



# CAIR-MN

2009  
ANNUAL REPORT

CAIR-MN  
'08-'09  
TIMELINE  
of EVENTS

NOVEMBER '08

**8**  
2nd Annual  
Banquet

**14**  
Somali Community  
Youth Forum

DECEMBER '08

**5**  
Customs and Border  
Protection Meeting

**17**  
U of M Police  
Department Training

**25**  
Gaza Peace  
Demonstration

JANUARY '09

**2**  
Gaza Rally/  
Know Your Rights  
Abubakar Islamic  
Center

**10**  
Community Media  
Training with  
Ibrahim Hooper

**20**  
Customs and Border  
Protection Meeting

**24**  
1st Annual Muslim  
Women's Conference

**31-Feb. 1**  
CAIR National  
Council Meeting

## ABOUT CAIR-MN

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), grass roots civil rights and advocacy group. CAIR is America's largest Islamic civil liberties group, with 35 regional offices nationwide and in Canada. The national headquarters is located on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.

The Minnesota chapter of CAIR was revitalized in 2007 to address the discrimination of the unique Muslim population here in the Midwest. From restrictions placed on Muslims to practice their religion freely in the workplace to religious profiling and discrimination stemming from a lack of understanding of Islam, the need for CAIR in Minnesota was great.

CAIR-MN is the state's only Muslim civil rights organization, and the demand for its services has grown tremendously. The civil rights case load grew from just five cases in 2007 to over 115 so far this year.

Since its establishment in 1994, CAIR has worked to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America. Through media relations, government relations, education, and advocacy, CAIR puts forth an Islamic perspective to ensure the Muslim voice is represented. In offering this perspective, CAIR seeks to empower the American Muslim community and encourage their participation in the political process, media, and social activism.

In short, CAIR-MN strives to ensure that Muslims have the same rights that all Americans have fought so hard to earn.

For more information on CAIR-Minnesota and to become a member, please visit [www.cairmn.com](http://www.cairmn.com).



## HOW WE OPERATE

CAIR-MN's services are offered for free to our clients. Our Civil Rights casework includes legal consultations and referrals, court representation, and related administrative costs for staff and overhead. These and other operating costs are covered by member donations, grants, and small fees charged for training sessions involving corporations. Below is a breakdown of the way we use those funds. A copy of our full 990 IRS return is available upon request.



FEBRUARY '09

6  
"Know Your Rights"  
Somali Community

20  
ACLU Coalition  
Meeting

25  
Abubakar Islamic  
Center Open House

MARCH '09

10  
Muslim Day at  
the Capitol

23  
1st Annual  
Media Breakfast

26  
"Know Your Rights"  
Show on KFAI

27  
"Know Your Rights"  
at U of M Somali  
Student Association

27  
Young Muslim  
Professionals  
Coffee Hour

31  
Building Blocks  
Media Training

4  
"Parallel Injustice"  
American Indian/  
Gaza Event

4  
"Know Your Rights"  
Abubakar Islamic  
Center

## OUTREACH

Our outreach activities tie together CAIR-MN's mission and vision. From bringing community members to the table with elected officials to educating Muslims throughout MN on the services CAIR-MN provides—and the rights Americans have—we're advancing our mission while finding out what issues effect everyday Minnesota Muslims. We have reached many communities in 2009 and plan to increase our efforts for 2010. Below are a few of this year's events:



### CAIR-MN Speaks on "Muslim Contributions" at Metro State University

Representatives from CAIR-MN were invited to be on a panel to discuss the contributions and engagement of the Muslim community in Minnesota. CAIR-MN presented on civil rights and other concerns effecting the Muslim Community and shared our ongoing case work and outreach efforts.

### CAIR-MN hosts Civil Rights Networking Dinner

This dinner and networking opportunity brought together several civil rights organizations in Minneapolis, including NAACP-Saint Paul, OutFront MN, Minneapolis Civil Rights Commissioners, Citizen's Against Police Brutality, the Confederation of Somali Communities in Minnesota, United Somali Movement, and others. The event introduced leaders to CAIR-MN's work and educated them on civil rights issues in the Muslim community, while creating partnerships for future collaboration.

