



# R ESILIENCE in the Face of Hate

CIVIL RIGHTS  
REPORT  
2021

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CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

**Direct questions about this report to:**

Council on American-Islamic Relations

453 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003

Tel: 202-488-8787, Fax: 202-488-0833, [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)

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# Resilience in the Face of Hate 2021 Civil Rights Report



Nihad Awad

National Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

Freedom is never free. Throughout American history, the fight to establish, preserve and advance basic human rights in our country has been an uphill battle. This is especially true for people of color and other minority groups, who continue to experience systematic violations of their rights and liberties in modern times.

As our nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, the Council on American-Islamic Relations has been on the front line of establishing, preserving and advancing the rights of American Muslims -- through legal representation, advocacy, government relations, media relations, and education, all to bring America closer to fulfilling its promise of liberty and justice for all people.

However, that promise cannot be attained until American Muslims receive the same civil liberties and civil rights as their neighbors. To achieve that promise, it is incumbent that we dismantle the structural Islamophobia that is deeply embedded in our nation's institutions, private sector, and public sphere. Even amid a deadly pandemic, manifestations of Islamophobia continued to plague our community in 2020. American Muslims have responded with resilience and perseverance through advocacy, legal action, and increased civic engagement.

CAIR's vital work does not end there. We are committed to empowering American Muslims, increasing civic engagement and ensuring safety within our communities at large.



This report's primary purpose is to highlight CAIR's legal achievements across the nation in the face of significant challenges. CAIR's legal teams continue to be at the forefront of defending civil rights and pursuing justice for American Muslims, from ridding our workplaces of religious discrimination to challenging discriminatory government policies to ensuring the right of incarcerated to practice their faith.

This report provides a comprehensive reflection of CAIR's diverse legal achievements in 2019 and 2020. Our work inside and outside the courtroom does not end here. We will continue to fight for families whose civil rights are at stake and advocate for communities who are most vulnerable.

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**We are committed to empowering American Muslims, increasing civic engagement and ensuring safety within our communities at large.**

Nihad Awad  
National Executive Director

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CAIR has been at the forefront of defending the civil rights and civil liberties of American Muslims while pursuing justice for all. As part of our mission, CAIR provides free legal services to individuals who have been victims of anti-Muslim discrimination or bigotry. We have offices in 25 states to help clients obtain fair and just resolutions to their cases.

The first section of this report gives a detailed breakdown of our 2020 civil rights complaints and highlights CAIR's legal achievements across the nation. In 2020, CAIR received a total of 6,144 complaints, with immigration and travel accounting for the majority of reported cases and employment discrimination representing the largest bulk of discrimination complaints.

In the next section, we provide a comprehensive reflection of CAIR's major legal achievements in 2019 and 2020. Although this section highlights the progress that occurs for all when CAIR wins legal justice for our clients, these cases also provide us a snapshot of the lived experiences of American Muslims. For instance, CAIR filed a lawsuit challenging Texas' anti-BDS legislation on behalf of Bahia Amawi, a school speech pathologist, who lost her job after refusing to sign an employment contract extension that included a pledge not to boycott Israel. CAIR secured a ruling by a federal court declaring the law unconstitutional, delivering a landmark victory protecting First Amendment rights of all Americans.

In the following section, we shed light on CAIR's advocacy efforts. Since its founding, CAIR has stood up against all forms of bigotry by working to proactively empower American Muslims. To that end, CAIR launched an action-oriented campaign, "All Hands on Deck," as a major effort to mobilize the Muslim vote for the 2020 election. CAIR introduced many initiatives under this campaign, including a 24/7 rapid response

hotline that was operated by CAIR's legal team, a community-wide training that explained voting rights to Muslim voters and what to do if these rights were being violated, a calling center for 150,000 registered Muslim households on the day of the election, a virtual town hall and phone banking event, an election-day live coverage update special, and a nationwide exit poll survey of Muslim voters in efforts to collect data. We are proud to fight alongside a broad coalition of groups to achieve justice for all and uplift the voices of the most marginalized people in our society.

Lastly, due to the rising number of hate crimes over the past decade, this report also dedicates a special section to examining CAIR's role in demanding hate crime inquiries and probes by law enforcement. Our civil rights team has played a vital role in demanding that law enforcement agencies do not create a double standard when American Muslims are the victims of a hate crime.

CAIR is committed to protecting the rights of American Muslims and empowering them to fight for justice for all people. We aspire to have a nation where all Americans have the equal right to freely practice their faith regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.



Press Conference at  
CAIR National

## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- 1- **CAIR received a total of 6,144 complaints nationwide in 2020** involving a range of issues, including discrimination, immigration and travel restrictions, bias incidents, incarcerated rights, law enforcement, and school-related incidents, among other reported issues.
- 2- **There was a 9% increase in complaints** received since our previous civil rights report, *Targeted*, which was published in 2018.
- 3- **CAIR recorded 1,814 complaints** regarding immigration and travel-related issues, one of the most frequent complaints we received.
- 4- **There was a 20% decrease in reported hate crimes to CAIR in 2020**, which was likely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.
- 5- **Employment discrimination accounted for 57% of all discrimination complaints** making it the most common form of discrimination reported to CAIR.

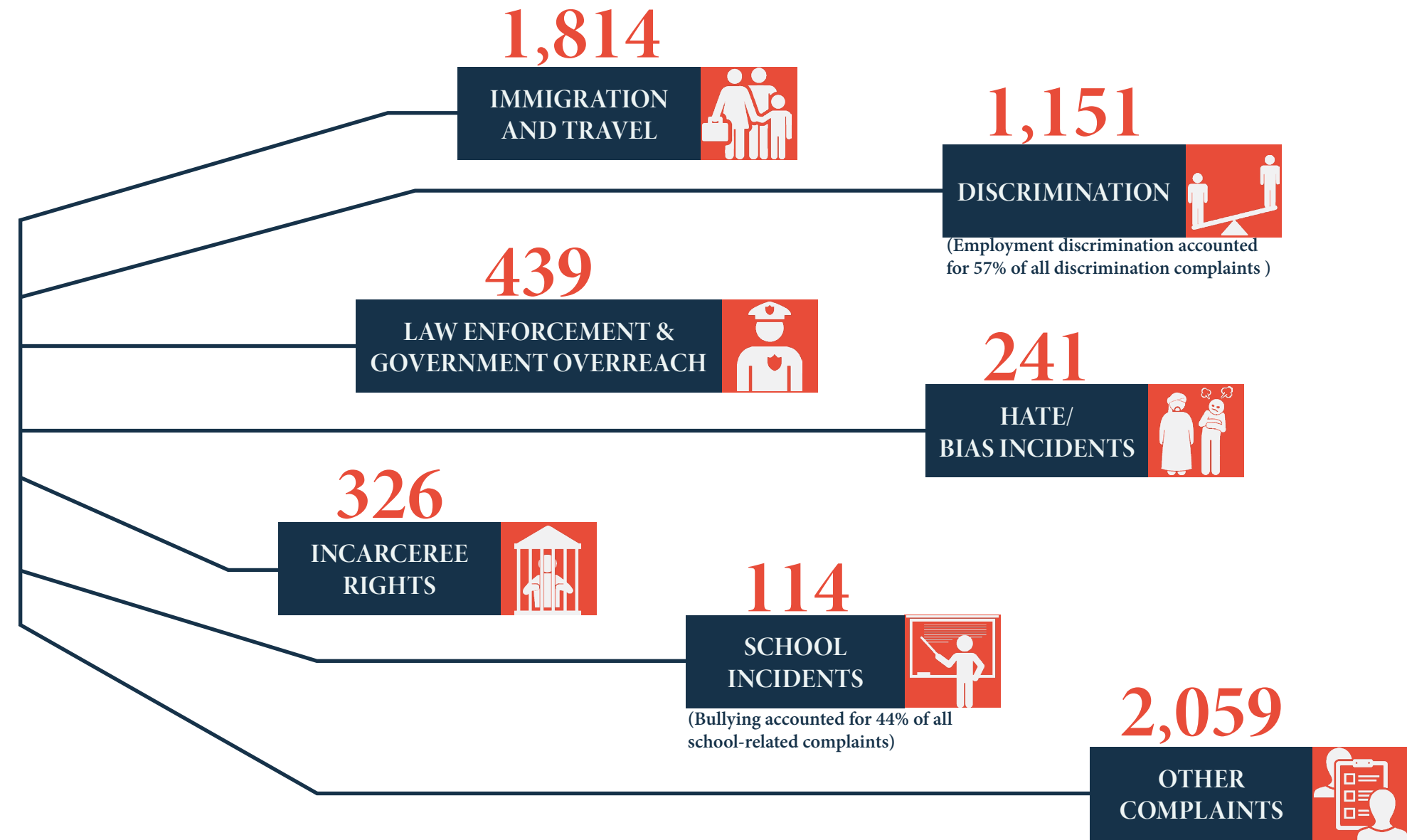
CAIR Staff with  
National Board Chair  
Roula Allouch



## Breakdown of Civil Rights Data

In 2020, CAIR received a total of

**6,144**  
complaints





**Discrimination** complaints encompassed the following forms of discrimination: employment, banking, denial of services, mosque-related issues, and housing incidents.

**Hate and Bias** reports included verbal harassment, vandalism, and physical violence, such as the forcible removal of hijabs.

**Immigration and Travel** complaints included issues involving citizenship, asylum, CBP and USCIS abuses such as airport profiling incidents, the no-fly list , and the Muslim Ban.

