



# A JOURNALIST'S GUIDE

**to Reporting on  
Islam and Muslims**

2021



# A Journalist's Guide to Reporting on Islam and Muslims



This guidebook is designed to give journalists and other media professionals the tools they need to gain a better understanding of Islam and write more informed, accurate and balanced stories about Muslims.

- **Like people of other faiths, Muslims cannot be described in simplistic terms or in a monolithic fashion.**
- **In order to better understand this community, media professionals must take the time to understand Islam and its adherents in a cultural, social, historical, and political context.**
- **Journalists should refrain from oversimplifying complex situations and go beyond the typical sources to collect balanced information about Islam.**
- **And most importantly, journalists should learn how to discern what constitutes legitimate religious beliefs from what are often practices borne out of cultural customs.**

In this guidebook, readers will find necessary background information about Islam and Muslims, best practices for reporting on the Islamic faith and a list of appropriate terminology to employ when covering issues pertinent to its adherents.

Guidelines on how to make contact and interact with the Muslim community are also offered, along with some common misconceptions.

We hope this handbook will serve as a valuable resource for media professionals and help ensure greater accuracy in reporting on and understanding of Muslims and Islam.



# UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Islam, the world's second largest faith, is a religion often misunderstood by many today. In reality, Islam - a 1,400-year-old religion practiced by more than a billion people worldwide - has a diverse following and is a faith that teaches peace and tolerance.

## Basic Beliefs

Islam, an Arabic word that means peace and submission to God's will, originated in seventh century CE, Arabia. Muslims believe that the message of Islam was revealed to **the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)\*** as the culmination of God's message to humanity throughout history.

**The Quran**, Islam's revealed text, is considered by Muslims to be the final and literal Word of God. It is a record of the exact words revealed by **God through the Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad\* over a period of 23 years**. Memorized by Muhammad\* and then dictated to his companions, the text of **the Quran** was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet\* and later written in the format of a book by his companion, Uthman. The 6236 verses arranged in 114 chapters of the Quran have remained unchanged through the centuries.

A narration of the Prophet's\* life and his sayings are also compiled in books called **Hadith**. Since Muslims see Muhammad\* as the human figure to emulate, Muslims also turn to Hadith for guidance in all aspects of their lives, from the mundane to the spiritual. Both the Quran and Hadith are the primary sources for understanding Islam and developing Islamic jurisprudence.

Ultimately, in order to be a Muslim, one must believe in six essential things: the Oneness of God, all of God's messengers, God's Holy books, angels, the Day of Judgment, afterlife and divine destiny.

In addition to these beliefs, five tenets, known as the "**pillars of Islam**" form the core of Islamic practice:

1. **The Declaration of Faith:** "There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." By this declaration, the person announces faith in all of God's messengers.
2. **Prayer** – Muslims are commanded to perform five obligatory prayers each day at predetermined intervals of time. Muslims believe their prayers are a direct link between them and God. Since Islam has no hierarchical authority or priesthood, a learned Muslim chosen by each congregation leads the prayers.
3. **Zakat** - One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and that wealth is held in trust by human beings. Zakat, or charitable giving, "purifies" wealth by setting aside a portion for those in need. This payment is usually two and a half percent of one's accumulated wealth.
4. **Fasting** - Every year in the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims are commanded by God to fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink and other sensual pleasures. The fast is another method of self-purification and means to become closer to God.



5. **Pilgrimage** - A pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, is an obligation for those who are physically and financially able to undertake this journey. The rituals of Hajj are by and large a commemoration of the sacrifices of Prophet Abraham\*, his son Prophet Ishmael\*, and his wife Hagar.

[\* It is Islamic custom for one to say “peace be upon him” after the mention of any prophet of God.]

## History of Islam

Although Islam’s roots originate in Arabia, Muslims trace their beginnings back to the Prophet Adam.\* Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam, and continuing on with Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and finally ending with Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

**Like Christians and Jews, Muslims believe in One God** and are taught to live in submission to God and in peace with one’s self and others. Muslims are also commanded to respect the original Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Chapter 29, verse 46 of the Quran states: “Tell (the Jews and Christians), ‘We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us (the Quran) and in that which came down to you (the Torah and Gospel); Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we surrender.”