### CAIR-MN Hosts Leadership Briefing with Muslim Community Leaders

Local Muslim leaders were invited to learn more about CAIR-MN's work and understand their rights and responsibilities at the airport, at work, and in dealing with law enforcement. The briefing ended with a discussion with Rep. Keith Ellison (D-5th District) on new initiatives in the Obama administration. Over 60 Muslim organizations were represented.

### CAIR-MN Organizes Young Muslim Professionals Coffee Hour

As part of its outreach to professionals in the community, CAIR-MN organized our second coffee hour to reach out to young Muslims. After coffee and networking, CAIR-MN provided an update on current civil rights cases and shared volunteer opportunities.

### CAIR-MN Meets with Mall of America Security

CAIR-MN met with mall security to discuss prayer space for Muslims who visit the mall on Eid day. CAIR-MN now meets quarterly with mall security.



## CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITIES

Increasing the understanding of Islam helps us ensure that Muslim's rights are upheld in the workplace, at the airport, and other public arenas. As you can see from our time line above, we've got a full schedule of trainings for people on both sides of the table, making sure Muslims also understand their obligations and responsibilities under the law. Here are just a few highlights:

### CAIR-MN Host First 'Positive Interactions' Employer Training

25 metro area HR representatives and managers attended a four-hour workshop training employers on religious beliefs, customs and practices, and obligations to religiously accommodate employees under federal, state, and local laws. The session included Somali cultural nuances and breakout sessions focusing on creative resolutions to industry conflicts.

### CAIR-MN meets with U.S. Attorney B. Todd Jones

CAIR-MN representatives met this summer with U.S. Attorney B. Todd Jones. The discussion focused on Muslim civil rights and outreach opportunities with the Minnesota Muslim community.

### CAIR-MN Co-Organizes Muslim Day on the Hill at the State Capitol

The CAIR-MN Civil Rights Director spoke at the opening ceremonies encouraging the attendees to become civically engaged. CAIR-MN also met with Rep. Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud), who introduced the headgear ban bill earlier this year, to discuss the federally-protected right of all individuals to wear religious head coverings.

### CAIR-MN Meets with U.S. Customs and Border Protection

CAIR-MN meets quarterly with CBP as an effort to build ongoing relationships between the Muslim community and different government and security agencies that work in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The goal is to proactively facilitate communication, avoid cultural misunderstandings, establish a direct route for discrimination complaints, and discuss ways to educate travelers on ways to travel safely and efficiently.

### CAIR-MN Presents Diversity Training to Mayo Clinic

Twenty-five managers and HR representatives from Mayo Clinic participated in an on-site diversity training. The training addressed the basics of Islam and Muslims, highlighting common practices that take place at work. In addition, it discussed the legal obligations of both employees and employers when it comes to religious accommodation at the workplace.