**Law Enforcement/Government** included FBI, police, and watchlist surveillance complaints.

**Incarceree Rights** included inmate complaints regarding religious accommodation issues, facilities, etc.

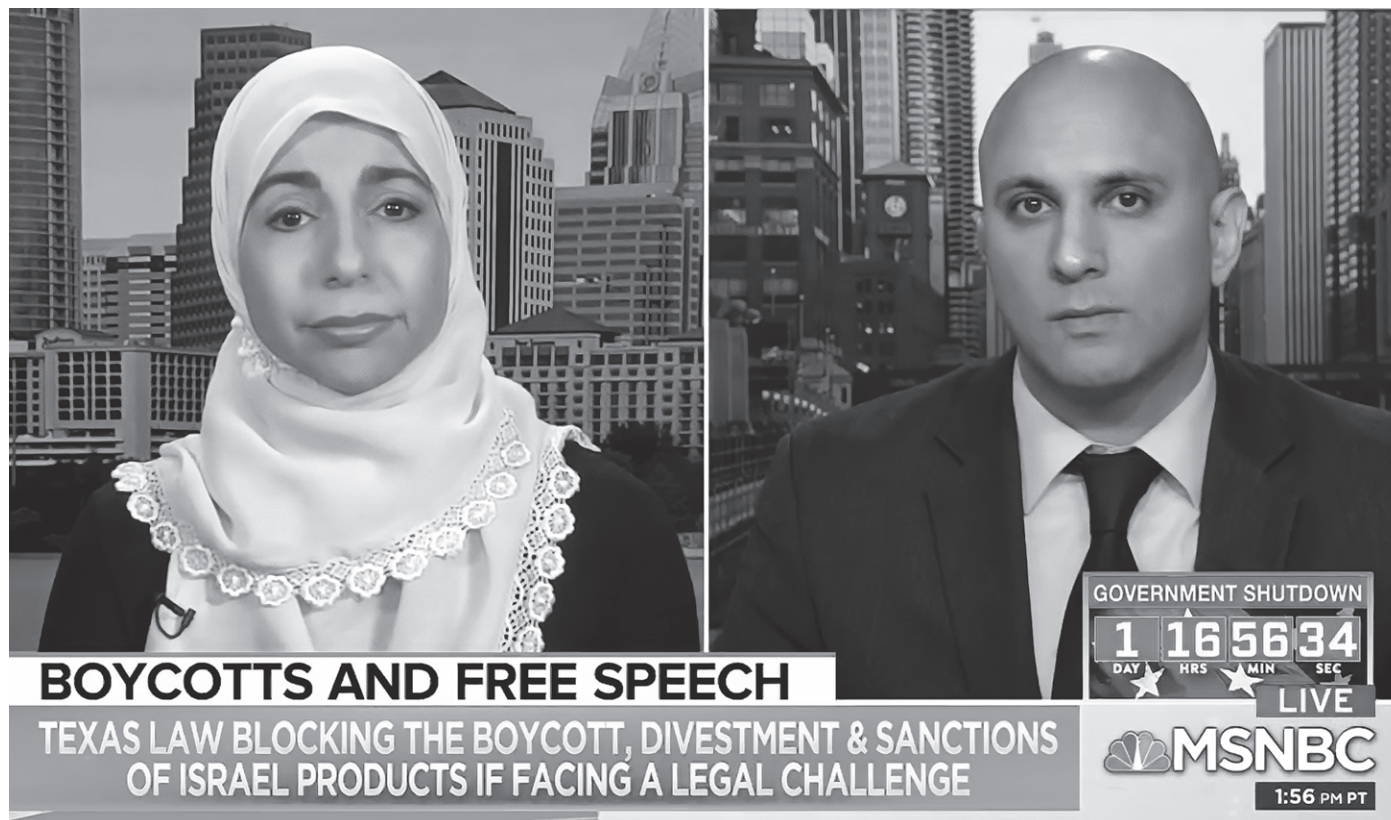
**School** complaints included bullying, Islamophobic school curriculum, and holiday denials.

**Other Complaints** (reports included voting complaints, criminal cases, requests for legal advice, COVID-19 issues, stimulus, referral requests, etc.)

## KEY CASE HIGHLIGHTS

1. Virginia's Riverside Regional Jail created a religiously segregated space for incarcerated who promised to live their lives in accordance with the Bible, colloquially known as the 'GodPod,' thereby establishing an official preference for Christianity. Whereas Christian incarcerated were provided regular religious programming, instruction and materials, Muslims and incarcerated of other faiths were denied access to each of these things. **CAIR sued the jail and won.** A court declared the religious segregation illegal, setting a precedent that requires equal treatment of incarcerated of all faiths in other correctional facilities.
2. CAIR launched and advanced a series of lawsuits against the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), among numerous other government agencies, as part of a coordinated challenge against FBI's terrorist watchlisting system - a program that has subjugated Muslims to years of profiling, harassment and abuse. **CAIR secured a ruling by a federal court declaring the watchlisting system unconstitutional,** delivering a major blow to the government's concerted efforts to broadly and indiscriminately violate the rights of Muslims. This legal achievement is a huge step towards dismantling the watchlisting system, which has wreaked havoc on the lives of tens of thousands of American Muslims. Although an Appeals Court panel with two judges appointed by President Trump recently voted to uphold the watchlist, CAIR is seeking further review of that ruling.
3. **CAIR Greater Los Angeles secured a legal victory and a monetary settlement** for a Muslim woman who was denied services because of her hijab. The lawsuit challenged discriminatory practices at a medical facility and ensured company-wide, sweeping changes to its policy across all of its medical facilities nationwide.

4. **CAIR-Chicago** sued the Illinois Secretary of State over a policy that required the revocation of state identification documents and driver's licenses if Muslim women are caught in public without their hijab or Muslim men are caught without their kufi. **CAIR-Chicago won**, securing a ruling that the policy is unconstitutional. CAIR-Chicago played a critical role in drafting new language that fosters religious inclusiveness and protects religious expression.
5. **CAIR and CAIR-Georgia sued Georgia Southern University** for cancelling a lecture by a visiting civil rights activist and journalist, Abby Martin, after she refused to sign an oath to not "engage in a boycott of Israel." That lawsuit remains pending.
6. CAIR filed a lawsuit challenging Texas' Anti-BDS legislation on behalf of **Bahia Amawi**, a speech pathologist, who lost her job after refusing to sign an employment contract extension with Pflugerville independent school district that included a pledge to not boycott Israel. CAIR secured a ruling by a federal court declaring the law unconstitutional, **delivering a landmark victory in protecting First Amendment rights of all Americans.**
7. In July 2019, **CAIR-NY sued the Trump administration** for illegally revoking the visa of the wife of a US citizen, Saleh Almughani, while she was traveling to Yemen. **Within 24 hours of the lawsuit**, CAIR-NY secured Mr. Almuganahi's wife a visa and challenged the Trump administration's attempts to unlawfully strip the rights of the spouses of American citizens.



Bahia Amawi with CAIR Attorney Gadeir Abbas on MSNBC after filing a lawsuit against Pflugerville Independent School District

# CAIR in the Courts: Highlights of CAIR's Legal Achievements in 2019

**\*Content Warning:** This content contains sensitive material that some people may find disturbing including violence and harassment.



CAIR-National Legal Team Stepping  
out of the Courthouse



Note: Although there were some cases filed before 2019, we did not receive the outcome of the case until 2019.

## CHALLENGING ISLAMOPHOBIA

- In April of 2019, the anti-Muslim activist Laura Loomer filed a lawsuit against CAIR, **CAIR-Florida**, and Twitter in a Florida court based on the false allegation that CAIR had instigated Loomer's permanent ban from Twitter. Loomer was banned from Twitter because she repeatedly violated the site's rules against hateful conduct. In October, the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida dismissed part of Loomer's lawsuit after she failed to demonstrate any wrongdoing by CAIR-Florida. In November, the court dismissed the remainder of Loomer's lawsuit against the organization on the basis that it "failed as a matter of law" and was "nonsensical."<sup>1</sup>

## DENIAL OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INCARCEREES

- CAIR filed a lawsuit on behalf of plaintiffs Anas Dowl and Ernest Jacobsson. **The lawsuit sought emergency relief in May 2018 against Alaska Department of Corrections (Alaska DOC)** for allegedly refusing to provide Muslim incarcerated with sufficient nutrition during Ramadan 2018. Due to CAIR's legal efforts, they ultimately reached a settlement whereby the state agreed with Alaska's DOC requiring to them change several policies affecting Muslim incarcerated. Per the settlement agreement, Alaska DOC is required to allow Muslim incarcerated the opportunity to fast during the month of Ramadan at all of its facilities. This includes 3,000 nutritionally adequate meals daily during the month of Ramadan, including two hot meals. Additionally, Muslim incarcerated are now also permitted to lead, perform, and offer their daily prayers and Friday jumu'ah services together for the first time in Alaska's history.<sup>2</sup>

- In August of 2019, **CAIR and CAIR-Greater Los Angeles** filed a lawsuit against the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department on behalf of three Muslims challenging its multipronged and systematic effort to disfavor Muslim incarcerated. The Department imposed policies that either completely deny Muslim incarcerated access to most, if not all, religious accommodations, services, programming, and materials that are available to incarcerated of other faiths, restrict their access, or require them to jump through hoops to obtain them. Muslim incarcerated are also subjected to a rigorous, intrusive and unlawful inquiry that tests their knowledge of arcane details of Islam to prove they are devout Muslims before they can be provided with a halal diet.<sup>3</sup>
- CAIR filed a lawsuit on behalf of five Muslim incarcerated against Prince George's County in Maryland for implementing a Muslim-specific policy preventing them from participating in Friday Jumu'ah services and daily prayers, while allowing incarcerated of other faiths to perform congregational prayers. That lawsuit remains pending.
- CAIR filed a lawsuit on behalf of three incarcerated against the Arkansas Department of Corrections challenging its policy of forcing Muslim incarcerated to hold combined Friday prayer services with other religious faith groups – specifically, the Nation of Islam and Five Percent Nation/Nation of Gods and Earths. In 2020, the United States Department of Justice intervened in CAIR's lawsuit and filed a brief in support of the lawsuit as an interested party. That lawsuit remains pending.
- In December 2019, **CAIR-Minnesota** secured a six-figure settlement for a Muslim woman after Ramsey County jailers forced her to remove her hijab and undress in public view following her arrest over a traffic offense. In addition to the \$120,000 payout, the settlement requires the jail to implement specific policies to establish rules on accommodating incarcerated with religious headwear during the booking photo process. Moreover, the Sheriff's Office is required to provide religious sensitivity training to its corrections officers.<sup>4</sup>



## DENIAL OF SERVICE

- **CAIR-Oklahoma**, along with the ACLU and the ACLU of Oklahoma, filed a lawsuit against a Muskogee County store and gun range for preventing American Muslims from entering their establishment. The Oktaha business in July 2015 posted a sign that read, “This privately owned business is a Muslim-free establishment...” With pressure from CAIR-Oklahoma and the ACLU, the gun range removed the anti-Muslim sign in 2018 and the lawsuit was dismissed in 2019.
- In May 2019, Leitoya Dixon, an African-American Muslim woman, was denied assistance by a pair of MTA ticket agents who said they “don’t answer questions from people who look like you” according to the complaint. **CAIR-New York filed a discrimination complaint** with the NYC Commission on Human Rights and the case was settled for a sizable amount. Non-monetary relief was also agreed upon.
- In July 2019, a Muslim hijabi woman attempted to open a savings account designating her husband as the beneficiary. Upon hearing her husband’s name, it was reported that CitiBank informed her that it will need three to four days to investigate her husband first. However, the bank did not provide any reason for the investigation. **CAIR-New York** took immediate action and filed a discrimination complaint with New York City’s Human Rights Commission. The case is still ongoing.<sup>5</sup>



## DISCRIMINATION BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- In 2019, **CAIR-Florida's** client was denied a concealed weapons license without any reason. CAIR-Florida appealed the decision to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Customer Service and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Eventually, the administrative process was successful and the client was able to obtain a concealed weapons permit.

## EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

- **CAIR-Michigan**, together with the civil rights law firm of Pitt McGehee Palmer & Rivers, PC filed a lawsuit in the Federal District Court in the Eastern District of Michigan on behalf of two former Muslim employees of Anna's House who were terminated on the basis of their race, religion, and for opposing the company's discriminatory employment practices.
- **CAIR-Columbus** filed a wrongful termination complaint against Walmart with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on behalf of a Muslim-Somali man. The Muslim man began his employment at Walmart in 2004. He performed his duties competently and with merit, got promoted, and did not ever receive any warnings or complaints. For years, he was subjected to a hostile work environment by his coworkers and managers. They made derogatory comments regarding his race and religion such as "Muslims should not be in America," "Muslims kill Americans. . .Trump will stop that" and "Barack Obama was a Muslim."
- **CAIR-NY** filed a federal discrimination complaint in October 2019 on behalf of a Sudanese Muslim engineer against International Design Services, Inc. (IDS) for racial, religious and national origin discrimination and the creation of a hostile work

environment. According to the complaint, the Muslim employee was subjected to months long patterns of harassment, intimidation, proselytizing, and threats. He was also subjected to a “bootcamp” training program designed to harass him. After the Muslim employee filed a complaint, he was fired from his job. On at least 10 occasions, his supervisor told him: “I don’t like your religion.”

- **CAIR-NY** filed federal and state employment discrimination complaints against the New York State Department of Corrections on behalf of a former Muslim chaplain employee for harassment, hostile workplace and retaliation. The former employee, an American Muslim woman who wears a hijab was allegedly harrassed by a supervisor for years in an attempt to terminate her.
- **CAIR-Los Angeles** represented and assisted a Muslim woman employee of a large national chain retail store regarding the hostile work environment, harassment, religious discrimination, and retaliation she faced. While the client was initially treated well by her supervisor, when the client began to wear her hijab to work about three months into her employment, her supervisor began to harass her. The supervisor would deride her religious beliefs at least two or three times a week. After she complained to human resources about her supervisor’s behavior, the supervisor retaliated against her by reducing her work schedule. The supervisor continued to harass her and make derogatory comments towards her, claiming she wore her hijab because “she does not comb her hair.” The supervisor questioned the client’s request for prayer accommodations and forced her to handle alcohol and pork products despite the client telling the employer of her religious needs not to do so. CAIR-LA successfully negotiated a monetary settlement for the religious discrimination she faced.



- **CAIR-Los Angeles** represented a client, a Muslim woman, who experienced a hostile work environment and religious discrimination in her place of work for wearing a hijab. An electrical accessories company hired her as a receptionist. She wore her hijab to her initial hiring interview and made clear that she wore her hijab for religious purposes. After being hired, during her first week on the job, her supervisor asked her if she could change how she wears her hijab as the supervisor did not want her to appear “all covered up.” The supervisor continued to harass her about her hijab, told her she “should not bring religion into the workplace” and forced her to decide between not wearing her hijab or changing how she wore it. When the Muslim woman refused to choose between these two options, she was terminated less than two weeks after her hire. CAIR-LA successfully negotiated a monetary settlement for the religious discrimination faced by the client.

### FLYING WHILE MUSLIM

- In September 2019, **CAIR filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation against American Airlines on behalf of two American Muslims** who were allegedly discriminated against by American Airlines for appearing Muslim and Middle Eastern during a flight from Birmingham, Alabama, that was headed to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. They were escorted off their flight, only to find themselves being interrogated by the FBI because a flight crew member felt uncomfortable after one of them “flushed the toilet two times.” CAIR requested the federal agency investigate the incident.



- In 2016, a Muslim family was harassed and removed from a United Airlines flight. The family had boarded the flight from Chicago to D.C. and asked for a booster seat for their child. They were consequently told to leave the plane with no explanation from the flight staff about why they were being removed. **CAIR-Chicago filed a civil-rights lawsuit against them in 2016**, and in 2019, the Northern District Court decided to allow the case to proceed on “one count against United.”<sup>6</sup>

### **FREE SPEECH AND CHALLENGING ANTI-BDS LEGISLATION**

- In 2018, **CAIR-National filed a lawsuit on behalf of Bahia Amawi**, a speech pathologist, who was not allowed to sign a contract extension with Pflugerville independent school district unless she pledged not to boycott Israel. CAIR challenged the Texas Anti-BDS Act in court and won the case in 2019. The Attorney General of Texas is no longer permitted to include ‘No Boycott of Israel’ clauses in any state contract. This was a complete victory protecting the First Amendment right of all Texans.<sup>7</sup>

### **HARASSMENT**

- A Muslim family had moved into an apartment with an Islamophobic tenant living below them. The Islamophobic tenant constantly harassed them, terrifying the children, and falsely complained to the police that they had poisoned his dogs. Moreover, he took them to court, seeking a restraining order based on various bizarre accusations, including claims that the family tracked his movements and eavesdropped on his conversations – a case that he lost. Fearing for their safety, the family moved from their apartment. **CAIR-Massachusetts** filed a case against the tenant at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination based on his campaign of harassment. The case is currently pending.

- In 2019, **CAIR-Georgia successfully secured a charge against a man who assaulted a Muslim employee.** Rick Painter attacked a Muslim woman food delivery driver and attempted to strangle her with her niqab. Painter pleaded guilty but received a short sentence of 14 months. **CAIR-Georgia** successfully lobbied the prosecutor's office to have the battery's initial charge upgraded to aggravated assault and false imprisonment.<sup>8</sup>
- **CAIR-Georgia** represented a Muslim Uber driver who was verbally and physically assaulted. For part of the plea deal, **CAIR-Georgia conducted religious sensitivity training for the assailant.**

### **HATE CRIME/HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION**

- On June 18, 2017, **Nabra Hassanen, an American Muslim 17-year-old from Virginia,** was with her friends leaving McDonald's in the early morning hours to head to their local mosque as part of their normal routine during the month of Ramadan. Nabra never made it because she was brutally attacked, raped, and murdered. **CAIR provided legal representation for the family** through the prosecution of Nabra's killer, who was sentenced to eight life terms in prison in 2019. As part of his plea deal that CAIR helped to secure, Nabra's killer is required to attend a deposition under oath where CAIR attorneys will ask questions on behalf of the Hassanen family in an effort to provide some closure to the family.
- In 2017, a Muslim grandmother was attacked on the subway by a white male. He screamed slurs at her, called her a terrorist, punched the window next to her head so hard that it shattered, and rammed the metal end of his umbrella into her back, leaving bruises that lasted for weeks. All the way through 2019, **CAIR-Massachusetts provided her with legal representation,** attending meetings with the police and prosecutors and representing her during the trial, where she bravely confronted her

assailant in court. Her attacker was convicted of four offenses and sentenced to two years in prison.

- **CAIR-Chicago settled a lawsuit it filed against the Chicago Police Department on behalf of a young Muslim woman** who was attacked on a subway platform by police officers. Itemid Al-Matar was walking to the subway platform at the CTA Red Line Station when six officers tackled her on the stairs, removed her hijab and clothes, and booked her without a warrant. In tandem with the Gregory E. Kulis and Associates law firm, CAIR Chicago filed a seven-count lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department. On January 23, 2019, the City of Chicago approved a settlement of the case and all counts for \$160,000.<sup>9</sup>
- In December 2018, a white man pulled a gun on a group of Somali-American teens at an Eden Prairie McDonalds. **CAIR-Minnesota filed charges of discrimination with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights against McDonald's** for their response to the handling of the situation.
- A single mother and U.S. citizen of Iraqi origin was harassed by her new neighbor because of her faith and national origin. The neighbor threatened her and her children, the neighbors that supported her, vandalized her property, and broke into

CAIR-Minnesota  
at capitol hill in  
Washington D.C.



her home. After the perpetrator was arrested and released on bond, he continued making threats violating the restraining order's rules. Attorneys at **CAIR-Florida** supported the victim throughout the process and advocated for the prosecution of the offender with local law enforcement and the FBI. As a result, in December 2019, the offender was sentenced to one year of supervised probation for interfering with the victim's housing rights.<sup>10</sup>

## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

- After over two years of litigation in three different courts, **CAIR-Massachusetts** negotiated a favorable settlement in a housing discrimination case on behalf of a disabled single mother. At her apartment complex, she and her son had been subjected

to anti-Muslim harassment, including slurs, aggressively rude treatment, and surveillance of her 8-year old son. During the winter, they endured months without enough heat or hot water, forcing them to wear their coats while indoors and use the oven for heat. But when she complained to the health department, her landlord threatened to evict her. The case was settled as they were preparing for a jury trial.

