



LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICIAL'S
GUIDE TO THE
MUSLIM COMMUNITY



CAIR

Council on American-Islamic Relations

The Council on American-Islamic Relations is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to presenting an Islamic perspective on issues of importance to the American public. CAIR conducts sensitivity training workshops for the benefit of administrators and other personnel at corporations and government agencies.

CAIR Research Center conducts research on the American Muslim experience. Dr. Mohamed Nimer is the director of research and author of CAIR's Guide Series.

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**Law Enforcement
Official's Guide
To The
Muslim Community**

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*“... Stand out firmly for justice,
as witnesses to God,
even as against yourselves,
or your parents,
or your kin,
and whether it be [against] rich or poor ...”*

Qur'an, 4:135

Glossary of Muslim Terms

<i>Al-Isra wal-Miraj</i>	Night Journey and Ascension, a religious occasion.
<i>Allah</i>	Arabic word for God.
<i>Ashura</i>	Name of a religious observance, which occurs on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar.
<i>Eid</i>	A day of festivity, major religious holiday.
<i>Eid Mubarak</i>	Greeting: Blessed Festival.
<i>Halal</i>	Permissible by Islamic law.
<i>Hijab</i>	Clothing Muslim women wear in public. It is generally loose-fitting and includes a head covering.
<i>Iftar</i>	Fast-breaking meal, eaten after sunset.
<i>Imam</i>	Prayer leader.

<i>Jum'ah</i>	Friday congregational prayer, the Muslim weekly worship service.
<i>Khutbah</i>	A sermon during Jum'ah.
<i>Kufi</i>	A cap sometimes worn by Muslim men.
<i>Lailat al-Qadr</i>	Night of Power, a religious occasion.
<i>Niqab</i>	A face veil worn by some Muslim women
<i>Qiblah</i>	The direction of Mecca, which Muslims face during prayer.
<i>Qur'an</i>	Islam's scripture, sometimes spelled Koran.
<i>Ramadan</i>	The month of fasting.
<i>Suhoor</i>	Pre-dawn meal, eaten before the day's fast begins.
<i>Wudu</i>	Ablution, a ritual washing before prayer.

The information contained in this publication is designed to assist law enforcement and other security personnel and administrators in formulating and implementing policies that will help create a culturally-sensitive environment and a cooperative relationship between American Muslims and law enforcement agencies. Because of the lack of experience many police officers and federal agents have about Islam, they may wonder what Islam and Muslims are. This publication does not aspire to provide a detailed description of Muslim life, rather it does attempt to highlight aspects that are most relevant to the law enforcement environment.

The booklet will also serve as a guide to the religiously mandated practices of Muslims who work for or have contact with security, and law enforcement entities. This guide is also designed as a quick reference tool to all emergency response professionals and volunteers, including firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

Muslims and the Law Enforcement Community

American Muslims emphasize respect for the law of the land, as the Islamic tradition maintains law and order as a top priority for a functioning society. The Qur'an regards the unjust taking of someone's life or property as a criminal behavior and great sin. The Islamic scripture also

regards justice as a supreme value. Informed by these teachings, Muslims generally look favorably at law enforcement. On various circumstances American Muslim community organizations have met with law enforcement officials to discuss issues of cooperation. Meetings across the country took place in Islamic centers, which offered comfortable venue for interaction between law enforcement and Muslim communities. However, mistrust of the police and security agencies may be found among recent immigrants because of negative experiences they may have had in their countries of origin (where officers of the law have been implicated in corruption and abuse of the citizenry). Thus some may exhibit fear or reluctance when dealing with law enforcement authorities.

The Islamic Creed

The Muslim creed is simply a belief in six core elements: (1) The One God; (2) the angels; (3) the divine scriptures, which include the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Qur'an; (4) the Messengers of God, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad, who was the last prophet; (5) the Day of Judgment, when people will receive the reward (Heaven) or punishment (Hell) for their deeds on earth; (6) and supremacy of God's will.

Islam stresses that all believers are brothers and sisters who should work

together to promote good and forbid evil. Thus, the Muslim concept of group solidarity assumes not only a positive collective will, but also an individual commitment to good deeds. Islam commands morality in personal life as well as justice and equity in relations between people.

To help the believers sustain the disciplined life Islam prescribes, the Qur'an makes obligatory on Muslims a number of practices including prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage. Islamic devotions are meant to increase Godconsciousness and to offer the believer an opportunity to periodically reflect upon his or her life with the intention to turn away from wrongdoing in favor of the straight path.