**Muslims believe Muhammad,\* Islam’s prophet**, is the final prophet and messenger to humanity. Born in Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula in what is now Saudi Arabia, in 570 CE, Muhammad\* was an orphan raised primarily by his grandfather. During the early parts of his life, Muhammad\* worked as a herdsman and later as a caravan trader. His mild manner and honesty in his daily affairs earned him the title of “al Amin” or “the truthful” among his contemporaries.

The Prophet’s work gave him the time and opportunity to reflect on God’s creations. He rejected the pagan practices of his people, and early on, made an effort to search for greater truth and understanding.

At the age of 40, while meditating in a nearby Meccan cave, the Prophet was visited by the Archangel Gabriel who brought him God’s message. Gabriel commanded him to “Read,” according to Islamic tradition. Although initially scared and hesitant, he soon thereafter accepted the duty of prophethood, with the support of his wife, Khadijah, and close companions.

The spread of Islam did not occur overnight, but it moved slowly and steadily through the Arabian Peninsula. Within a hundred years after the Prophet’s\* passing in 633 A.D., Islam reached as far west as Africa and Western Europe, and as far east as Southeast Asia, spawning empires, civilizations and a culture that continues to intrigue many today.

## **Islam Today**

Today, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. With an estimated **1.3 billion followers worldwide**, it is second only to Christianity. Muslims reside in almost every corner of the world; more than 50 countries have Muslim-majority populations, while other countries have minority Muslim communities. Despite common misconceptions, Islam is not exclusive to the Middle East. Only some 20 percent of the world Muslim population is Arab. The countries with the largest Muslim populations are Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and India.

In America, the Muslim community is as diverse and dynamic as in the Muslim world, reflecting a variety of cultures and schools of thought. Although there are no official numbers, various studies estimate that there are six to seven million American Muslims.

Muslims worldwide also vary in their schools of thought and interpretations. The two major branches of Islam, based largely on political differences that arose over who would be the Prophet's successors, are Sunni and Shia. Sunnis regard Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, as the fourth and last of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs," or rightly guided successors to Muhammad. Shias feel that Ali should have been the first caliph and the caliphate should have been passed down only to direct descendants of the Prophet.

Ninety percent of the world's Muslims are Sunnis, with concentrations of Shiites living in Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.

Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam, has become quite popular in the West. Sufis, practitioners of Sufism, are both Shiite and Sunni. While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God, Sufis' primarily focus on ways to strengthen the inner, spiritual dimension of their journey. This journey is referred to as tariqah, or the path.

## **REPORTING ON MUSLIMS AND ISLAM**

We suggest that reporters be balanced in reporting about situations of war or conflict, but also cover non-crisis events in the Muslim world, such as international Islamic conferences, Muslim achievements and other notable stories unrelated to war or conflict. By regularly covering human-interest stories or positive events relating to American Muslims, journalists can help humanize a community often portrayed in the media through the prisms of extremism and terrorism.

Journalists should also seek the opinions of Muslim experts on issues of their concern and issues affecting society as a whole, such as healthcare, the economy, etc. While it is important for Muslims to participate in discourse relating to Islam -- just as experts from other religions and ethnic groups are consulted on issues relating to their group -- Muslim voices should be included in stories about other contemporary issues.

False claims are often disseminated via websites and blogs. CAIR reminds journalists to confirm the facts before perpetuating unsubstantiated claims.



## Commonly Misused Terms

The most common complaint American Muslims have about news coverage has to do with the media's constant association of Islam with terrorism, as in the phrase "**Islamic terrorism.**" This phrase is commonly used to describe the activity of a wide variety of groups. Muslims believe that the use of such words implies that their faith or group as a whole is responsible for the actions of a small minority who are acting outside the teachings of their faith.

**"Islamic terrorism"** is a contentious term. Since the majority of Muslims do not accept that attacks on civilians can ever be justified by religion, describing terrorism as "Islamic" is seen by many as an unjust attack on Islam. Therefore, CAIR recommends using the proper name of the group committing these acts as an identifier in an effort to be fair.