**Dr. John Robbins,**  
**Executive Director of**  
**CAIR-Massachusetts**





## IMMIGRATION

- On September 9, 2019, **CAIR-Chicago filed a mandamus suit against the United States Customs and Immigration Services.** The USCIS had delayed advancing seven critical asylum cases, some ranging 120 days to more than two years. These seven anonymous clients are political dissidents facing torture, refugees fleeing death threats and students fleeing the failed regimes in Yemen and Syria. All relied on the USCIS to review their cases to secure safety and stability for their families. By filing a mandamus suit, CAIR-Chicago sought to advocate for these individuals and advance the processing of their citizenship applications.<sup>11</sup>

Ahmed Rehab,  
CAIR-Chicago's  
Executive Director



- A Syrian client of **CAIR-Chicago was awarded asylum status after CAIR intervened.** The individual arrived in the US seeking refuge from Syria where he was a target of violence by political and religious sects. The CAIR-Chicago Litigation team was able to intervene on behalf of the individual and fight for the US to grant him asylum.<sup>12</sup>
- In April 2019, **CAIR-Columbus filed a lawsuit in Federal court** for the Southern District of Ohio on behalf of a Muslim man whose green card application had been pending for almost 18 months without adjudication. Since the filing of the lawsuit, CAIR-Columbus was able to resolve the delay and adjudication successfully and their client was able to receive his green card.<sup>13</sup>
- Irum, a U.S. citizen, was unjustly separated from her husband Ahmed for three years. In Islamabad, Pakistan, the U.S. embassy unreasonably delayed Ahmed's immigrant visa for three years, forcing him and his wife to live apart. The couple had also contacted the embassy dozens of times pleading with them to process Ahmed's application. **CAIR-Columbus filed a federal mandamus lawsuit against the U.S. Department of State.** After three months, Ahmad received his visa and was reunited with his wife.<sup>14</sup>
- Muminov fled Uzbekistan to escape religious persecution. After receiving his green card, Muminov eventually applied for U.S. citizenship but was denied because of the government's secret watchlist. **CAIR-Ohio filed a lawsuit for Muminov to compel the government to process his citizenship application.** The U.S. government granted Muminov his citizenship after CAIR-Ohio filed an appeal in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.
- With the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, **CAIR-Washington made public hundreds of pages of emails regarding the detention of Iranians at the Port of Entry in Blaine, Washington.** These Iranians were detained in early January of 2020.

Chief Judge Ricardo Martinez ordered the search of the emails of high level Customs and Border Protection officials that had anything to do with the unlawful detention of Iranians at the port of entry. The court also ordered the release of those documents by Customs and Border Protection so that they could be made available to the public.<sup>15</sup>

- In November 2019, a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University flew to the United States from Colombia. Upon arrival, she was subjected to almost 10 hours of delay by CPB, including a secondary inspection and a line of personal questions about her faith, education, the mosques she attended, and text messages in her WhatsApp they found “troubling.” The CBP supervisor informed her that her visa will be canceled and that she will be put on a flight to Trinidad (her birthplace) and will be barred entry to the United States for five years. The client’s sister contacted **CAIR-Florida** immediately. Thanks to the persistent advocacy of CAIR-Florida, the CBP Director decided that the client would be admitted into the United States. CAIR-Florida continues to work with the client to ensure she will get a new visa.<sup>16</sup>

### SCHOOL BULLYING AND EDUCATION DISCRIMINATION

- **CAIR-LA** represented a Muslim middle school student who endured intense bullying and name calling including racial slurs, being asked whether she had a bomb at school, students making ticking noises at her, and being blamed for the 9/11 tragedy. After the district failed to adequately respond to reports of this bullying, which enabled a hostile environment to become pervasive at the school, **CAIR-LA initiated the Uniform Complaint Process with the District on behalf of the family.** The District issued an initial finding of no fault, asserting that no bullying or harassment had occurred. CAIR-LA appealed this to the CDE, which granted CAIR-LA’s appeal and ordered the District to conduct a novel investigation that included all of the reported incidents. The District subsequently issued a report that found that, although the discriminatory bullying had occurred, it transpired in a “mutual back-and-forth,” mischaracterizing

the student's attempts to defend herself against multiple attackers. CAIR-LA once again appealed this to the CDE, citing the statistically high rates of bullying that Muslim students are forced to endure, as well as the Islamophobic environment at the school. The CDE however rejected CAIR-LA's second appeal and found the District's second investigation and conclusion to be sufficient. CAIR-LA highlighted the injustice of this case, which mirrored the findings of the 2019 CAIR-CA Bullying Report, in press releases and media interviews.

- **CAIR-LA** attorneys assisted a first generation Egyptian-American Muslim high school student who was subjected to prejudicial bullying and destruction of his property by a fellow student in his school district. Upon being contacted, CAIR-LA attorneys successfully demanded that the school district provide accommodations including ensuring that the student engaged in the bullying would not have access to the impacted Muslim student either during school hours or while engaged in any school-related activity after hours. CAIR-LA further worked with the school district to clear any disciplinary punitive measures imposed on the Muslim student, which were related to his efforts to defend himself from the bullying. Finally, CAIR-LA helped the student's family file a report for the damaged property and guided the student in asserting his right to restitution for the value of the damaged property.
- In May 2019, it was reported that a public school employee in Brooklyn forced a Muslim child to watch children eat while he was fasting during Ramadan. An employee at a school allegedly told him, "you must sit in the cafeteria and watch all the kids eat while you are fasting!" **CAIR-New York** immediately took action and filed a complaint with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. The case is currently ongoing.<sup>17</sup>

- **CAIR-Massachusetts** filed a case at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination on behalf of an elderly Muslim man who was aggressively accosted by a security guard and ousted from a building where he attended classes. Their client, who had been in the lobby area for a few minutes and spoke quietly on his phone, was frightened and humiliated. The building management tried to defend itself by claiming that the client had violated an unposted 10-minute seating limit. CAIR-MA sent a series of white “testers” to the building and found that all of them were allowed to sit in the lobby for well over 10 minutes without being approached by a security guard, let alone thrown out. The case is currently pending.

### **TERROR WATCHLISTING SYSTEM**

- **CAIR-National** filed a lawsuit on behalf of Anas Elhady and approximately 20 other Muslims as part of a comprehensive constitutional challenge against the government’s terrorist watchlisting system. In September, 2019, Judge Anthony Trenga of the Eastern District of Virginia ruled that the government has unconstitutionally failed to provide watchlisted persons with notice and an opportunity for individuals to challenge their status. The judge granted CAIR’s motion for summary judgment in the case of the 23 American Muslims who were unjustly labeled as suspected terrorists

by their government, causing extensive harm to their families, careers, and ability to travel. The government appealed the ruling the decision was reversed. In March 2021, **CAIR** asked the entire U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit to review the decision by a three-judge panel upholding the terror watchlist and overturning a district court decision that declared the program unconstitutional. which remains pending.<sup>18</sup>

**CAIR Announces Filing of Broad Challenge to Watchlisting System**





## TRAVEL

- A U.S. citizen with Global Entry was stopped and questioned extensively by CBP about his trip, personal information, and occupation. They went further and took his phone from him and continued to press him with questions. A few hours later, the client and his siblings received an email revoking their Global Entry. **CAIR-Florida** stepped in and advocated on behalf of the client with TSA and was successful in getting his Global Entry reinstated.
- In July 2019, **CAIR-New York** filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Saleh Almuganahi, a U.S. citizen of Yemeni descent whose wife and two children were stuck in Yemen due to Trump's Muslim travel ban. The lawsuit was filed against President Trump's administration for illegally revoking their visa while overseas in Yemen. Within 24 hours of the lawsuit, the embassy granted Mr. Almuganahi's wife a visa and were eventually reunited in New York city.
- In September 2019, Mohamed Khairullah, mayor of Prospect Park in New Jersey, was wrongfully detained by CBP at New York's JFK airport. Kairullah told the press that CPB was "flat out profiling" him and asked him "if he knew any terrorists." The mayor's phones were confiscated and he and his family were subjected to secondary screenings consistent with watchlist treatment. **CAIR-New York** secured the return of his electronic devices.<sup>19</sup>



Yemeni Family Reunited at Dallas Airport



CAIR with faith leaders at the US-Mexico Border



## Client Testimonials

CAIR represented a Muslim woman after she was harassed at work because of her faith:

I think the CAIR Legal team demonstrated high ethics, so much empathy, and a lot of professionalism in handling my case. They were patient to go over the details multiple times, listen to my concerns and address them all with so much transparency. I appreciate how attentive Zanah was to all the important details and being on top of it. Many of these cases must have lawyers who would understand the emotional distress that comes with it, and I believe I eventually was happy with the team I worked with.

CAIR Legal Defense Fund represented a Muslim man who was denied the right to pray and retaliated against at work after he complained about harassment by his supervisor:

My ex-employer was denying accommodations for Salat and refusing to designate area for prayer. After many of my requests fell through deaf ears. I escalated to HR department with same results. A friend suggested to reach out to CAIR. CAIR became a beacon of hope to my case at a time when my options appeared limited and the likelihood of a satisfactory resolution felt bleak. I'm so thankful to God we have a great organization in US who's fighting for Muslims citizens' civil rights and protecting our civil liberties. Thank you CAIR for taking and winning my case.

CAIR Legal Defense Fund represented a Muslim man whose application to become a citizen was indefinitely delayed:

CAIR helped me immensely in getting a resolution to my long-stalled naturalization case. I didn't hear back from USCIS for more than two years despite of repeated attempts to contact them. I even reached out to my US Senator and my local US representative, but nothing helped. After exhausting all my options, I contacted CAIR who took up my case and contacted USCIS on my behalf. Just within a few weeks, I received a letter from USCIS asking me to appear for my interview. CAIR was very professional and helpful during the entire process, and even had their lawyer accompany me during the interview. The lawyer from CAIR was very professional and diligent throughout the process, and took time to understand my entire case. I was able to successfully pass my interview and eventually took my oath to become a proud US citizen a couple of months later. I firmly believe that without CAIR's help, I may still have been stuck in the limbo and not become a US citizen yet. God bless y'all for helping me get through this stressful time!