APRIL '09

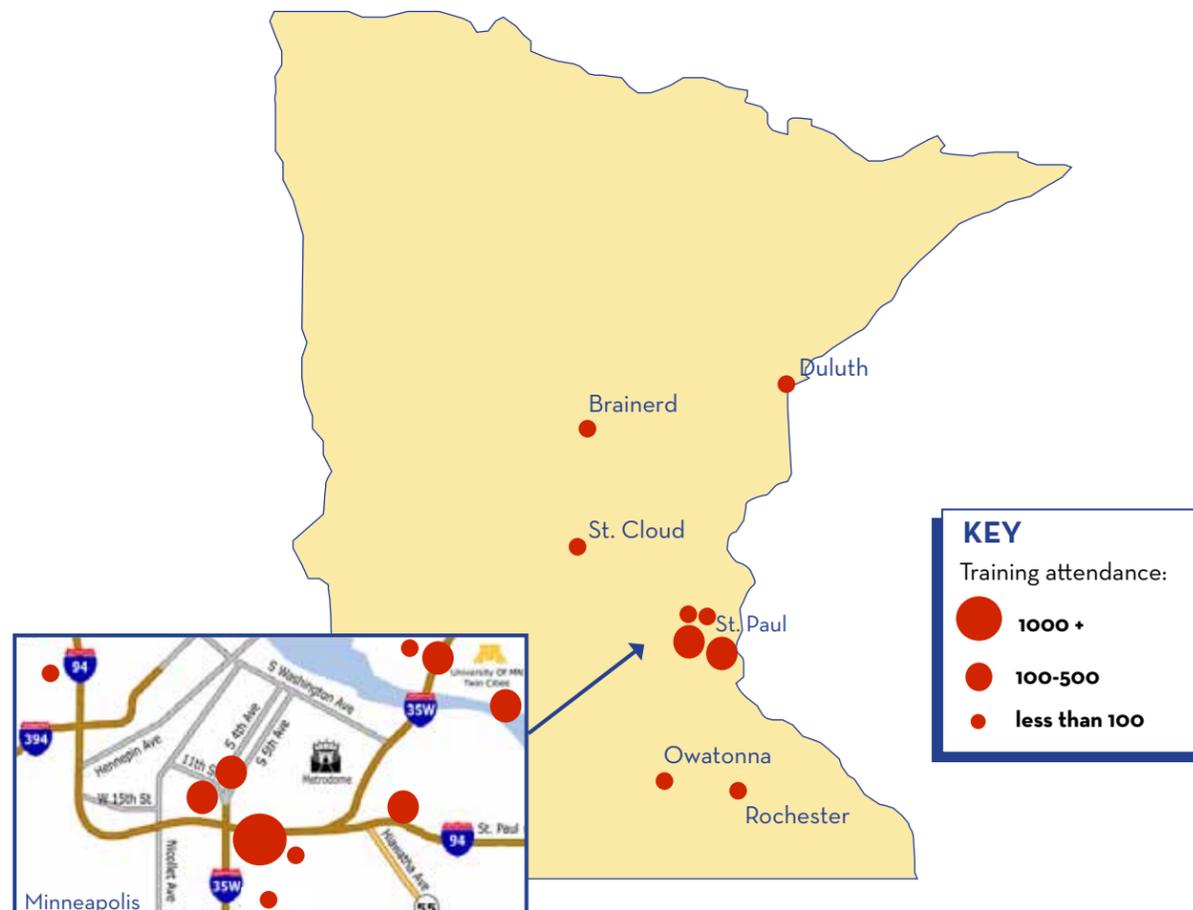
- 20**  
Muslim Contributions Presentation - Metro State University
- 25**  
"Know Your Rights" Masjid Dawah
- 28**  
Hennepin County Sheriff's Meeting on Hijab in Jail
- 30**  
Brian Coyle Center Resource Fair

MAY '09

- 9**  
Somali Voices Convention/Duluth Outreach
- 18**  
Know Your Rights Show on KFAI with MN FBI Director
- 22**  
Department of Homeland Security Roundtable
- 23**  
MAS Convention/Women's "Know Your Rights" Masjid Ihsan
- 28**  
Office of Justice Programs Annual Conference

## OUR IMPACT

Our training sessions reach thousands of Minnesota's Muslims—and not just in the Metro Area—we've estimated that CAIR-MN trainings have brought over 5,000 people together in 2009 alone. This year also marked the launch of our successful 'Positive Interactions' employer training series, expanded by the request of large employers like Macy's and the Mayo Clinic. See how far we travel to educate community members and employers below.



