdown changing the landscape of daily life for months on end. IRUSA Blueshirts (volunteers) experienced this jolting halt to normalcy and responded the way we've always known them to respond. Our volunteers personified perseverance and exemplified dedication to a cause bigger than themselves. They showed up in droves to our meal packs across the country, which have now totaled over 1 million distributed. Seeing the level of need around the world at home, IRUSA Blueshirts engaged in one of the most innovative fundraising methods we've seen yet, IRaise.

IRUSA's IRaise series is our largest virtual mobilization of volunteers EVER! Since its inception, volunteers have created IRaise pages for causes ranging from COVID-19 relief, to programs for vulnerable children, to aid for survivors in emergency zones. Volunteers built over 500 fundraising pages raising some \$600,000 since the beginning of the pandemic for various causes. You can be the newest member of IRUSA's IRaise family: visit [irusa.org/iraise](https://irusa.org/iraise) to learn more.





# A SALUTE TO THE BLUESHIRTS

COVID-19 is a stark reminder of longstanding inequities that exist in our communities. It is also a tribute to the truth and meaning that re-wires and directs our action to help those in need.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, IR has responded both globally and locally to help deliver aid to our neighbors. As a part of the effort, our volunteers raised close to \$50,000 to continue serving in any way they can! Those working on the frontlines asked us to do our part by reducing harm to help save lives and our volunteers responded by providing the most critical tool needed to make that happen: masks.

The volunteers teamed up to make 6,000 cloth masks and hygiene kits to be donated to health centers both locally and across the nation. Our salutes go to the Blueshirts; the ones who always stood by, they never forgot the cause or ever questioned why.

## MY RAMADAN FOOD PACK EXPERIENCE BY COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA SPECIALIST, MINHAJ HASSAN

It was another weekend devoted to an Islamic Relief USA pack-out in the same Springfield warehouse. And, it felt just as good as the first time. The IRUSA volunteer department had organized another food-pack with all COVID-19 limitations and conditions being considered, and had done it successfully.

This time, the event involved tens of volunteers pouring rice, soy, and beans into cellophane bags and then sealing them up. People were stationed at tables pouring the contents through funnels, and then measuring the bags to make sure they don't have too much in them.

The format was different from the Ramadan Food Box pack-outs that took place a couple of weeks earlier. Those involved nonperishable foods ready to be stored in cardboard boxes. This one involved actually measuring out and preparing the actual meals.

Having participated in both, what was clear is that each was a rewarding, fast-paced experience. The energy just naturally kicks in because the goal of packing thousands of meals requires it. And, to know that in both cases, the meals will go to the most vulnerable populations, you couldn't help but feel driven and keep packing, even when you're feeling bone-tired.

Food insecurity, as many a headline will tell you, is through the roof. Whatever my brothers and sister in royal blue can do to alleviate that crisis is much welcome. IRUSA has worked with organizations like Rise Against Hunger to help feed people in Africa. These flavorful and aromatic nourishing meals will help feed people there and locally.

Personally, it felt good scooping up beans and rice and soy placing them into smaller bins for people to bring back to their tables and then placing those contents into plastic bags.

By week's end, the organization's volunteers will have finished sealing thousands of plastic bags containing the nonperishable meals. Besides Springfield, several volunteers did the same thing in Folsom, PA, and Naperville, IL.

What I experienced during my time, was what hundreds of other volunteers experienced, which brings the question: How powerful would it be to set another record for volunteer participation after our struggle against COVID-19. We believe it can be done. And we need you to do it.







## Q&A WITH CHAMPION VOLUNTEER WAFA OMRAN

**Q:**

Everyone sees the Blueshirts (IRUSA Volunteers) but sometimes we don't get to meet everyone behind the incredible work. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**A:**

I'm a mother of a wonderful daughter and two lovely sons. I'm a wife to a good man, who is a philanthropist himself and has always supported my work and volunteerism. I am a humanitarian, committed to social justice and community development. With a background in theology and MA in sociology, I am currently doing more learning and studies on sustainability and human development. I'm a traveler who enjoys new experiences and appreciates all cultures. In my spare time, I like to paint. Finally, I love to listen to Islamic Relief podcasts.

**Q:**

At a young age, or while growing up, did you have someone in your life who inspired you to volunteer or to be generous?

**A:**

My parents were exceptionally generous people, not only with their money, but more with their affection, kindness, and time. They had this extraordinary ability to make every single person they know feel loved. At the root of this effusive affection was my parents' inability to be selfish. My dad in particular, grew up dirt-poor in a tent in a refugee camp. His mother had to sell her only possessions, to pay for his education.