CAIR Legal Defense Fund represented a Muslim leader who was placed on a watchlist that resulted in humiliating searches and interrogations each time he traveled:

I have had the blessing and opportunity to travel internationally with my family and for religious and educational purposes. Unbeknownst to me, I was added on to a list that resulted in being stopped and interrogated for hours every time I entered the US and came back home. It became so frustrating that I started to avoid travel, that is until CAIR helped me. They looked into my situation and ultimately cleared me so that I would no longer be stopped and questioned. I can only imagine how many people they've helped through even more difficult situations. May Allah reward them for helping Muslims who are being treated unfairly.”

CAIR represented a Yemeni woman and helped her challenge the Muslim ban so that she and her family could live safely in the United States:

My wife and I were in a very uncertain and dangerous situation in Saudi Arabia, where we were living in 2019 while waiting for my wife's US visa waiver request to be processed. My wife is Yemeni and had been denied according to the Presidential Proclamation 9645, or "Muslim ban" as it was known. She was pregnant and my work contract was expiring soon, at the end of which I would have to return home to the US and she would be without a sponsor in Saudi leaving her no choice but to go to Yemen to live and have our baby, alone and without her immediate family. CAIR received news of our situation and immediately stepped in to provide legal assistance. We were fortunate to have been helped by CAIR and it is our earnest hope that others are able to be helped by them as well – there are still many people in these kind of situations who deserve to be reunited and to live their lives safely and together.

## Highlights of CAIR's Legal Achievements in 2020

**\*Content Warning:** This content contains sensitive material that some people may find disturbing including violence and harassment.



Madinah Brown with CAIR  
attorney Ankur Sakaria

Note: Although there were some cases filed before 2020, we did not receive the outcome of the case until 2020.

## DENIAL OF SERVICE

- **CAIR-New Jersey** filed charges against ShopRite on behalf of their client how was harassed by an employee who told her to “go back where you came from.”
- In 2020 **CAIR-California won** a settlement on behalf of a Muslim woman who was forced to remove her hijab for identification purposes or she would be denied services. The incident occurred when the client went to donate blood plasma at a local facility. The staff ordered her to remove her hijab for identification, despite the fact that she wore her hijab in her identification photo. The client informed the staff that she cannot remove her hijab for religious reasons. At this point the manager stepped in and reiterated that she had to take off her hijab before she could donate blood. CAIR-Los Angeles was able to get the client a monetary settlement and the company has agreed to change its policies to ensure that all their facilities across the country accommodate religious attire.<sup>20</sup>

## DISCRIMINATION

- In July 2020, Ahmad Ahmad with the help of **CAIR-New Jersey** forced a citation to be dropped. A township cited his family for improper lawn maintenance; however, the prosecutor provided videos of other lawns owned by Caucasians that weren't maintained which demonstrated racial and religious prejudice in selection of citation.

## DISCRIMINATION BY FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- In July 2020, **CAIR-New York** filed a discrimination complaint with the New York City Human Rights Commission against Venmo because of its policy of targeting payments associated with people of Islamic or Arab nationality or ethnicity. Shahana

Hanif, a Muslim Bangladeshi woman, used Venmo to send a payment to her friend to repay her for the food they ate at Al-Aqsa Restaurant. Venmo flagged and restricted the payment. The complaint alleges that Venmo flagged the payment because they believed the restaurant was parallel to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The complaint states that Venmo is filtering out the payments that use the term “Al-Aqsa,” therefore, singling out Muslims. CAIR-NY has not filed this lawsuit yet but is in the process of doing so.<sup>21</sup>

- In March of 2020, **CAIR-Florida** reported a discrimination complaint against a credit card company that sent repeated letters to a Muslim client with the word “terrorist” instead of “terrace” on his address. **CAIR-Florida** additionally demanded an apology and discipline against the relevant employee. In July of 2020, they received confirmation that administrative action was taken against said employee.

### **DISCRIMINATION BY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

- On May 28th, 2020, CAIR-Chicago won a settlement with the Illinois Secretary of State (SOS) on a controversial official form requiring women, who wear the hijab in their Driver License ID photo, to wear the hijab at all times or risk license suspension. According to the lawsuit, the language was deemed unconstitutional because it infringes on religious freedom.<sup>31</sup> The new form drafted by CAIR-Chicago, now reads “My religious beliefs require me to wear an unconcealed religious head covering when I am in public. In observation and exercise of my religious beliefs, I do not normally remove my head covering in public unless removal is necessary in my discretion. I do not remove the head covering in public as a matter of courtesy or protocol, such as when in court.”<sup>22</sup>

## EDUCATION DISCRIMINATION

- In February 2020, **CAIR-California** represented a client who placed a complaint on Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert campus for offering an Islamophobic course. The class "History of Islam: Mohammed to ISIS" portrayed Islam as a religion of violence and depicted Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a man who sought world domination. Further investigation uncovered that the professor teaching the course had no background in academia or history. Since CAIR's complaint, the course has since been canceled.<sup>23</sup>

## EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

- In April 2020, **CAIR-New York** filed a discrimination complaint on behalf of a Muslim woman who experienced discrimination while working in CUNY's central office. The woman is a student at Baruch College and worked as a part-time college assistant in the Office of the Registrar, where she experienced a hostile environment created by her supervisors. CAIR NY's litigation director, Ahmed Mohamed, explained that this woman experienced "a yearlong campaign to abuse her, to demean her, on the basis of her religion and her gender and her sex and her national origin and her ethnicity." This complaint was filed with the state's Division on Human Rights.<sup>24</sup>
- **CAIR-Georgia** was able to secure a settlement over a federal discrimination complaint that CAIR-Georgia filed against Farmhaus Burgers in Augusta. The restaurant was under fire because a former employee accused the employer of mistreatment based on her religion. Lacey Enevoldsen had worked at the restaurant for more than a year when she started practicing Islam and wearing the hijab. After making the decision to wear one, Enevoldsen was discriminated against by the owner, prompting her exit from the restaurant.<sup>25</sup>



- In 2020, **CAIR-California** obtained a settlement on behalf of a Muslim woman who was asked to take her headscarf off by her immediate supervisor. Despite informing her supervisor that her headscarf is an expression of her faith, her employer stated that she needed prior authorization to wear a religious head covering, and because she did not have it, she either must remove her headscarf or leave work. When the client expressed concern about being forced to choose between her hijab and her livelihood, the employee's job was terminated. **CAIR-Los Angeles** has since advocated on behalf of the client and achieved a monetary settlement on her behalf.<sup>26</sup>
- In 2020, **CAIR-Massachusetts** won a legal case against a university who denied a custodian the right to wear a kufi on the job. The custodian previously faced frequent harassment on the job, and received many slurs by co-workers. **CAIR-MA** contacted college officials, who agreed to grant him a religious accommodation that exempted him from his department's "no hats" rule.
- **CAIR** filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaint against the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Families, in October 2019 for denying a Muslim female current employee the legally-protected right to wear a hijab. Madinah Brown stated that she was forced to return home from her job at the New Castle County Detention Center under the Delaware Department of Services if she was wearing her hijab, and one of her supervisors regularly called her a terrorist, causing her to lose wages and benefits. **CAIR-National** won the lawsuit in 2020 as it was clear that the state of Delaware had no legal basis for preventing Madinah from working with her hijab.<sup>27</sup>
- **CAIR** filed a lawsuit against a Maryland McDonald's franchisee on behalf of a Muslim woman who was forced to resign from her employment after being prohibited from praying and being subjected to discrimination and a hostile work environment.



## FREE SPEECH AND CHALLENGING ANTI-BDS LEGISLATION

- On June 3, 2020, **CAIR-Arizona** filed a first amendment lawsuit against Scottsdale Community College on behalf of a Muslim student who was punished for refusing to agree with anti-Muslim statements on an exam. The Scottsdale professor wrote a quiz which equated Jihad and terrorism, and then subsequently confirmed terrorism as a central tenant in Islamic doctrine. The quiz went on to say that terrorists strive to emulate Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).<sup>28</sup> A Muslim student refused to confirm these statements on the quiz and lost many points, affecting his grade. CAIR-Arizona's lawsuit ignited online criticism of the school which led the school to offer a public apology; "SCC senior leadership has reviewed the quiz questions and agrees with the student that the content was inaccurate, inappropriate, and not reflective of the inclusive nature of our college," said Chris Haines, SCC interim president.
- **CAIR and CAIR-Georgia** filed a free speech lawsuit after Georgia Southern University cancelled a talk by journalist Abby Martin who is also a civil rights activist. Martin's refusal to sign an oath that stated she would not "engage in a boycott of Israel" is what pushed Georgia Southern University to cancel Martin's talk. Martin believed that signing the oath was a violation against the constitutional right to free speech and protest. After informing the school that she refused to sign the contract, the school cancelled the speaker from the conference. In 2016, Georgia's Governor, Nathan Deal, signed a bill into a law that requires any person or company that enters into a contract with the state of Georgia to sign a pledge not to engage in political boycott of the Israeli government. This law is inherently unconstitutional.

## HATE CRIMES/HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATION

- **CAIR-New Jersey** ordered charges of bias intimidation, making terrorist threats, aggravated assault, unlawful possession of a weapon, and possession of a weapon with an unlawful purpose in April 2020 against Michael Morrison, who targeted a hijabi woman Jamilla Bozkurt. While she was entering a Carvel cream store, he spewed anti-Muslim rhetoric that she was a terrorist, threatened to kill her, and rammed his SUV twice into her car.<sup>29</sup>
- In 2020, **CAIR-Massachusetts** secured a court order, protecting a Muslim family from a xenophobic neighbor. For over a year, a Muslim couple with three children endured a campaign of harassment and intimidation by their next door neighbor. The neighbor often made explicitly anti-immigrant and Islamophobic remarks to both the father and responding police officers. In one instance the neighbor made obscene remarks to the mother and her 12-year old son, then swung a ladder at the father. CAIR-Massachusetts stepped in and advocated for the family securing their and their children's safety.

## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

- In August 2020, a Muslim family were denied the Homeowners Association (HOA) approval to rent a condo in Clearwater, Florida, because of a policy that did not allow families with underage children as they had two children under the age of 18-years-old. **CAIR-Florida** challenged this policy and demanded monetary damages for costs incurred. The HOA has since modified their policy regarding underage tenants and are in continuing negotiation regarding monetary damages.

## IMMIGRATION

- **CAIR-New York**, in tandem with the New Haven Legal Assistance Immigrant Rights Clinic, filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District of New York against the U.S. and three ICE agents. The ICE agents assaulted the plaintiff, Bakhodir Madjitov, an Uzbek native. They violated his civil rights during their attempt to illegally arrest him. In solidarity and support of Madjitov's case, CAIR-NY joined a coalition in support of Madjitov and his family's efforts to stay in the U.S.<sup>30</sup>
- **CAIR-New York** filed a federal lawsuit against the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for delaying the status application for an Iraqi refugee. Hatem Harej, a native of Iraq, entered the U.S. from Syria under refugee status in 2010. Harej applied for lawful permanent status in 2011, but the process was delayed for five years. In 2016, Harej applied a second time to adjust his status. The USCIS has not adjudicated his second application, regardless of the passage of 45 months. The lawsuit asks the Federal District Court for the Northern District of New York to force the USCIS to issue a decision on Harej's pending status. This case is still ongoing.<sup>31</sup>

Afaf Nasher, Executive  
Director of CAIR-New York



- In 2020, **CAIR-Ohio** filed a federal lawsuit against the U.S. Department of State challenging a visa delay, which kept a family separated for years. Rabi, a U.S. citizen, has been unable to see his wife and daughter for over three years because the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon refuses to give them their visas. **CAIR-Ohio** succeeded in court, and the family has now been reunited in Toledo, Ohio.<sup>32</sup>

### INCARCEREE RIGHTS

- In April 2020, In conjunction with the law firm of Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady LLP (ECBA), **CAIR-New York** filed a class-action civil rights lawsuit in federal court to block the City of Yonkers from removing arrestees' religious head coverings for the booking photos that are taken while in Yonkers Police custody. In April 2021, CAIR-NY and the ECBA secured a settlement that will end the Yonkers Police Department's discriminatory "hijab removal" policy. As part of the settlement, the City of Yonkers agreed to pay \$175,000 in damages, which may be the largest-ever settlement in such cases.<sup>33</sup>
- In 2018, **CAIR** filed a settlement against Virginia's Riverside Regional Jail for creating so-called "God Pods" which provided preferential treatment for Christians through individual cells and use of technology such as a television or microwave. Simultaneously, the jail discriminated against Muslims by denying Muslim prisoners adequate food during Ramadan. Although the "God Pod" disbanded days after the submission of the lawsuit, on October 20, 2020, CAIR-National formally welcomed the federal court's ruling in *Young v. Newton* that recognized the violation of religious rights of Muslims and the establishment of religious segregation in the jail.



## POLICE BRUTALITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT HARASSMENT

- On June 20, 2020, **CAIR-Florida** demanded the firing of police officers who removed the hijab of an 18-year-old after she was arrested at a Black Lives Matter protest. Alaa Masri was forced to remove her hijab for her mugshot, and her hijab was not returned to her for seven hours.<sup>34</sup>
- **CAIR-Georgia** announced a wrongful death lawsuit against the city of Johns Creek after Shukri Ali Said, a 36 year old Muslim woman who was shot five times by the police, resulting in her death. Said was born in Somalia and had a history of mental illness, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Before Johns Creek police killed Said, her sister, Aisha Hussein, called 911 hoping that officers would be able to get Said to a hospital after she ran away from home after telling her sister that she was hearing voices. Instead of helping Said, the dispatched officers shot and killed her. The four officers that were involved with the case are named as defendants in the lawsuit along with the city of Johns Creek.<sup>35</sup>
- In April of 2020, **CAIR-Florida** demanded the termination of an officer who shared an article by an anti-Muslim hate website attacking one of the largest Tampa mosques in response to a question about whether the state government would lock down mosques as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19. This officer has since been terminated. Additionally, another officer working as a security guard for several Orlando mosques posted comments on his social media accounts like “wake up America, the Muslims are taking over” and had uploaded a video showing Muslims coming out of a mosque with images of ISIS in the background. **CAIR-Florida** called for an investigation and was informed in June 2020 that the officer was disciplined in accordance with the agency’s policies for unbecoming conduct.



- Four Somali teenagers ranging in age from 13 to 16, respectively were held at police gunpoint, handcuffed on the ground, and detained by the Minneapolis Park Police in January 2020. The police received a call from a private caller saying that the teens were in the park with weapons but no weapons were found when police checked the teenagers and the caller. **CAIR-Minnesota** represented the teens in the case and were able to work towards a suit settlement for a total of \$170,000. Each of the teenagers is set to receive \$40,000 and the rest of the \$10,000 will be paid to CAIR for their legal fees.<sup>36</sup>
- **CAIR and CAIR-Los Angeles** filed a lawsuit on behalf of Nusaiba Mubarak in federal court on September 17, 2020, who had her religious headscarf (hijab) forcibly removed by police officers. During a Police Commission meeting where she was waiting to comment about a recent shooting, Nusaiba Mubarak was pushed against a wall, handcuffed, and stripped of her hijab by the police without reason for her detention.
- In 2020, **CAIR-Houston** assisted individuals who were wrongfully targeted by the FBI. The FBI and SWAT Team surrounded a home, after an active shooter attack on a Naval Air Station that would be later documented as an act of terrorism. **CAIR-Houston** since assisted the wrongfully targeted individuals and helped protect their rights.
- In 2020, **CAIR-Houston** responded to several urgent calls responding to FBI profiling of the Shia community. **CAIR-Houston** had provided extensive “Know Your Rights” training to the community which prevented police from taking advantage of this group. **CAIR-Houston** continues to advocate on behalf of Shia Muslims in defense of abusive FBI profiling.

## SCHOOL BULLYING

- On September 16, 2020, **CAIR and CAIR-Minnesota**, announced a federal lawsuit against Chisago Lake High School for not acting to prevent the months of bullying and physical assault by both students and staff that ultimately led to Jacob Letourneau-Elshawkawy's death by suicide. Letourneau-Elshawkawy's mother claimed that the bullying started when the family converted to Islam and the district did not appropriately respond to the repeated complaints of bullying.<sup>37</sup>

## TRAVEL

- The NYC Ferry denied Muslim families from boarding the boats and referred to them as a "security issue." The families consisted of three mothers, two of which wear a hijab, two infants, four young boys, and two young girls. When the Muslim families were trying to board, the NYC Ferry employees allowed every other passenger besides these families to board. **CAIR-New York** filed a federal discrimination complaint against the NYC Ferry corporation. The complaint was filed in 2019 and was settled in 2020. The terms of settlement were as follows: there is a confidential financial settlement for the families to compensate them for the hardships and inconveniences they faced that day. In addition to monetary compensation, the HNY Ferry also agreed to work on its anti-discrimination trainings, adopt procedures for responding to complaints by passengers that allege discriminatory treatment, and submit a formal plan to relevant authorities to place better signage at the location of the incident. The HNY Ferry corporation also issued a statement condemning the actions that day.<sup>38</sup>
- In 2020 **CAIR-Massachusetts** represented several clients who faced systemic and enduring humiliation and profiling from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Transportation Security Administration. Many clients had previous investigations from these agencies which resulted in no findings, yet they still endure harsh

questioning and treatment causing them to miss flights. CAIR continues to fight on behalf of these clients.

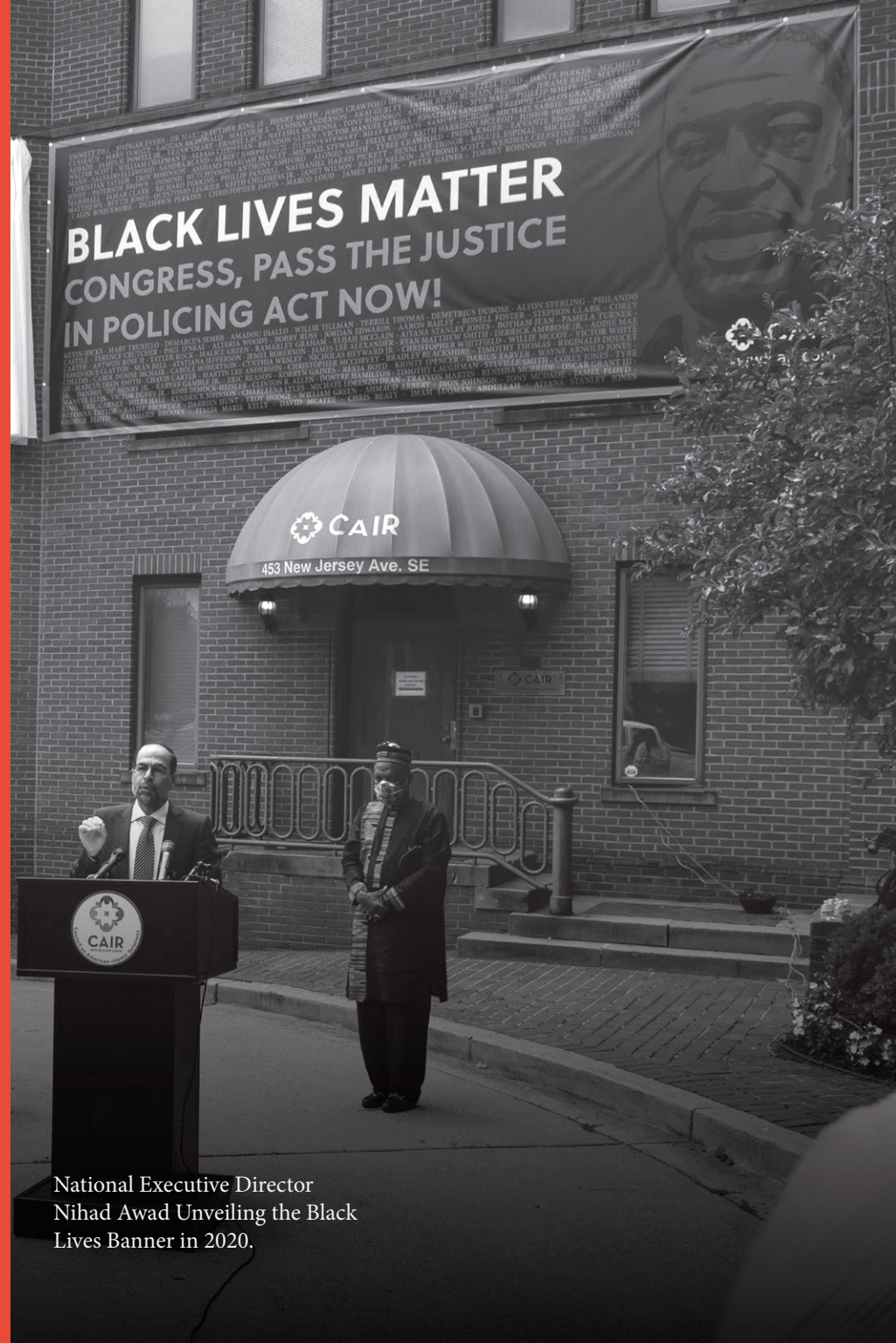
- In 2015, Anas Elhady, a U.S. citizen of Yemeni descent was stopped by border officers at the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit while returning from Ontario and then placed in a freezing cell without his coat or shoes until he passed out and required hospitalization. In February of 2020, a Michigan District court ruled that **CAIR-National's** case to challenge Anas Elhady's detention could go to trial.<sup>39</sup> The government has since appealed the decision, which remains pending.
- After filing the lawsuit *El Ali et al vs Barr et al* on August 8, 2018, challenging the federal government's terrorist watchlisting system on behalf of 40 Muslims, a Maryland federal judge issued a decision that paved the way for **CAIR's legal team** to depose agency officials and obtain documents throughout the federal government and highlights the role played by the shadowy, supra-agency body called the Watchlist Advisory Council, which oversees the federal government's watchlisting system. The Court refused government efforts to dismiss most of the legal violations CAIR asserted, including violations of the Fourth Amendment, the Fifth Amendment, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act, and the Administrative Procedures Act. In her decision, Judge Paula Xinis criticized the government's watchlisting processes, finding that "existing procedural protections are inscrutable, opaque." She noted that many people on the No Fly List who appeal to the government to be removed end up in an administrative "black hole." Judge Xinis also explained that "[p]robing interrogations about travel to Muslim-majority countries, religious pilgrimages, learning Arabic, attending mosques, affiliations with Muslim organizations, religious donations, and associations with other Muslims" raise an inference that decisions to target Muslims are tied "directly, and perhaps solely, to Plaintiffs' race, alienage, religious, and national origin."