## CIVIL RIGHTS CASES



We work hard to advocate on behalf of community members experiencing discrimination and remedy cases to logical resolutions. Cases range from employment, public accommodation and education discrimination, to hate crimes and government religious/racial profiling. Below are just a few of the cases we've taken on this year:

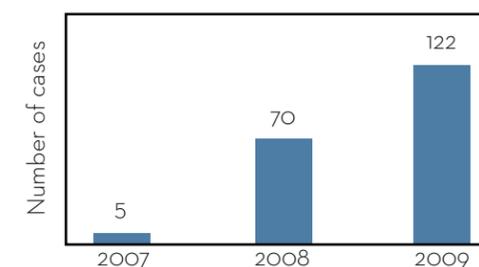
**CAIR-MN Provides 'Know Your Rights' Trainings and Attorney Referrals**  
With the ongoing federal investigation regarding the missing Somali men, CAIR-MN has fielded and referred calls from community members visited by federal agents or subpoenaed for grand jury testimony. CAIR-MN's Know Your Rights presentations have reached over 30,000 people this year.

**CAIR-MN Resolves Workplace Dispute**  
After CAIR-MN's Civil Rights Department met with Walmart executives to discuss the case of a Muslim man fired for praying at work, the man was rehired.

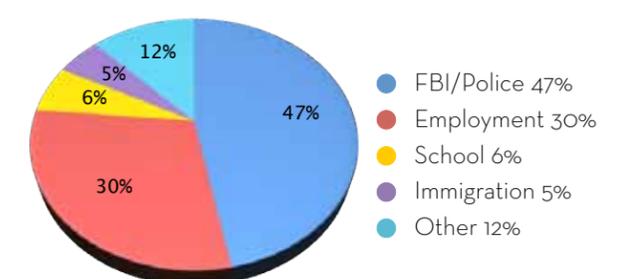
**CAIR-MN Asks for Investigation into School Harassment**  
In a case of verbal and physical harassment against a Muslim student, CAIR-MN and the St. Cloud school district have begun working together to find various ways to promote understanding and cultural sensitivity.

**CAIR-MN Asks Fireworks Retailer to Withdraw Offensive Fireworks**  
CAIR-MN contacted a fireworks retailer in Wisconsin to express concerns over a product called 'Run Hadji Run,' which had a Stealth bomber flying over a group of Arabs riding camels on its packaging. The company immediately removed the product from its shelves.

The number of cases handled by CAIR-MN has risen significantly over three years of operation.



The types of cases received in 2009 consist mainly of law enforcement and employment issues.





## MEDIA COVERAGE

CAIR-MN actively engages with the media to ensure that a fair and accurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims is presented to the American public through media appearances, press conferences, opinion editorials and letters to the editor. Moreover, CAIR-MN's staff monitors local media with the aim of reinforcing positive representations of Muslims. **In 2009, CAIR-MN was featured or quoted in over 55 reports from national, local and ethnic media outlets.**

### Some 2009 Media Quotes:

#### Rights groups say Somalis being stopped, questioned

Minnesota Public Radio, 02/13/09

"[CAIR-MN was contacted by a] man who was walking on the street, and the FBI agent invited him into his car .... he was bombarded with questions. He answered "no" to everything. He was just so scared." -Lori Saroya, Board Chair

#### FBI Reaching out to Minneapolis Somali Community

Voice of America, 04/07/09

"The challenge is: how do you build a relationship with a community when you've already started interrogating in ways the community is already fearful of." -Taneeza Islam, Civil Rights Director

#### Group wants schools to provide Somalis legal support

KSTP, 04/09/09

"Students' legal rights need to be upheld and they aren't currently being afforded the only true legal protection they have when talking to the law enforcement—an attorney." -Taneeza Islam, Civil Rights Director

#### Rabbi's comments about Arabs widely rebuked

Minnesota Public Radio, 06/04/09

"This disturbing call to genocide and religious desecration must be repudiated by all Minnesotans who value peaceful coexistence and interfaith harmony. Silence in the face of such extremist views will only serve to give the author a false sense of legitimacy and approval." - Jessica Zikri, Communications Dir.

