



# Ramadan Action Guide:

Advocacy Resource on Hunger and Poverty

*Those that give their wealth for the  
cause of God can be compared to a  
grain of corn which brings forth seven  
ears, each bearing a hundred grains.*

– The Qur'an, 2:261

# In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## Think

### Awareness: The Scope of Hunger

#### Global

- An estimated 963 million people in the world go hungry.
- Every five seconds, a child dies from malnutrition and hunger-related causes.
- Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly 1 in 3 people to die prematurely or have disabilities.
- Hunger and malnutrition kills more people than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.

#### Domestic

- In the United States, 12.4 million children live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. That means one in ten households in the U.S. are living with hunger or are at risk of hunger.
- 35 million people in America are threatened by hunger and 25 million depend on food banks and charities to have enough to eat.
- 4.0 percent of U.S. households experience hunger. Some people in these households frequently skip meals or eat too little, sometimes going without food for a whole day. 11.1 million people, including 430,000 children, live in these homes.

## Care

### Compassion

Ramadan is the time to serve those who are less fortunate and an opportunity to reinforce the spiritual reasons for fighting hunger and poverty. It is also an ideal time to educate the diverse Muslim-American community. The hungry and poor should be, and always are, emphasized in supplication during Ramadan taraweeh prayers. As we experience hunger, the best way to follow that spiritual experience is through action on behalf of poor and hungry people. The following ideas can be intensified during Ramadan in the spirit of Zakat.

Your mosque or organization can hold an event highlighting issues related to hunger and poverty. These gatherings may include leaders of other faiths and members of their respective congregations which would allow non-Muslims an opportunity to visit your establishment during Ramadan. With minimal effort, your mosque and others in your area can team up for fundraisers, food drives, advocacy efforts or direct feeding programs, which will make a considerable difference in the lives of poor and hungry people.

*“They will ask you about almsgiving. Say, ‘Whatever you bestow in charity must go to parents and to kinsfolk, to the orphans and to the destitute and to the traveler in need. God is aware of whatever good you do.’”*

– The Qur’an, 2:215

## Act

### Advocacy

#### 1. Write letters or e-mails to members of Congress

Communication with your Representatives or Senators is most effective if it is personalized and makes a specific request. Letters from constituents are potent tools of democracy and can have an impact on the political process, especially when received in numbers. Letters from individuals discussing the same issue will make an impression on your Representative’s office or on the pages of your local newspaper.

This year, Congress must reauthorize the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, as well as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program. Urge your members of Congress to make the necessary investments in ensuring that our nation has healthy, well-nourished children to learn.

Another way to make such efforts fruitful is if they are drawing attention to a specific event. For instance, your mosque can organize an interfaith hunger awareness event and invite an elected official to speak. A Christian organization that has been very effective in winning legislative changes for poor and hungry people is Bread for the World. They have advocacy resources and materials for effective letter writing and ways to locate your respective political leaders. To learn more about Bread for the World, please visit [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org). If you need additional information, please call (800)-822-7323.

## Act (cont.)

A Bread for the World's affiliate that works on interfaith efforts is the Alliance to End Hunger. The Alliance to End Hunger engages diverse institutions in building the political and public will to end hunger, both at home and abroad. The Alliance develops innovative partnerships among our members, political commitments among our leaders, and global connections among groups working to end hunger worldwide. We welcome you to learn more about the possibilities of building strategic partnerships in building the public and political will to end hunger by contacting Ann Steensland at (202)-639-9400.

### 2. Meet with your federal, state, or local elected officials

When walking into the office of a Representative, your greatest opportunity for success comes when you work in coalitions. A member of Congress or staff member will respond very positively to an Interfaith Lobby/Awareness Day that brings together constituents of varying faiths to talk about the importance they place on ensuring that their representative is attentive to the needs of hungry and poor people. It is important to show that you are looking for a sustained effort on the part of your elected officials.

Political leaders are very concerned with what their voters think. The specific issues may be complicated, but speaking about them doesn't need to be. RESULTS, a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization, has developed an activist tool kit with specific instructions. They are focused on helping individuals exercise their personal and political power by lobbying elected officials for effective solutions and key policies that affect hunger and poverty. For further information, please visit [www.results.org](http://www.results.org) or contact Meredith Dodson at (202)-783-7100. You can also contact Corey Saylor at the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) at (202)488-8787 for additional information.

### 3. Reach out and be a positive image

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) works closely with interfaith communities around the country to help enhance understanding of Islam and help Muslims understand other faiths. Understanding and respecting each others' faiths is essential to living and working together peacefully.

Toward this goal, CAIR officials regularly meet with interfaith leaders, speak at ecumenical events, and serve on boards of interfaith groups and organizations. CAIR representatives frequently attend events at churches, synagogues, other houses of worship, and help mosques nationwide hold open houses to share understanding of the Islamic faith.

"Muslims Care: Promoting Volunteerism for A Better America" is a campaign designed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations to encourage individuals in the Muslim community to reach out to their neighbors and make a positive contribution to our society at large. The Prophet said (pbuh), "He who has enough food for two, let him invite a third, and he who has food for four, let him invite a fifth or a sixth."

For more information about "Muslims Care: Promoting Volunteerism for A Better America," please visit [www.cair.com/muslimscare](http://www.cair.com/muslimscare) or call your local CAIR chapter. From this website, you will find resources on how to plan or join an event already taking place in your community. You can also contact Corey Saylor at CAIR's headquarters by calling (202)488-787.