Daily Prayer

Islam urges "God-consciousness" in the individual's life. To that end, Islam prescribes prayers, which are considered reminders for Muslims to be good. Muslims are required to offer mandatory prayers at the following times each day:

1. Morning Prayer (Fajr) may be offered from break-of-dawn until just before sunrise.
2. Noon Prayer (Zuhr) may be offered from just after midday until mid-afternoon.
3. Afternoon Prayer ('Asr) may be offered from late afternoon until just before sunset.
4. Sunset Prayer (Maghrib) may be

offered from sunset until darkness.

5. Night Prayer (Isha) may be offered throughout the night hours. Muslims usually keep prayer timetables, schedules calculated for specific geographic locations. While Islam encourages

Muslims to pray at the mosque as many do every day, any dry space free of impurities is suitable for prayer. Thus it is not unusual to see Muslims fulfilling such acts of devotion in highway rest areas or other public places (e.g. at airports, shopping malls or on duty).

During the prayer time, the Muslim is fully engaged. He or she may not respond to a ringing telephone or conversation. Officers should not take offense if the worshiper does not answer their call during the prayer. However, in the case of an emergency, an announcement as to the nature of the emergency will suffice to interrupt and, if needed, stop the prayer. During the act of worship, in both individual and congregational prayer, specific verses from the Qur'an are recited silently or aloud, and the Muslim will stand, bow and touch the forehead to the ground. During the prayers, the worshiper will face in a direction towards Mecca, called qiblah which is generally northeast in America. Before the prayer, Muslims are required to wash their faces, hands and feet with pure water. This ablution, called wudu, is normally performed in a restroom sink or other facility that has running water.

Friday Congregational Prayer

In Islam, Friday is the day for weekly congregational services, called Jum'ah. This event takes the place of the daily noontime prayer and includes a sermon, called the Khutbah, which is delivered by an Imam (Prayer Leader). Some Friday congregational prayers may take about 60-90 minutes; others may last until the afternoon prayer. This is especially true in winter, when there is only about two-hour difference between the noon and the afternoon prayer times. The Jum'ah prayer is held in a mosque or other community space.

Because of the rapid Muslim population growth taking place in many parts of the country, mosques conduct several services on Fridays. Fire departments are advised to schedule random inspections on other days. Should any necessary business be conducted involving the premises of Islamic centers on Friday, that business must be completed before 10:00 A.M. or scheduled to start after 3:00 P.M.

Qur'an and Other Literature

The Qur'an is the most important source of religious knowledge for Muslims. Muslims revere it as the last revelation from God to mankind. If an officer has cause to believe the Qur'an may contain any contraband, it may be inspected and, if needed, taken as evidence. Should Qur'ans be seized, they should not be

placed on the floor and should be handled with respect as much as possible. This way, officers can demonstrate that they separate the actions of suspects from a holy scripture cherished by all Muslims. Requirements of religious sensitivity, of course, are superseded by safety concerns under emergency circumstances.

Beards

Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, many Muslim men wear beards. Some Muslim scholars are of the opinion that wearing of a beard is a religious obligation. Cleanliness and proper appearance are required by Islamic teachings.

Muslim Calendar

There are several days in the Muslim calendar with special religious significance. Islamic holy days and festivals follow the lunar calendar. Like the solar calendar, there are twelve lunar months. However, a lunar month, which is marked by the appearance of a new crescent moon on the horizon, may last only 29 days. Thus, a lunar year has about 11 days fewer than the solar year. Therefore, it is important for administrators to note that the dates of Muslim observances and special celebrations change each year because of this difference between the solar and lunar calendars.

Ramadan Fast

Ramadan is a period of personal restraint and a time to focus on moral conduct. The month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is the time in which Muslims are required to fast. Observing Ramadan means refraining from eating and drinking from dawn to sunset. This implies a temporary change in food schedule. The morning meal, called suhoor (predawn meal), must be taken before dawn, when the early morning light breaks the darkness. The evening meal, called iftar (fast-breaking meal) must be served immediately after sunset.

Sick persons are not required to fast during Ramadan, but they must make up missed days after recovery. If the patient still wishes to observe the fast, oral medications can be rescheduled for intake during the night. Injections do not invalidate the fast unless they are nutritious or used as substitute for nutrition.