**"Islamist" (or Islamism)** is another word that has gained increased attention in the Western media in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks. The term "Islamist," is often generically used for any political or militant group that uses Islam as an identity or ideology and does not discern the difference between the two.

Many Muslims who wish to serve the public good are influenced by the principles of their faith. Islam teaches Muslims to work for the welfare of humanity and to be honest and just. If this inspiration came from the Bible, such a person might well be called a Good Samaritan. But when the source is the Quran, the person is an "Islamist."

Unfortunately, the term "Islamist" has become shorthand for "Muslims we don't like." It is currently used in an almost exclusively pejorative context and is often coupled with the term "extremist," giving it an even more negative slant.

There are few, if any, positive references to "Islamist" in news articles. There are also no -- nor should there be -- references to "Christianists," "Judaists" or "Hinduists" for those who would similarly seek governments "in accord with the laws" of their respective faiths.

## Jihad

"Jihad" does not mean "holy war." Literally, jihad means to "struggle," strive and exert effort. It is a central and broad Islamic concept that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in the battlefield for self-defense (e.g., - having a standing army for national defense), or fighting against tyranny or oppression.

"Islamist" and "Jihadist" are fictional terms with no Arabic equivalents that misconstrue Islam as a political ideology. In recent years, we have seen the term "jihadist" come to be used as if it means a person who kills people out of a religious motivation, but this is inaccurate.

## 5 Myths About the Quran, Islam's Revealed Text

The Quran, Islam's revealed text, is considered by Muslims to be the final and literal word of God. It is a record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. Memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions, the text of the Quran was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet and later compiled in the form of a book by his companion Uthman. The Quran's 6,236 verses are arranged in 114 chapters and have remained unchanged through the centuries.

The Quran guides Muslims to the “middle path” of moderation in all things. “And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that (with your lives) you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind.” (2:143) In another verse, **God says: “Let there arise from among you a band of people who invite to righteousness, encourage what is good and forbid what is evil — they are the ones who will be successful.” (3:104)**

### MYTH 1: The Quran promotes violence and mandates death for apostasy.

Islam advocates both freedom of religion and freedom of conscience; a position supported by verses in the Quran such as:

1. “If it had been the will of your Lord that all the people of the world should be believers, all the people of the earth would have believed! Would you then compel mankind against their will to believe?” (10:99)
2. “(O Prophet Muhammad) proclaim: ‘This is the Truth from your Lord. Now let him who will, believe in it, and him who will, deny it.’” (18:29)
3. “If they turn away from you (O Muhammad) they should know that We have not sent you to be their keeper. Your only duty is to convey My message.” (42:48)
4. “Let there be no compulsion in religion.” (2:256)

Muslim scholars say the original rulings on apostasy were similar to those for treasonous acts in legal systems worldwide and do not apply to an individual's choice of religion.

Religious decisions should be matters of personal choice, not a cause for state intervention. Faith imposed by force is not true belief, but coercion. Islam has no need to compel belief. As the Quran states: “Truth stands out clear from error. Therefore, whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks.” (2:256)

There is a common misconception that the Quran teaches violence. Critics of Islam will often take verses out of context, or quote selectively to fuel this false idea.

The reality is that Islam forbids the taking of human life, except in self-defense or as a legal punishment for murder or other capital offenses.



The Quran states: “Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus does He command you that you may learn wisdom.” (6:151)

The Quran also states: “Whoever kills a person (unjustly)...it is as though he has killed all humankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind.” (5:32)

### **MYTH 2: The Quran promotes inequality between men and women.**

**The Quran states: “The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another.” (9:71)**

The Quran repeatedly reinforces the spiritual equality of men and women: **“And their Lord hath accepted of them and answered them: ‘Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: you are the offspring of one another.’” (3:195)**

More than 1,400 years ago Islam eliminated the chattel status of women, prohibited the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide and gave women full control over their earnings and wealth. The “modern” concept of the pre-nuptial agreement is ancient by Islamic standards. Muslim brides have always had access to this legal protection.