### 4. Coordinate food pantry/shelter efforts

Your mosque can connect and coordinate its efforts with local charitable institutions that can guide your community to be as active and helpful as possible in your collective efforts to serve hungry and poor people. You will learn a great deal about your surrounding community and find that you can have a significant and lasting impact. Feeding America—the Nation's Food Bank Network is the largest charitable hunger-relief organization, serving 25 million low-income hungry people in the United States.

To access free food for your charitable efforts and learn more about your local food bank, visit Food Bank Network's website at [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org) and enter your zip code to find your local food bank. For further information, please call (800)-771-2303.

### 5. Organize campus action

Thousands of Muslim American students have capitalized on their powerful positions as agents of change. They have been successful in galvanizing their communities to understand the needs and responses to the unjust realities of poverty and hunger that millions face at home and abroad.

The Muslim Students Association (MSA) organizes Fast-a-thons during Ramadan. This unique program challenges Muslims and non-Muslims alike to donate the money they would have spent on food that day to a food bank. Each

## Act (cont.)

year, about 250 campuses participate in this nationwide program. To participate in a Fast-a-thon, please send an e-mail requesting information to [fastathon@msanational.org](mailto:fastathon@msanational.org).

The MSA also created the National \$1 Campaign, which calls on all Muslim students to donate \$1 for orphaned children and quality healthcare for the underserved. Donations are given to Islamic Relief and the UMMA Clinic. For more information, contact the MSA National office at (703)-820-7900.

Additionally, Islamic Relief USA (IR), in collaboration with the MSA, has launched a new campaign called “Bite the Bug,” a grassroots campaign to educate the public about the effects of malaria, communicate IR/MSA’s vision and efforts to combat the disease and, together, eradicate malaria deaths. To learn more about this campaign, please contact Ms. Nazia A. Hossain at (703)-236-9789, or visit [www.bitethebug.org](http://www.bitethebug.org).

Students around the country can make a large impact against hunger by effectively utilizing their talents and energy for an important cause. New initiatives can be created to include not just college level students, but also students at Islamic elementary/high schools, and Sunday schools.

### 6. Volunteer at Islamic Relief’s Day of Dignity • 2009

In the spirit of Ramadan, Islamic Relief hosts “Day of Dignity,” where communities around the country come together to provide services to homeless individuals and families in need to promote their well-being. “Day of Dignity” is a grassroots effort coordinated by thousands of volunteers who distribute clothing, hygiene items, toys and food, and provide free health screenings. Every year Day of Dignity provides services to over 25,000 individuals in need throughout the U.S.

“Day of Dignity” serves two purposes: 1) To allow community members to provide services to their neighbors in need and; 2) To create an opportunity for individuals from a variety of communities to work together.

Atlanta, GA 09/05	Dallas, TX 09/05	Irvington, NJ 09/27	New York-Brooklyn, NY 10/03	Portland, OR 09/19
Baltimore, MD 08/29	Detroit, MI 09/12	Kalamazoo, MI 09/12	New York-Manhattan, NY 10/04	Seattle, WA 11/21
Boston, MA 09/13	Elizabeth, NJ 09/26	Las Vegas, NV 12/06	Philadelphia, PA 08/30	Washington, D.C. 09/05
Chicago, IL 08/22	Fort Thompson, SD 08/15	Newark, NJ 09/12	Phoenix, AZ 12/05	

To learn more, please contact Domestic Programs Coordinator, Karim Amin, at (703)-370-7202, or visit [www.irw.org](http://www.irw.org).

### About the contributors:



**Islamic Relief USA (IR)** is a non-profit, humanitarian organization striving to alleviate poverty and suffering around the world. IR operates a wide variety of projects, in education, water, sanitation, income generation, orphan support, health, nutrition, and emergency relief. [www.irw.org](http://www.irw.org)

thealliance



**The Alliance to End Hunger** engages diverse institutions in building the political and public will to end hunger. The Alliance develops innovative partnerships among our members; political commitment among our leaders; and global connections among groups working to end hunger worldwide. [www.alliancetoendhunger.org](http://www.alliancetoendhunger.org)



**CAIR**

**Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)** is a nonprofit grassroots civil rights and advocacy group. It is America’s largest Islamic civil liberties group, with regional offices nationwide and in Canada. CAIR’s headquarters is in Washington D.C. [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)



**Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)** is an association of Muslim organizations and individuals that provides a common platform for presenting Islam, supporting Muslim communities, developing

educational, social and outreach programs and fostering good relations with other religious communities, and civic and service organizations. [www.isna.net](http://www.isna.net)



**ONE** is a grassroots campaign and advocacy organization backed by more than 2 million people from around the world who are committed to the fight against extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa.

At **ONE**, we achieve change through advocacy. We hold world leaders accountable for the promises made to the poorest people, and we press these leaders to support better policies and more effective aid and trade reform.

**ONE Sadaqa** is a part of **ONE Sabbath**, which rallies individuals and organizations of all faiths to address the challenges of extreme poverty and global diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. [www.one.org](http://www.one.org)



**Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)** is a public service agency working for the civil rights of American Muslims, for the integration of Islam into American pluralism, and for a positive, constructive relationship between American Muslims and their representatives. [www.mpac.org](http://www.mpac.org)