#### Muslim group urges fireworks retailers to pull Anti-Arab product...

Pioneer Press, 07/03/09

"It [racist fireworks packaging] looks like something that could have come out 50 or 60 years ago, but not today...it's just a signal that these anti-Arab sentiments are still out there. And we don't think they should be for sale." - Jessica Zikri, Communications Director



## MEDIA EVENTS

Engaging the media in discussions about working with the Muslim community helps to create an environment where fair and balanced journalism can thrive. Educating Muslims on working with the media empowers the Muslim community to assert their rights and respond with confidence when met with requests for interviews on issues important to them. Below are a few of the 2009 events aimed at bridging the divide between Minnesota Muslims and the media:

#### CAIR-MN Holds First Annual Media Breakfast

Nearly every major news outlet in Minnesota was represented. Journalists were given information on reporting on Muslim-Americans as well as feedback on recent coverage of CAIR-related stories. Journalists' guides were provided free of charge.

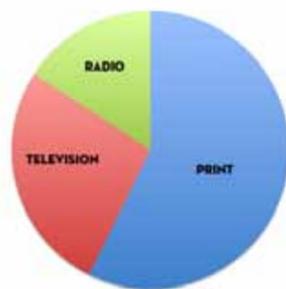
#### CAIR-MN Hosts Community-wide Media Trainings

CAIR-National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper led a group of nearly 100 attendees through the basics of media relations in January and then again in August during the Abu Bakar As Saddique Islamic Center Convention. The event provided training to participants on how to publicize their events, respond to negative press, and build relationships with media professionals. CAIR-MN's Communications Director Jessica Zikri led a subsequent training to a local non-profit organization, focusing on how to raise awareness of their services and activities.

#### CAIR-MN Meets with Star Tribune Staff

CAIR-MN met with reporters from the Star Tribune to discuss the Muslim community's concerns related to recent coverage and address specific articles. CAIR-MN also provided the Star Tribune and other news agencies with a more complete contact list of Muslim leaders and activists.

CAIR-MN 2009 MEDIA COVERAGE



CAIR-MN  
08-'09  
TIMELINE  
of EVENTS

**AUGUST '09**

**4**  
Multi-Industry  
Employer  
Diversity Training

**22**  
3rd Annual  
Ramadan Dinner

**SEPTEMBER '09**

**5**  
Anjuman e-Asghari  
Iftar and  
Presentation

**16**  
Najaf, Iraq Visit  
Host Family  
Diversity Training

**OCTOBER '09**

**5**  
Mayo Clinic  
Diversity Training

**11**  
"Know Your Rights"  
Owatonna

**26**  
Customs and  
Border Protection  
Meeting

**29**  
Department of  
Homeland Security  
Roundtable



## BOARD AND STAFF

(PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

### ABDUL BASIT, TREASURER

Originally from Pakistan, Abdul Basit currently works with Ameriprise Financial as a Project Manager. He also owns MediaArts, a local videography company. In addition to his work with CAIR-MN he volunteers with multiple non-profit organizations.

### KASHIF SAROYA, OUTREACH DIRECTOR

By profession, Kashif is a Project Consultant at Ecolab Inc. He has a business degree in Information Systems and Management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to volunteering with CAIR-MN, Kashif serves as the President of the Advisory Council of the Muslim Youth of Minnesota and is a Board Member of the Muslim Youth Leadership Award.

### ASMA LORI SAROYA, CHAIRWOMAN

A co-founder of CAIR-Minnesota, Asma Lori is the youngest Chairperson in CAIR's 15-year history. She is a graduate of St. Catherine University and is currently working on her J.D. degree. In her spare time, she teaches ESL to immigrant adults and volunteers with the Muslim Youth of Minnesota. In 2009, she was recognized as a Facing Race Ambassador by the St. Paul Foundation.