Other rights granted to women by Islam include the right of inheritance, the right to initiate divorce and the right to own a business. The Prophet Muhammad’s wife Khadijah was a prosperous businesswoman. The first martyr in Islam was a woman, as was the first person to accept the Prophet’s message from God.

Islam also grants women the right to receive child support, to be treated equally by the law, to participate in political affairs, to seek employment or an education, to accept or reject a marriage proposal, and to be free of spousal abuse.

### **MYTH 3: The Quran mandates a particular form of government.**

The Islamic political system advocates mutual consultation, which is described as “shura” in the Quran. **God praises those “who hearken to their Lord and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation.” (42:38)**

Muslim scholars describe shura as having three necessary elements -- equal rights for all citizens, majority rule for public policy and upholding the ideals of justice and human dignity.

Traditions of the Prophet also support this claim. According to some scholars, when the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina, the Islamic state that he established was based on a social contract and was constitutional in character.

While on his deathbed, the Prophet Muhammad was repeatedly asked to appoint a successor, but his refusal to do so is often interpreted to mean that he wanted the people to decide how they wished to be governed.

#### **MYTH 4: The Quran stifles freedom of expression.**

Islam supports an individual's right to express his or her opinion and to be informed. In fact, the rights of expression and information cannot be separated from the rights to think and believe freely. Intellectual and linguistic capabilities characterize human beings and thus, according to Islam, the right to form and express opinions represents an essential manifestation of God's gifts to humanity.

**The Quran states: “(O Prophet) exhort them; your task is only to remind; you cannot compel”** (88:21-22). Chapter 16, verse 125 adds: “Call (all humanity) unto your Lord’s path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly (and convincing) manner.”

The right to criticize government leaders and express opinions about governmental affairs in the public arena is also supported in Islam. In some cases, when speech concerns the interests of the entire community, it is an obligation for people to speak up to reveal truth and attain justice.

**The Quran states: “O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth, for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk.”** (4:135)

Providing false information about an event that one has witnessed or refraining from providing the facts that one knows are both considered grave sins that should be avoided and prevented by every possible means. Chapter 2, verse 42 states: “And do not overlay the truth with falsehood, and do not knowingly suppress the truth.”

#### **MYTH 5: “Allah” in the Quran is not the God worshiped by Christians and Jews**

Muslims worship the same God as Christians and Jews. “Allah” is the Arabic word for God.

Muslims believe that God sent different messengers throughout time, all of whom came with the same message and the same teachings. Muhammad was the last of the prophets and the Quran was the final message.

Islamic principles mandate good relations with people of other faiths and encourage constructive interfaith dialogue. As the Quran states: “(Rest assured that) those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians, and the Sabians - whoever believes in God and the last day and performs good deeds - will be rewarded by their Lord. They will have nothing to fear or to regret.” (2:62)

**The Quran also states: “Say: ‘We believe in God and the revelation given to us and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and it is to Him that we surrender ourselves.’”** (2:136)

Muslims call Abraham the “friend of God.” Chapter 4, verse 125 of the Quran states: “Who can be better in faith than one who submits his whole self to God, does good and follows the way of Abraham, the true in faith? For God did take Abraham for a friend?”



Another verse in the Quran portrays Abraham as the “father” of all believers. **“Strive in the way of God as you ought to strive with sincerity and discipline. He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in the observance of your faith - the faith of your father Abraham.”** (22:78)

Verse 45 of chapter 3 in **the Quran** states: “Behold! The angels said: ‘O Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him. His name will be Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and in (the company of) those nearest to God.’”

Other verses in **the Quran** state that Jesus was strengthened with the “Holy Spirit” (2:87) and is a “sign for the whole world.” (21:91) His virgin birth was confirmed when Mary is quoted as asking: “How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?” (3:47)

The Qur'an tells of Jesus speaking from the cradle and, with God's permission, curing lepers and the blind (5:110). **God also states in the Qur'an:** “We gave (Jesus) the Gospel and put compassion and mercy into the hearts of his followers.” (5:27)

## BASIC ISLAMIC TERMINOLOGY

**Adhan** – The Muslim call to prayer. The “dh” is pronounced like the “th” in “thus.”

**Ahl al-kitab** – Arabic for “People of the Book.” The term is used in the Quran to describe Jews and Christians, who also follow revealed texts.