Almsgiving

Caring for the poor and disadvantaged is considered a foundation of the Islamic faith. For Muslims with ability, there are mandatory annual and seasonal obligations of giving charity. The Islamic tradition requires Muslims to give a portion of their wealth to eligible categories of the needy. Also, Islam recommends generous charitable giving in general--no matter what personal circumstance, as even a smile is charity.

Pilgrimage

Every capable Muslim is obliged to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime during the pilgrimage season, which starts two months after Ramadan. The round trip and the religious rites in the holy places usually take seven to ten days.

Muslim Holidays

Eid (Day of festivity) is the main holiday celebrated by Muslims twice a year. The first, Eid al Fitr, is celebrated at the end of the month of Ramadan. The second, Eid al Adha, is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic month. A typical greeting on these occasions is Eid Mubarak (Blessed Eid). Celebrating Eid requires that Muslims take only one day off from work. A special congregational prayer for the whole community takes place in the morning between sunrise and noon. The festivities usually include carnivals for children, family visitations, gift exchanges, and community meals.

There are other days of religious significance for Muslims. These include:

Night of Power (Lailat al-Qadr): This observance occurs during the last ten days of Ramadan. Muslims believe the revelation of the Qur'an began on that night. Devout Muslims offer special prayers throughout the night. During this time Muslims may stay at the mosque all night, or even go to the mosque during the "wee hours."

Ashura: This commemoration occurs on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim calendar. It marks the day when God saved Moses and the believers from Pharaoh and his soldiers. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, many Muslims fast on that day and another day before or after the event. Ashura also commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the third most revered Imam for the Shi'a Muslim community (which represents about 10-15 percent of Muslims). Gatherings are conducted in which this historical event and its lessons are memorialized.

Al-Isra wal-Miraj (The Night Journey and Ascension): This event is marked on the 27th day of Rajab, the seventh month in the Islamic calendar. The Qur'an states that the Prophet Muhammad was taken by the power of God on a night journey from Mecca to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. From there, he was then taken to Heaven, where he received the order to start the practice of the obligatory daily prayer. Gatherings are conducted in which the story of the miraculous journey is told from religious texts.

Mosques usually experience higher attendance levels around and during these occasions. Consequently, traffic around mosques becomes heavier than usual. During Ramadan, mosques may be busy with people even late into the night, and before dawn.

Clothing

Islam prescribes that both men and women behave and dress modestly. Muslims believe that men and women should be valued as members of society who must be judged by their wisdom, skills and contribution to community, and not by their physical attributes. There are a number of ways in which Muslims express such teachings:

Men

Some men wear a beard and/or a small head covering, called a Kufi. Some men wear long tunics or robes to cover their bodies more fully.

Women

When in public, Muslim women tend to wear loose-fitting, non-revealing clothing. In the presence of unrelated men, Muslim women wear attire known as hijab in observance of religious commands. This attire, which may vary in style, usually includes covering the hair, neck, and body, except the face and hands. Some women following strict religious interpretations may wear niqab, or a face veil.

Muslim Names

Converts to Islam often adopt Muslim names. Popular names include the name of the Prophet Muhammad and other

prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. Common Muslim names may be hyphenated (even though in some spellings the hyphen may be dropped). The first part of the name may be Abd (or Abdul), which means servant. The second part may be one of the names or attributes of God, ninety-nine of which are mentioned in the Qur'an. For example, Abdul-Rahim (sometimes spelled Abdurrahim or Abdelrahim) means the Servant of the Most Merciful.

Still, one must be cautious of stereotypes. Some non-Muslims may have what some may believe to be Muslim-sounding names, while Muslims may bear names lacking any religious influence.

Prayer Rugs

Muslims may typically be seen praying on special rugs. A prayer rug is about the size of a large towel. The prayer rug may be searched as needed, but like the Qur'an should be treated with respect—never to be thrown away or stepped on. Muslims may use any clean, flat object, such as cardboard or a piece of paper, in place of a prayer rug.