So when Allah blessed him with wealth and opportunity, he did not believe it was his own. He knew he had the responsibility to share his blessings with his family and his community. My mom has always opened our home to guests for months at a time. She carried a bubbly personality and exuded compassion. My mother is the most down to earth person you can ever meet. I've learned early on to live for a bigger purpose than ourselves.

**Q:**

Is there any moment in your life that really made you see that volunteering would always be a big part of your life?

**A:**

They say "With great pain comes great change." Four years ago, my son who was a bright, happy, energetic 5 year-old was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor. I witnessed him deteriorate, day after day, to a point where he lost his ability to talk, walk, and eventually he could not open his eyes. Living this pain with my son and the agony of it being so quickly till the night I knew he was leaving us. I held him in my arms till dawn when he exasperated his last breath.

This made me realize how precious life is and how blessed the gifts that Allah bestowed upon us. I had to question my whole life and reflect on what this huge loss meant. I just had to find out what does Allah want from me? He wants more. I kept saying to myself. Even though up until that point I was involved in community service and charity work, I knew that I needed to do more.

# JOIN THE BLUESHIRT TEAM

[IRUSA.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://IRUSA.ORG/VOLUNTEER)





# ADVOCACY FOR A BETTER WORLD

Creating policies that make meaningful differences in the lives of many doesn't happen in isolation. Rather, it is the result of careful consideration of ideas expressed by various stakeholders.

This is known as advocacy. Whether it's clean water, food security, access to healthcare, or social justice, advocacy requires not just passion, but a set of facts and data that convince decision makers why a particular action or law is required. It helps to ensure those with the least resources, those who are most vulnerable are represented, that their plights aren't ignored.

IRUSA has taken a nonpartisan, pragmatic approach to advocacy, as no one group or party or ideology has a lock on best ideas. Taking different approaches and perspectives into consideration has proven to be the most effective way of finding solutions to complex problems.

## HEALING FOR A STRONGER TOMORROW EVENT WARMS HEARTS



Islamic Relief USA held its 4th Annual Partnership Tribute: Healing for a Stronger Tomorrow event, showcasing the organization's accomplishments in addressing the challenges brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Healing was the theme for the event, which was entirely virtual and livestreamed through various social media platforms. While healing from COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, is among the biggest challenges facing society, the event speakers—a cross-section of leaders of nonprofit, faith-based, and governmental organizations agreed that there are many other problems in conjunction with the virus that rise to pandemic levels.

They include hunger, racial injustice, lack of healthcare for millions, and socioeconomic inequities, amongst other things. A sense of optimism and uplift was sprinkled throughout, despite the heaviness of the subjects discussed.

### BRINGING HOPE TO LIGHT

That particularly shone in the rousing remarks by the keynote speaker, Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church. He said the world now needs “a healing balm,” and he shared some important lessons from “Is There No Balm in Gilead,” a Biblical sermon about the prophet Jeremiah.

The bishop said love is the ultimate balm, and Islamic Relief USA demonstrates that through its work.

“I am personally convinced that love is the way to help us through this year, to help us through the hard times, because love is not selfish,” he said. “Love is not self-centered. Love is not rude or boastful...Love seeks the good, the welfare, the well-being of others, as well as the self.

“That way of living, by the power of love, is what IRUSA is about, helping those who are in need, no matter who they are,” he continued. “That way of living is how we must live as brothers and sisters on this planet, as people who are created in the image of God.”

### WHAT PARTNERSHIP MEANS

IRUSA President Anwar Khan, who described the partnership event as “a family gathering,” said in the midst of this celebration of partnership, we must remember society's most vulnerable.

Our keynote speaker Bishop Michael Curry of the Episcopal Church said strongly, “There's been a lot of hurting going on in 2020. People are losing their jobs, their income. There are long lines at the food banks, and many people have lost their lives.”

But, he said, these very tribulations have helped foster partnerships, a sense of teamwork, and outright resilience. IRUSA has worked in over 200 cities with some 170 organizations to perform lifesaving work, providing hygiene kits, food boxes, financial assistance, and facemasks, among other things.

“Your generosity, your support has gone up,” he said, adding that the IRUSA has also tackled the subject of racial injustice by starting a series where they speak with various African American officials leading partner nonprofit organizations.

**COME ADVOCATE WITH US:**

**IRUSA.ORG/ADVOCACY**



# MORE WAYS TO GIVE

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:  
[IRUSA.ORG/CREATIVE-GIVING](https://irusa.org/creative-giving)



**WILLS**  
Protect your family with a sharia-compliant estate plan with Islamic Relief. Create a will, divide your estate according to sharia ruling, and add in a sadaqah jariyah. [irusa.org/wills](https://irusa.org/wills)



When you select IRUSA as your charity of choice on Good Search and Good Shop, your humanitarian impact grows with every item you buy or search for. [goodshop.com/nonprofit/islamic-relief-usa](https://goodshop.com/nonprofit/islamic-relief-usa)



## ISLAMIC RELIEF USA APP

The IRUSA app makes it easy to donate directly, and can even round up your everyday purchases and donate the difference, if you choose. Search "Islamic Relief USA" in your app store to download.