**Alhamdulilah** – Arabic for “All praise is due to God.” A phrase that Muslims are encouraged to use in all of life’s situations. Pronounced al-Hamdu li-llah.

**Allah** – The most commonly used linguistic term for “God” in Arabic. Allah is the same monotheistic God worshipped by Christians and Jews.

**Allahu Akbar** – Arabic phrase meaning “God is Great.” This phrase is used in many situations. Muslims recite it in their daily prayers and at any time that they want to acknowledge God’s magnificence. They might use it when they are happy, when they wish to express approval, or even during times of extreme stress.

**As-salaamu alaikum** – Arabic phrase meaning “Peace be upon you.” This is a traditional Islamic greeting. The response is “Wa alaikum as-salaam,” meaning, “And upon you peace.”

**Ayatollah** – A religious leader among Shiite Muslims. It is used as a title of respect for one who is considered—by consensus—to be an esteemed leader among Shiite clergy.

**Bismillah** – Arabic for “In the Name of God.” Muslims are encouraged to begin every act with this phrase. Pronounced bis-mil-lah.

**Dawah** – Inviting others to Islam through words and actions.



**Dhikr** – literally, “remembrance,” this Arabic word usually refers to remembrance of God. The “dh” is pronounced like the “th” in “thus.”

**Fatwa** – A religious edict or legal opinion that is written by qualified scholars commenting on issues relating to Islam.

**Fiqh** – Islamic jurisprudence.

**Hadith** – Written narrations of what the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said and did during his lifetime. Hadith are considered one of the primary resources for Muslims, second only to the Quran.

**Hijab** – It is used commonly to describe modest Muslim dress, specifically the head scarf that many Muslim women wear. It is not a “burka” or a “veil.” NOTE: A face veil is called a “niqab.”

**Ijtihad** – A component of fiqh whereby Islamic laws are derived from sources other than, or not necessarily including, the Quran or the Sunnah.

**Imam** – One who leads congregational prayers in a mosque or in any other location. It is an honorific title.

**Insha'Allah** – Arabic for “God Willing.” Muslims use this phrase to indicate that they expect to do something in the future or when they hope that something will be realized. It is also used as a reminder that God will determine the future.

**JazakAllahu Khayran** – Arabic for “May God reward you with good.” Often used by Muslims in place of “thank you.”

**Masjid** – The Arabic word for “mosque,” an Islamic house of worship. Plural: masajid.

**Masha'Allah**: Arabic for “As God wants it.” It is used as an expression of admiration or glorifying God for anything with which one is pleased.

**Mufti** – A Muslim jurist who interprets Islamic law.

**Mullah** – A Persian word with a meaning similar to “Imam.”

**Mussallah** – Literally, a “place of prayer.” A room or space designated for prayer, but not necessarily a masjid.

**Salat**: The Arabic word for prayer. Muslims offer salat five times a day at prescribed times to fulfill the second of their five pillars of faith.

**Shahada** – The Islamic creed. It is the declaration of belief in the oneness of God and in Muhammad as His messenger. In English it translates to: “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”



**Shariah** – Islamic law derived by scholars from the Quran and Hadith.

**Sheik** – An honorary title of respect. The Associated Press recommends using this spelling unless the individual named personally prefers “sheikh.”

**Sunnah** – Denotes the way the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived his life. The sunnah is the second source for Islamic jurisprudence after the Quran. The Hadith are the written source of the sunnah.

**Ummah** – An Arabic word meaning “community.” It is often used to express the idea that Muslims worldwide belong to one community.

## **GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH MUSLIMS**

Most religions have cultural and religious norms that often regulate interaction between people. In Islam, there exists a code of conduct for male/female interaction outside the bounds of one's immediate family. Understanding these norms and being mindful of them will help a reporter establish credibility and trust with his or her contacts. The following are a few things reporters may keep in mind when interacting with Muslims.