- In 2020, **CAIR-Ohio** sued the U.S. State Department for refusing to renew a passport for an American Muslim citizen. The client, Mr. Abukar, had been without a passport for three years since the State Department refused to complete a routine renewal. Mr. Abukar has since been unable to visit his dying mother or visit his children abroad. The State Department did not offer a reason for the refusal. **CAIR-Ohio** advocated on behalf of the client, arguing that it violated his constitutional fifth amendment right. **CAIR-Ohio** has since secured the client's passport after successfully suing the U.S. government.<sup>40</sup>

### OTHER

- After an in-store Target barista wrote "ISIS" on a Muslim woman's drink order instead of her name in July of 2020, CAIR-Minnesota filed a discrimination complaint against Target. The 19-year-old woman told CAIR lawyers that she repeated her name slowly and multiple times to the barista, and when the woman raised the grievance with a supervisor, she was dismissed. **CAIR-Minnesota** has urged for more action beyond Target's apology and additional training for the team members, saying that this doesn't solve systemic injustices. **CAIR-Minnesota** has asked Target to fire the barista and the supervisor.
- In 2020, **CAIR-Massachusetts** represented a woman who found her car spray painted with huge swastikas. In addition to these violent symbols, "white power" was spray painted on the street next to the car. CAIR-Massachusetts offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the perpetrator's conviction. CAIR-Massachusetts also advocated on behalf of the client and ensured that her insurance company would not increase her premiums. CAIR-Massachusetts followed the arrest and continued to advocate for the client.

# CAIR Campaigned for Positive Change and Justice



National Executive Director  
Nihad Awad Unveiling the Black  
Lives Banner in 2020.



1. **CAIR** marked the one-month anniversary of George Floyd’s murder by hanging a Black Lives Matter (BLM) banner with the names of hundreds of victims of police brutality on their Capitol Hill/ Washington, D.C. headquarters on June 25, 2020. They accompanied this action by also demanding Congress members support the Justice in Policing Act to implement further legal measures to stop police violence against unarmed Black Americans. **CAIR-National** also joined a BLM “Justice 4 George Floyd” march earlier the same month to promote grassroots protests against police violence.
2. In the aftermath of the French government enacting legal measures to violate the religious freedom of French Muslims, **CAIR** opened their Capitol Hill headquarters to the organization Collective Against Islamophobia (CCIF) with the offer of office space and logistical resources. The French government had forced CCIF to close under the guise of spreading “Islamist propaganda” and “religious separatism” whereas in reality, the organization was monitoring Islamophobia in France.
3. **CAIR-Sacramento Valley** welcomed a massive legal victory as the U.S. federal government exonerated Hamid Hayat, who was wrongfully convicted on terrorism charges and imprisoned for more than 13 years. Hayat’s case was highly publicized as a feature of post 9/11 hysteria, and sadly Hayat was one of those falsely convicted of terrorism charges due to public and state prejudice. Hayat was convicted in 2006 and released in 2019 after an order was filed by Senior United States District Judge Garland Burrell Jr. on July 30, 2019, to vacate Hayat’s conviction. Hayat’s imprisonment has torn his family apart and traumatized an entire community. CAIR-SV continues to work with Hayat and his family during this transition.
4. **CAIR** launched an action-oriented campaign, “All Hands on Deck,” as a final effort to mobilize the Muslim vote for the 2020 election. CAIR introduced many initiatives under this campaign, including a 24/7 rapid response hotline that was operated by





CAIR organized Muslim religious leaders at the US-Mexico border to fight for humane immigration policies during the America Friends Service Committee's #LoveKnowsNoBorders protest. The protest was voted the most valuable protest of 2018 by The Nation magazine.

**CAIR's legal team**, a community-wide training that explained voting rights to Muslim voters and what to do if these rights were being violated, a calling center for 150,000 registered Muslim households on the day of the election, a virtual town hall and phone banking event, an election-day live coverage update special, and a nationwide exit poll survey of Muslim voters in efforts to collect data. This campaign was intended to be a non-partisan campaign that empowered Muslim voters to engage in their civic duties and go vote.

5. In August 2019, India's government revoked Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, an amendment that gave Kashmir autonomy. This revocation was coupled with the Indian army stationing 10 soldiers for each Kashmiri citizen. The phone lines and internet were cut and the entire city was shut down, with reports of human rights violations against the Muslim populations of Kashmir. **CAIR-New Jersey** voiced its support for the victims of the Kashmir siege of 2019. **CAIR-New Jersey** issued a public letter condemning the Indian government's actions in Kashmir and their role in the abuse of Muslims in Kashmir. CAIR-NJ requested that New Jersey's governor, Phil Murphy, cancel his trip to India because of what the Indian government was going in Kashmir. The letter that CAIR-NJ sent voiced its concerns and declined to meet with the Indian consulate.
6. **CAIR-NY** started the campaign #BringThemHome to rescue American citizens and legal permanent residents who were stranded in Yemen due to flight cancellations caused by COVID-19. Yemeni Americans contacted CAIR for support in finding travel back to the U.S. CAIR issued a statement urging the State Department to bring home the Americans and legal permanent residents of America. Many of the travelers who were impacted by the U.S.'s strict travel stipulations were women and children. In at least one instance a woman gave premature birth due to shock from increased warfare in her neighborhood. She reached out to CAIR because she could not secure travel documents for her newborn. In another instance, a woman bearing twins with

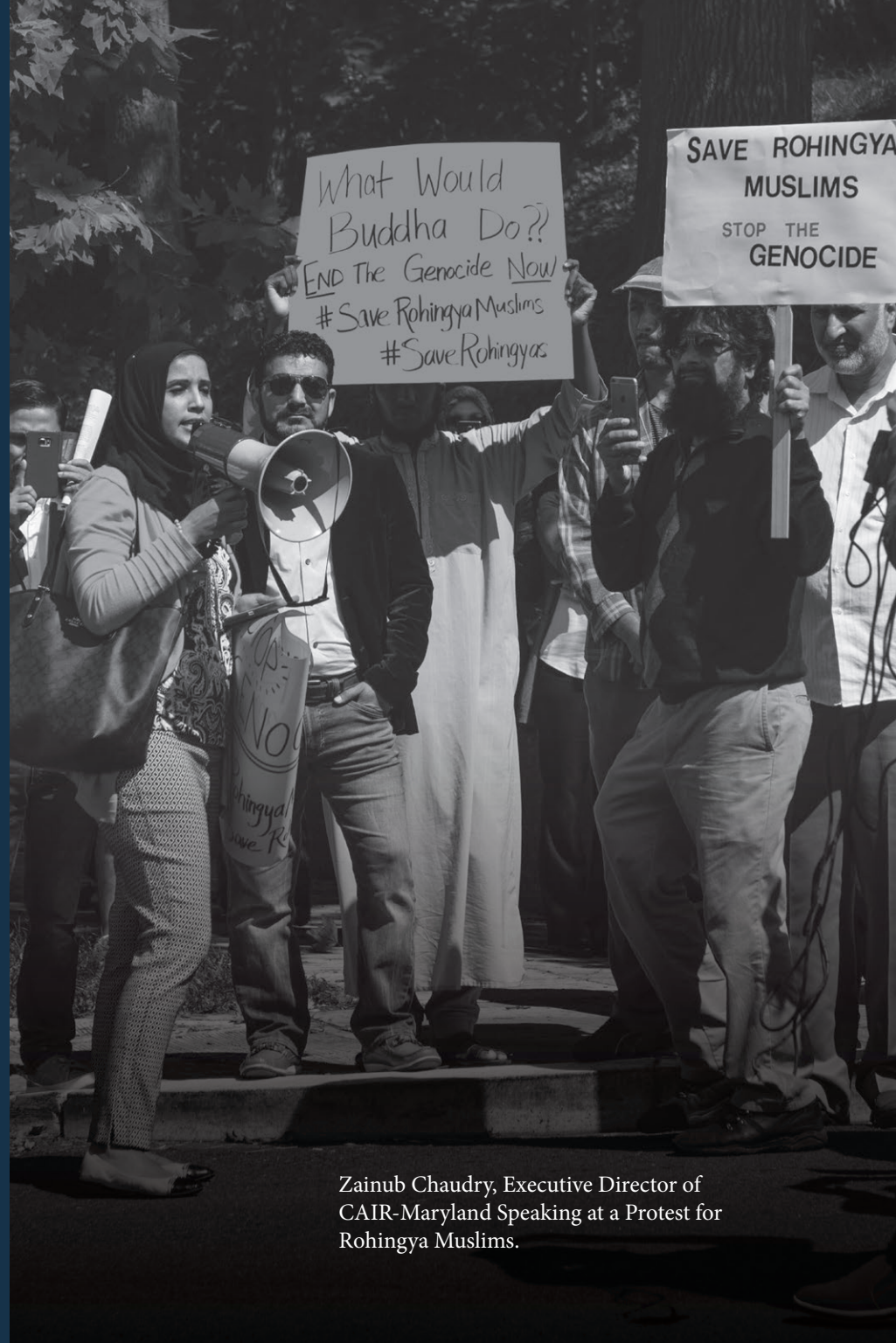
a rare genetic mutation traveled to Yemen briefly, intending to return to America and give birth as she had scheduled her C-surgery in August 2020. She was also stranded, despite being an American citizen, and could not find travel. In nearly all of the cases, clients faced lack of medicine and maternity care. **CAIR** advocated on their behalf, developing advocacy campaigns and hashtags to garner international attention to those who are most vulnerable.

