

Know Your Rights

American Muslim Civic Guide

“Your Rights and Responsibilities as an American Muslim”

If Federal or Local Law Enforcement Contacts You...

American Muslims strongly support law enforcement and the protection of our national security. As Americans, we also value the civil rights of all Americans. All Americans have the constitutional right of due process and to be politically active.

If you know of any criminal activity taking place in your community, it is both your religious and civic duty to immediately report such activity to local and federal law enforcement agencies.

If you are visited by federal or local law enforcement agencies, remember:

- You should have a lawyer present when speaking with federal or local law enforcement agencies. Under the law, you have the legal right to have a lawyer present when speaking with federal or local law enforcement agencies. This is true even if you are not a citizen. This is your legal right. Refusing to answer questions cannot be held against you and does not imply that you have something to hide.
- You do not have to permit them to enter your home or office if they do not have a warrant. Under U.S. law, law enforcement agents must possess a search warrant in order to enter your house. If they say they have a warrant, kindly demand to see it before allowing them to enter. The warrant will specify exactly what can be searched and if they have a warrant, be courteous and polite and remember that you are under no obligation to answer questions without a lawyer present.
- You should never lie or provide false information to any law enforcement agencies. Lying to law enforcement agents is a federal crime and should never be done under any circumstance.

Your Legal Rights as an Employee

Federal law makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee on the basis of religion, race, or national origin.

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act guarantees your right to:

- **Reasonable religious accommodation.**

The failure of an employer to reasonably accommodate your religious practices may constitute employment discrimination. ‘Religious practices’ include wearing a beard, prayer breaks, hijab and going to Jummah (Friday) prayers.

- **Fairness in hiring, firing, and promotions.**

Your employer is prohibited from considering religion when making decisions affecting your employment status.

- **A non-hostile work environment.**

Your employer must ensure that you are not subjected to anti-Muslim insults, harassment or unwelcome and excessive proselytizing.

- **Complain about discrimination without fear of retaliation.**

Federal law guarantees your right to report an act of alleged employment discrimination. It is illegal for your employer to retaliate against you for your complaint.

When Faced with Discrimination on the Job

- Remain calm and polite.
- Inform the offending party that you believe his/her actions are discriminatory.
- Report the discriminatory action in writing to company management.
- Begin documenting the discrimination by saving memos, keeping a detailed journal, noting the presence of witnesses and making written complaints. Make sure to keep copies of all materials. It is important to keep a “paper trail” of evidence.



- Call the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at 800-669-4000 or local county or state civil rights agencies to educate yourself about legal options.
- Contact a local attorney who is licensed to practice in your state to discuss your case.
- DO NOT sign any documents or resign without an attorney's advice.
- Ask to be transferred to another department or job site.
- Ask for mediation.
- Contact CAIR to file a report.
- Consider looking for a new job.

Your Legal Rights as a Student

You have the right to inform others about your religion. You have the right to pass out literature or speak to others about Islam, as long as it is not done in a disruptive manner.

You have the right to wear religious clothing. You also have the right to wear clothing with a religious message, as long as other clothes with similar messages are allowed.

You have the right to organize student-led prayer on campus, as long as the service is not disruptive to the function of the school.

You may have the right to attend Friday prayer. The Supreme Court has upheld the right of states to allow students "release time" to attend religious classes or services.

You have the right to be excused from school for religious holidays. You should be sure to inform the school that you will be absent in advance.

You have the right to be excused from class discussions or activities that you find religiously objectionable. If you have any questions, please contact CAIR.

You have the right to form an extracurricular Muslim student group.

Reacting to Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes

If you believe that you have been the victim of a hate crime, you should:

- Report the crime to your local police station immediately. Ask that the incident be treated as a hate crime. Follow up with investigators.
- Report the crime to CAIR. You can do this by emailing civilrights@cair-net.org or by calling 202-488-8787. Inform CAIR even if you believe it is a 'small' incident.
- Document the incident. Write down exactly what was said and/or done by the offender (including dates, times and places). Save all of the evidence and try to take photographs.
- Act quickly. Each incident must be dealt with right away, not when it is convenient.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken. Consider issuing a statement from community leaders, holding a news conference, organizing a peaceful protest, meeting with local officials or starting a letter writing campaign.
- Mobilize community support. Make sure that the local mosque or prominent American Muslim organizations are aware of your situation.
- Stay on top of the situation. Make sure you follow up with police, local media and community leaders to make sure that your case is receiving the attention that it deserves.
- Announce results. When the incident is resolved, make an announcement to the same people and organizations originally contacted.



Your Legal Rights as an Airline Passenger

As an airline passenger, you are entitled to courteous, respectful and non-stigmatizing treatment by airline and security personnel. You have the right to complain about treatment that you believe is discriminatory. If you believe you have been treated in a discriminatory manner, immediately:

- Ask for the names and ID numbers of all persons involved in the incident. Be sure to write this information down.
- Ask to speak to a supervisor.
- Ask if you have been singled out because of your name, looks, dress, race, ethnicity, faith, or national origin.
- Ask witnesses to give you their names and contact information.
- Write down a statement of facts immediately after the incident. Be sure to include the flight number, the flight date, and the name of the airline.
- Contact CAIR to file a report. If you are leaving the country, leave a detailed message, with the information above at 202-488-8787.