### **Greetings**

Islam does not recommend hugging or the shaking of hands between unrelated men and women. If a hand is stretched out to a member of the opposite gender, many Muslims out of courtesy will go along with this; however, many Muslims, especially women, may refrain from reciprocating the gesture. An alternative would be to wait until a hand is extended or follow a common Muslim practice of placing one's hand over one's heart.

Also, you may hear Muslims greet each other with a salutation of peace. The Muslim greeting is “Asalaamu Alaykum” (Peace be upon you); the response is “Wa Alaykum Salaam” (And upon you Peace). People of other faiths are welcome to exchange this greeting with Muslims.

### **Eye Contact**

In American society, direct eye contact is considered one of the most powerful ways of communicating. It is often the first step toward striking up friendships and creating positive impressions. Honesty and the ability to look someone directly in the eye are also very closely related. But in Islam and in many Asian cultures, lowering one's gaze is encouraged for both modest men and women when dealing with the opposite sex. Muslims believe that doing so protects one from temptations and guards one's modesty. In many Muslim cultures, this action is also considered a sign of respect.

Reporters should not interpret a Muslim interviewee's lack of eye contact as a cause of suspicion or dishonesty. It could well be that they are trying to follow their religious guidelines.

## Dietary Guidelines

As is the case with other faith communities, Muslims have dietary guidelines that significantly vary in their interpretation. In Islam, most foods are allowed, except alcohol and other intoxicants, pork, carrion, and the meat of most carnivorous animals. Some Muslims interpret that it is halal (permissible, lawful) to eat the meat prepared by people of the Book (Jews and Christians). As such, they will purchase meats from supermarkets or eat at any restaurant. A large number of other Muslims interpret religious text differently and only eat the meat slaughtered by Muslims with the name of God recited over it. This process is called Dhabihah and similar to the preparation Kosher foods; therefore, Muslims can eat Kosher meat too.

When arranging luncheon meetings with members of the community, avoid meeting in places with heavy alcohol use and avoid meeting from dawn to dusk in restaurants during the month of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting.

## MAKING CONTACTS

Establishing a relationship with local Muslims is one of the best ways to better understand the diversity and complexity of the American Muslim community. One can do so in a variety of ways, such as visiting a mosque, visiting a Muslim home and talking to heads of Muslim organizations.

### Visiting a Mosque

As a reporter writing about Islam or the Muslim community, it is imperative to establish a rapport with the local Muslim community. Visiting the local mosque or Islamic Center is a good first step to initiate contact with representatives of the Muslim community.

Since there is no single authority or single group that speaks for all of Islam or that can provide a single authoritative interpretation of Islamic law (sharia), reporters should establish contacts with a variety of mosques.

Reporters should communicate clearly the intention of the requested visit and make it clear to the mosque's contact person (usually the imam—the prayer leader, or the Islamic center/mosque's president) the parameters of the visit. For example, will the discussion be on-the-record or off-the-record, and is the visit for background/educational purposes only or is part of a fact-finding mission.

Photographers should seek permission before taking picture during prayer services. If the community's leader agrees to have photos taken during prayer, tread unobtrusively and do not walk in front of the people praying.

Do not be surprised to find mosques without furniture, except for the carpet because of the simple form of prayer.

**(NOTE: If your community does not have a mosque or Islamic center, check at the nearest major university. Large universities often have very active Muslim student associations.)**



## Visiting Muslim Homes

Islamic culture is known for its hospitality. Reporters can see firsthand how Muslim families interact and live on a daily basis. Local mosques which have outreach departments can typically set up such a meeting.

For the actual visit, a reporter should specify the topic of the article. For example, how a Muslim family prepares for the month of Ramadan, how American Muslim families preserve their cultural and religious traditions at home or are the pressures facing American teenagers the same for American Muslim youth.

Make sure you specify a time for the visit that does not interfere with Muslim daily prayer times, although the family may be willing for you to observe the prayer.

Reporters should remove their shoes before entering. Muslims place a high emphasis on cleanliness, especially in the areas where they pray.





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