7. On August 12, 2020, **CAIR** sent a letter to National Basketball Association (NBA) commissioner Adam Silver demanding that the NBA cease their economic ties with the Chinese Communist Party due to their ongoing genocide against the country's Uyghur Muslim minority. The NBA has a long legacy of using a training academy in Xinjiang Province and banning Americans that protest Uyghur human rights at sports games.
8. In 2020, **CAIR-LA** advocated for American citizens who were stranded abroad and assisted in scheduling their immediate repatriation flights. During the height of the COVID global lockdowns, **CAIR-LA** actively contacted the U.S. Secretary of State, Consulate Generals, U.S. Congressional Representatives, and California state Assembly members on behalf of their clients who were stranded abroad. CAIR-LA also assisted those needing emergency financial assistance in contacting their respective embassies. **CAIR-LA** applied continual pressure on the U.S. government to arrange urgent repatriation for those affected by the COVID-19 travel closures.



## CAIR Consistently Works to Stand Up for the Survivors of Hate Crimes

**\*Content Warning:** This content contains sensitive material that some people may find disturbing including violence and harassment.



Zainub Chaudry, Executive Director of CAIR-Maryland Speaking at a Protest for Rohingya Muslims.

1. On November 23, 2020, **CAIR-Maryland** called for a hate crime investigation on behalf of a Muslim family who has sustained extensive racist assault for over three years. The family has been targeted by their neighbor who has attacked them and their property. Despite the family notifying police and filing extensive complaints against the assailant, the police have failed to launch an investigation.

The assaults committed by the neighbor are exhaustive and varied. Most recently on November 6, 2020 the neighbor approached a male family relative outside the family's home, and began offending him verbally and then attacked him, slicing the relative's hand and injuring his knee. The neighbor, according to the family, has set up a surveillance system directed at their house. Other incidents include performing actions which are suggestively violent such as staring at the family's daughters and chopping wood with an axe. Many are vulgar, trashing their cars and urinating on their property. Most are outright violent, shooting their home with paintballs and other incidents of physical assault and verbal slurs.

**CAIR-Maryland** finds it unconscionable that police have not launched a formal investigation. CAIR stands by this family and continues to advocate on their behalf for their right to safety and peace from these insults and attacks.

2. On November 18, 2020, **CAIR-Los Angeles** decried an alleged hate crime in which police declined to make arrests. Imam Khaled Hemaya was assaulted when he arrived at his home in a gated community. Hemaya noticed an unknown male suspect following his car as he arrived at his home. The male suspect blocked in him Hemaya's car and approached him with verbal slurs. The man began to grow increasingly angry, kicking Hemaya's car before opening the door and punching Hemaya. A security guard called the police, who upon arrival declined to make any arrests. **CAIR-Los Angeles** continues to advocate on behalf of Hemaya and calls on police to investigate the incident further.

3. On October 22, 2020, **CAIR-SFBA** expressed solidarity with the Jewish community after an uptick in anti-Semitic attacks. On October 18, the Jewish community found a swastika drawn on the door of Oakland's Temple Sinai. The following Tuesday, October 20th the neighboring Azerbaijan Cultural Society headquarters in the South Bay Cultural Center in Los Gatos was vandalized with anti-Turkish language. CAIR-SFBA continues to condemn these heinous attacks on religious and cultural institutions.
4. Executive director of **CAIR-Dallas Fort-Worth**, Faizan Syed, spoke out and expressed solidarity on September 16, 2020, against the vandalization at St. Patrick's Cathedral in El Paso where a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was destroyed. He called upon Muslims to stand in solidarity with the El Paso Christian community and hold them in their thoughts. A suspect for the crime is currently in custody.
5. **CAIR-Connecticut** called for hate crime charges on June 25, 2020, against two men who yelled racial slurs and attempted to strike three Black teenagers riding their bikes off the road in Manchester, Connecticut. The accused Matthew and Michael Lemelin were later arrested on 9 criminal charges, including two risks of injury to a minor and one count of intimidation based on bigotry or bias in the second degree against Mathew Lemelin for the assault.
6. On April 28, 2020, **CAIR-Missouri** welcomed the arrest of Nicholas J. Proffitt under the charges of burglary, arson, and property damage, for setting a fire at the Islamic Center in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, on the first night of Ramadan. CAIR also sent a letter to the District Attorney's office to classify this heinous act as a hate crime.
7. **CAIR-Colorado** welcomed hate crime charges, as well as attempted murder charges, assault, and harassment, on July 22, 2020, against Eric Breemen who ran over a Sikh store owner with his car in Lakewood, Colorado. This case comes in the aftermath



of the assault of 57-year-old Baljeet Singh Sindhu in Richmond, California, who was attacked near his home with a barbecue lid and choked in Richmond on December 18, 2019, where **CAIR-SFBA** also demanded police to investigate a bias motive for hate crime charges.

8. After an individual threatened to kill the owner of a Middle Eastern restaurant and the Muslims standing outside of it in Washington, D.C., **CAIR** urged law enforcement to bring a hate crime charge. The former Georgetown Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, Bill Starrels, walked into Charcoal Town Hookah and Shawarma and complained about loud noise and talking. Bashar Mehjar, the owner of the restaurant told police that Starrels was threatening to shoot him and the patrons of the restaurant.
9. **CAIR-Ohio** urged law enforcement to prosecute a woman who assaulted a Muslim Uber driver in Middletown, Ohio, under laws on ethnic intimidation. The assault happened after the woman asked the driver if he liked Donald Trump. The driver explained that under Uber's policies, he was prohibited from discussing politics with riders. After the driver said this, the woman was upset and began hitting the seats while yelling slurs at the driver. The driver asked her to leave the car, and the woman continued to curse at him, even when he called the police.
10. **CAIR-Colorado** offered \$10,000 for information regarding on an arson that killed a Muslim family of five. CAIR explained that the money will be given after the arrest and prosecution of whoever was responsible for the fire that killed the Muslim family of five. The police investigating the case mentioned that the accident site conveyed to them that this was a homicide investigation. Not only were the fires deliberately started, there were also mentions of smoke detectors not fully working. Police reported that because of when the homes were built, the smoke detectors should have been working perfectly fine.

## CONCLUSION

In this report, we provided a comprehensive review of **CAIR's work** inside and outside of the courtroom over the past two years. In the first section, we provided a breakdown of our 2020 civil rights data detailing over 6,000 complaints. We then documented a number of diverse lawsuits that CAIR has successfully won, filed, or settled. We also listed moments in which **CAIR attorneys** advocated on behalf of individuals who needed legal advice and communities in need of “Know Your Rights” presentations.

Next, we provided a brief snapshot of **CAIR's advocacy** work where we spoke out and took action against the state-sponsored Islamophobia taking place not only domestically but internationally.

For example, in the aftermath of the French government enacting legal measures to violate the religious freedom of French Muslims, **CAIR-National** opened their Capitol Hill headquarters to the organization Collective Against Islamophobia (CCIF) with the offer of office space and logistical resources. Moreover, we also documented how CAIR engaged in advocacy efforts to civically engage the Muslim community in preparation for the 2020 presidential elections.

**CAIR-National** launched an action-oriented campaign, “**All Hands on Deck**,” as a final effort to mobilize the Muslim vote for the 2020 election. CAIR introduced many initiatives under this campaign, a few examples including a 24/7 rapid response hotline that was operated by **CAIR's legal team**, a community-wide training that explained voting rights to Muslim voters and what to do if these rights were being violated, and a calling center for 150,000 registered Muslim households on the day of the election.

Lastly, because of the rising number of hate crimes over the years, we highlighted moments where **CAIR** has called for hate crime charges or probes in cases where

communities or individuals have been under attack because of their race, religion, or ethnicity. Because we understand the profound repercussions of Islamophobia, it is crucial we stand with communities who are facing all strands of bigotry.

As the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, we will continue to fight on your behalf in the courtroom, advocate with you, and hold all agencies and actors accountable to provide an equal assessment when underrepresented minorities are victims of hate crimes. **Our work at CAIR will not end here. This is merely the beginning.**

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453 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20003

Tel: (202) 488-8787

Fax: (202) 488-0833

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