Communicating with Congress

Tips on writing to a member:

The letter is the most popular choice of communication with a congressional office.

If you decide to write a letter, this list of helpful suggestions will improve the effectiveness of your letter:

- Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If the letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H.R. _____, Senate bill: _____.
- Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position.
- Address only one issue in each issue letter. If possible, keep the letter to one page.

Addressing Correspondence

To a Senator: The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Senator (last name):

To a Representative: The Honorable (full name)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as: Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman.

Getting Involved Locally

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors of all faiths, races and ethnicities.
- Join your children's school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and other organizations.
- Donate well-written books or audio cassettes about Islam to the local public and school libraries.
- Make sure that you are registered to vote in local, state and national elections.
- Join or start a local CAIR chapter.



Council on American Islamic Relations – New York

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 244

New York, NY 10115

Call 212.870.2002 Fax 212.870.2020

www.cair-ny.org

- Attend school board meetings and city council meetings. Check

newspaper calendars for dates and times.

- Put together a Ramadan or Hajj display at a local school or library.
- Submit an opinion piece to your newspaper about an issue of local importance.
- Invite local community leaders and public to a mosque open house. (Contact CAIR for tips).
- Host civic events for the public such as blood drives and health fairs at your local mosque.
- Get yourself and your mosque involved in local issues affecting all Americans.
- Schedule local and national officials to speak about community issues at your local mosques. (Congressperson, police chief, mayor, city council members, etc.)

Writing a ‘Letter to the Editor’

Most letters to the editor do not get published. To increase your chances of publication, be sure to follow the following guidelines:

- Keep your letter to no more than 150-250 words.
 - React quickly to news of the day, negative coverage or views you support. If possible, have the letter in the hands of an editor on the same day.
 - Be authoritative. If possible, speak on behalf of a local organization in which you are involved.
 - Pick one main topic and focus only on that one issue.
 - Address the letter to “The Letters Editor.”
 - Be passionate or even controversial, but avoid rhetoric and defamation.
 - State the PURPOSE of the letter in 25 words or less.
 - Give background information on the issue or misconception. Cite impartial and objective sources.
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- Offer a reasonable and fair solution to the problem you are addressing in your letter.

What is CAIR?

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a nonprofit, grassroots membership organization.

CAIR’s mission is to enhance general understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims and build coalitions that promote social justice and mutual understanding.

Become part of CAIR’s network

Join our “CAIR-NET” e-mail list to receive updates on issues impacting Muslims in America and around the world. Join CAIR-NET by sending the e-mail message “subscribe cair-net” (without the quotation marks) to: majordomo@list.cairnet.org

How can I help CAIR?

Membership in CAIR is open to individuals and organizations that support our work.

You can help us achieve our goals by:

- 1) Becoming a member or renewing your membership,
- 2) Helping establish a local chapter for CAIR, and
- 3) Donating generously to help defray the expenses involved in this work. Monthly automatic deductions, even in small amounts, are best. Call 202-488-8787 for an authorization form. Thank you.



Making Our Voices Heard

(Remember to be polite.)

Corporation	Phone	Fax	Website
ABC News	212-456-4040		http://abcnews.go.com
CBS News	212-975-3691	212-975-1893	http://www.cbsnews.com
NBC News	212-664-4971	212-664-5705	http://www.nbc.com/News_&_Sports
CNN	404-827-1511	404-681-3578	http://www.cnn.com
Fox News	212-301-3300	212-301-8274	http://www.foxnews.com
MSNBC	201-583-5222	201-583-5453	http://www.msnbc.msn.com
PBS	703-998-2150	703-998-4154	http://www.pbs.org
NPR	202-414-2200	202-414-3329	http://www.npr.org
NY Times	212-556-1234	212-556-3690	http://www.nytimes.com
USA Today	703-276-3400	703-247-3100	http://www.usatoday.com
WS Journal	212-416-2000	212-416-2658	http://www.wsj.com
Washington Post	202-334-6000	202-496-3936	http://www.washingtonpost.com
Newsweek	212-445-4000	212-445-4450	http://www.newsweek.com
Time	212-522-1212	212-522-0323	http://www.time.com/time
U.S. News	202-955-2000	202-955-2049	http://www.usnews.com
AP	212-621-1600	212-621-7520	http://www.ap.org
Congress	202-224-3121		http://www.house.gov http://www.senate.gov
White House	202-456-1414	202-456-2461	http://www.whitehouse.gov

Legislative Info <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Local Media: (Thank as well as criticize.)

ABC Affiliate: _____

CBS Affiliate: _____

NBC Affiliate: _____

Daily Newspaper City Desk: _____