Shop on Amazon using AmazonSmile for Islamic Relief USA, and 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases will be donated to our humanitarian work. [irusa.org/amazon-smile](https://irusa.org/amazon-smile)



## STOCK DONATIONS

Donating stocks is a great way to use your securities to help Islamic Relief provide vital aid around the world. [irusa.org/stock-donations](https://irusa.org/stock-donations)



## TEXT TO DONATE

Did you know you can donate to IRUSA with a text message? **Simply text IRUSA to 50155 and follow the prompts.**



## Matching Gifts

Through your employer's matching gift program, you could multiply your or your spouse's donation or volunteer hours. Be sure to check with your employer today. [irusa.org/matching-gifts](https://irusa.org/matching-gifts)



## CAR DONATION

Ready to get rid of your car, motorcycle, boat, or even jet ski? Donate your vehicle and the proceeds will support IRUSA's humanitarian work. [islamicreliefusa.careasy.org](https://islamicreliefusa.careasy.org)



This charity app gives friendly reminders to give to your charity of choice. Search "Feeling Blessed" in your app store to download. [feelingblessed.org/irusa](https://feelingblessed.org/irusa)



## WILLS • DONOR ADVISED FUNDS • TRUSTS

*The purpose of IRUSA Waqf is to perpetually sustain the mission and work of Islamic Relief USA. The principal of the Waqf fund is kept intact and invested in a shariah compliant manner while the returns are used to fund Islamic Relief USA's humanitarian efforts around the globe. Islamic Relief USA established this endowment so that we can continue to carry on our important work in the years to come. You can make a significant contribution to further our mission- and it's easier than you might think.*

TO LEARN MORE: [IRUSAWAQF.ORG](https://irusawaqf.org) • [INFO@IRUSAWAQF.ORG](mailto:info@irusawaqf.org)

“  
THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON HIM) SAID:  
“When a person dies, all their good deeds come to an end except three: Ongoing charity (Sadaqah Jariyah), beneficial knowledge, and a righteous child who prays for them”  
(An-Nasaa'i)  
”



**IRUSA'S CHAIRMAN SHARES A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE AND HOPE TO THE IRUSA COMMUNITY FOR ITS UNWAVERING AND AMPLIFIED SUPPORT DURING ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DIFFICULT YEARS IN MODERN HISTORY: 2020**

**Assalamu alaikum. Greetings of peace!**

This has been an extraordinarily humbling year for us at Islamic Relief USA. As the world struggled with the COVID-19 global pandemic, the demand for our humanitarian relief work intensified. Because of your generosity and continued support, Islamic Relief USA was able to meet the unprecedented need experienced by millions of our brothers and sisters both at home and across the world. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to humanitarianism and being an integral part of our tremendous growth so far.

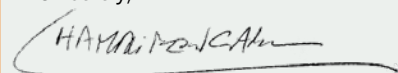
During these incredibly challenging times, where no one was untouched by the widespread effects of COVID-19, we worked together to ensure that the most vulnerable and at-risk communities received the emergency assistance and care they needed to survive. Your donations served more than five million people worldwide, spanning over 200 cities in 38 countries. The assistance provided financial stability and essential healthcare services to orphans, refugees, and vulnerable families facing immense food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and social instability due to devastating effects of COVID-19.

In the United States, your support allowed us to rapidly mobilize and deliver over \$3.85 million in emergency assistance to over 514,000 beneficiaries across 45 states. Our collaboration with a broad and diverse range of community-based organizations allowed us to ensure that critical relief and assistance reached the hardest-hit and poverty-stricken communities in the country. In a time where our nation has witnessed record unemployment rates, food insecurity, and evictions, we were able to distribute hot meals, food packages, hygiene kits, and personal protective equipment to the most vulnerable populations. As the global pandemic continued to rattle our country, our nation also had to confront the underlying racial tensions and injustice that has impaired our society for years. In response, we solidified our commitment to social justice, committing over \$3 million to African American organizations across the country to provide the support and resources they need to better serve their communities.

Islamic Relief USA is overwhelmed by the outpouring of support we received over the past year. We will continue to do what we do best and ensure that your donations are delivered to those who need it most to provide the greatest possible impact on their lives. As we continue to navigate the dangerous effects of COVID-19, we hope that you will continue to trust us as your partners in humanity.

Jazak Allah khairan.

Sincerely,



Hamadi Bengabsia  
Chairman of the Board



# THANK YOU