Rights of Muslim Law Enforcement Officers

Some Muslim law enforcement officers have successfully settled job discrimination complaints, which often involved religious accommodation concerns; others

had to seek help through the legal system. Such religiously mandated expressions are protected by the following provisions in the Bill of Rights and federal law:

- The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which protects the free exercise of religion.
- Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which provides that an employer may not discriminate against a person because he/she adheres to a particular faith, and that employers must accommodate an employee's religious practices unless doing so would cause undue hardship to the employer.
- In a number of cases the courts have affirmed the right of Muslims to exercise their religious precepts. On October 4, 1999, the Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling in favor of bearded Muslim police officers against the Newark Police Department's no-beard policy. The ruling, issued by the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit Court in *Fraternal Order of Police v. City of Newark* (App. No. 97-5542), stated:

Because the Department makes exemptions from its policy for secular reasons and has not offered any substantial justification for refusing to provide similar treatment for officers who are required to wear beards for religious reasons, we conclude that the Department's policy violates the First Amendment.

Death

It is essential that family members (or the local mosque, if family members cannot be reached) know immediately when a Muslim is dying or has died. All efforts must be made to ensure that a person's body is ceremonially washed according to Islamic teachings and buried in 24 hours if at all possible. A dying Muslim would appreciate help in turning his or her face toward Mecca (northeast in the United States), in accordance with Muslim practice. Muslims wash the body of the dead and bury him or her quickly. Cremation is not permissible and embalming should not be performed unless required by law. Muslims may have specified in their wills where they should be buried and who should handle their funeral and burial. Such requests should be accommodated.

Autopsy

Islam prohibits the mutilation of dead bodies because it shows a lack of respect for the dead. Unless required in connection with an investigation of a crime, an autopsy should not be performed.

General Interaction

It is appropriate to keep a physical space when dealing with members of the Muslim community. Words of sympathy for victims of crime are considered adequate emotional support. Some Muslims may be uncomfortable with gestures that

include any touching, especially from the opposite gender, because of religious concepts of modest behavior.

Officers speaking with a Muslim of the opposite gender may observe that individual avoiding eye contact. Rather than being a sign of evasion or deceit, it is likely that the individual is following religious teachings of modesty which require "lowering the gaze."

Many Muslims, especially immigrants, may feel great fear or discomfort around dogs for cultural reasons. Canine officers should take this into account while performing their duties.

Body Searches

Islam prescribes certain parameters for relations between the sexes. For example, many Muslims may interact formally and are reluctant to shake hands with the opposite sex. This should not be taken as an insult, but as a sign of personal modesty.

Following religious teachings, Muslim females may want to stay fully covered in public and Muslim males may want to keep their bodies covered from the navel to the knees. Muslim detainees in facilities with open showers should be allowed to wrap themselves with large towels. The officer doing shakedowns, including pat searches, should be of the same gender as the Muslim. Also, in non-emergency situations, frisking and strip-searches should be conducted while respecting the privacy

of the suspect. Whenever the situation permits, female paramedics should attend to Muslim female patients.

Etiquette on Entering Homes and Mosques

Because Muslims kneel to the ground in prayer, they try to keep their flooring free of impurities. In mosques as well as places of residence, Muslims take off their shoes before stepping on carpeted areas (often upon entering the front door). When alone, Muslims may not invite officers of the opposite gender into the house, again, because of religious concepts of modesty. In non-emergency situations, officers demonstrate sensitivity when they adhere to such etiquette during visitation of Muslim places of worship. If conducting home searches, officers should allow women to cover in the presences of non related men.

Recruiting Muslims

Muslim community organizations encourage their members to join law enforcement. Still, many Muslims hesitate to do so. In the case of some recent immigrants, their countries of origin may have had police officers who were agents of repressive regimes. Other Muslims shun service believing that American law enforcement agencies tolerate an anti-Muslim bias. There have been many instances when Muslims were profiled

based on their faith, ethnicity or political views. In some cases they were questioned or visited by federal agents at their homes or places of work based on unsubstantiated reports. Also, anti-Muslim remarks have been attributed to even some high officials. Law enforcement agencies can increase the chance of recruitment in the Muslim community by dispelling such fears and exhibiting utmost fairness at all times.

Muslim Community Outreach

There are about seven million Muslims in the U.S. and they are found in every state. For more information and questions, call the Council on American-Islamic Relations at (202) 488-8787. Also, check your local telephone directory for the nearby Islamic center to contact a local imam or an outreach officer. A local Muslim center may be located on the Internet by visiting <www.islamicfinder.com>. For more details about the concerns of Muslim employees consult *An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices*. For more information on issues relevant to Muslims in detention, consult *A Correctional Institution's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices*. Both publications are available from CAIR at <publications@cair-net.org>. Muslim police officer groups can also help improve relations between the community and law enforcement institutions.

Other Titles in This Series:

An Employer's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices

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