### TONI NEWBORN, ESQ., EVENTS COORDINATOR

Toni Newborn is originally from Birmingham, Alabama. She graduated from Birmingham-Southern College with a B.A. degree in Political Science in May of 2003. In the fall of 2004, she moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where she attended William Mitchell College of Law. In May 2007, she graduated from William Mitchell and was admitted to the Minnesota State Bar in May of 2008. Toni is currently employed at the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights as a Complaint Investigator. She joined the CAIR-MN board as the Events Coordinator in the summer of 2009.

### ZAHRA ALJABRI, ESQ., STAFF CIVIL RIGHTS COORDINATOR

Zahra Aljabri started as an intern with CAIR-MN and in March 2009 she was hired as the Civil Rights Coordinator. Originally from California, she graduated from UCLA in 2005 with a Communications degree. She then completed her law degree at Syracuse University College of Law in New York and was admitted to the Minnesota State Bar in 2009. If you call CAIR-MN's office, Zahra will be your first point of contact.

### JESSICA ZIKRI, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Since earning a B.F.A in Advertising Design from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Jessica has been working in the Continuing Studies Department at MCAD. In addition to her work with CAIR-MN, Jessica volunteers with the Building Blocks of Islam and is a volunteer and freelance graphic designer for several nonprofit organizations in the Twin Cities area.

### TANEEZA ISLAM, ESQ., CIVIL RIGHTS DIRECTOR

Serving as the CAIR-MN Civil Rights Director since March 2008, Taneeza is an attorney and works as a Complaint Investigator at the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights. In addition to her Master's degree in Intercultural Management and Diversity Training, Taneeza earned her J.D. from Hamline Law and was admitted to the Minnesota State Bar in 2008.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### CAIR-MN VOLUNTEERS

The important work that CAIR-MN does to support and serve the Muslim community is almost entirely done by volunteers. The CAIR-MN board of directors is a working board. Each year the board volunteers nearly 10,000 hours to ensure that education, training and advocacy resources are available to the community. In addition to the board's work, CAIR-MN has been blessed to have a wide volunteer and intern base that recognizes the necessity of CAIR-MN's services. Countless volunteers are behind the scenes of every event and publication distributed by CAIR-MN. Without the dedication, resolve and initiative of all our volunteers and interns, CAIR-MN's accomplishments would not be possible.

### SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

This past summer CAIR-MN had several law school interns working in its office. These interns had the chance to conduct initial intakes of new complainants, draft letters to respondents and research relevant case law to form supporting arguments among other things. Currently CAIR-MN has partnered with the Minnesota Justice Foundation (MJF) to receive more law school interns each semester. MJF works with all four twin cities law schools to place qualified law students with organizations that support undeserved communities.



## 2009 JUSTICE WORKS AWARD RECIPIENT STEPHEN SMITH, ESQ.

Stephen Smith has nearly 22 years of experience litigating employment and civil rights cases before administrative agencies and in state and federal courts. Mr. Smith has demonstrated expertise in representing plaintiffs in a broad range of employment litigation, including discrimination and harassment cases, and complex employment discrimination class-actions. Mr. Smith also has a robust criminal defense practice, representing clients in state and federal court. Mr. Smith served eight years as a member of the Board of Directors for Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and is a member of the Minnesota State Bar Association. Finally, Mr. Smith is one of the recipients of the 2002 Minnesota Lawyers Attorney of the Year award.

## MISSION

To enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

## VISION

To be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Want to help CAIR-MN further its mission? Consider joining as a volunteer, an intern, or supporting member. CAIR-MN is always looking for talented individuals who have the drive and patience to see the work through to the end. Whatever talent or skill that you have, CAIR-MN needs it—whether it's financial accounting, community organizing, media relations, legal research, graphic design, or event planning. Let us know how you can help: visit [www.cairmn.com](http://www.cairmn.com) for more information.



1821 University Ave W Ste 220 Saint Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 645-7102 | [info@mn.cair.com](mailto:info@mn.cair.com)

[www.cairmn.com](http://www.cairmn.com)