

CAIR.CAN

Your Voice. Your Future.

2009-2010

ANNUAL REVIEW

Striving to be a leading voice that enriches Canadian society through Muslim civic engagement and promotion of human rights

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Introduction

As-salaamu’alaykum (Peace Be With You),

On behalf of the National Board of Directors of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), I welcome you to our sixth annual review. The case of Canadian Muslims detained abroad, the introduction of Bill 94 in Quebec’s National Assembly to ban women who wear the face veil from receiving or delivering public services, and public advocacy on Parliament Hill to protect civil liberties; these are some of the core issues on which the CAIR-CAN team has focused on for several months. In this report, you will find an overview of our defence of civil rights, media engagement and community outreach from 2009-2010.

2009 saw the return of a full-time Executive Director to guide the organization’s work and Ihsaan Gardee has delivered solid leadership to CAIR-CAN since that time. As part of growing CAIR-CAN’s profile, Ihsaan initiated a tour of Western Canada in the Fall of 2010 where he met with diverse Canadian Muslim communities and media organizations in Greater Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg. Our grassroots outreach has provided to both the community and CAIR-CAN a team of dedicated volunteers and organizers from coast to coast.

As a national Canadian Muslim civil rights organization, we have always focused on providing vital anti-discrimination services to communities. Our Civil Rights Department has been led by our capable Civil Rights Officer Julia Williams who has brought a passionate voice in the service of human rights and civil liberties. In all,

our national staff have served CAIR-CAN and the community with selflessness and a dedication that is sometimes hard to replace. The fruits of CAIR-CAN’s work are a true reflection of them and their diligent efforts.

I would like to deeply thank our countless volunteers, members of our consultative committee and our generous donors who have exhibited unwavering support for CAIR-CAN and its vision to be a leading voice that enriches Canadian society through Muslim civic engagement and the promotion of human rights. They are all an integral part of the CAIR-CAN team.

We invite you to join CAIR-CAN and support its critical work in protecting and advocating for your interests. Help us to always serve you. We look forward to working with you, serving you better and receiving your advice, feedback and generous financial assistance as CAIR-CAN moves forward from strength to strength.

Wa salaamu’alaykum,
Peace be with you.

Selma Djukic, Chair

From the Executive Director

Assalamu’alaykum (Peace Be With You)

My relationship with CAIR-CAN began as an occasional volunteer; soon after, I had the privilege of joining the team in an official capacity - first as its Director of Community Relations, and then as the organization’s third Executive Director (ED). It has been a valuable and rewarding 6 years. CAIR-CAN continues to work towards being a leading voice that enriches Canadian society by encouraging Muslim civic engagement and promoting human rights.

Whether addressing issues such as acts of anti-Muslim vandalism, religious freedom, racial profiling, national security, or the cases of Canadians detained abroad such as Omar Khadr, Abousfian Abdelrazik, Huseyin Celil or Bashir Makhtal, CAIR-CAN continues to be at the forefront by providing a balanced and mainstream voice on issues pertaining to Canadian Muslims.

Since its founding, CAIR-CAN has consistently sought to take principled positions grounded in Canada’s Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and laws on issues regarding the rights and responsibilities of informed, critical, and loyal citizenship.

I have been proud to be a part of the CAIR-CAN family for so many years.

That is why it was with mixed emotions, that I announced my resignation earlier last year. Since then, by way of a mutual agreement with the Board, I have remained on as the interim ED until a qualified successor is found. It is my hope, after my tenure at CAIR-CAN, to pursue other career opportunities and possibly further studies.

While I will miss life at CAIR-CAN, I am excited at the potential this new direction holds. The opportunity to try to make a

difference and to contribute to the community is one that I have cherished and for which I am extremely grateful.

What we have accomplished together to date is amazing. Even more amazing is the chance I have had to work with people from various backgrounds and all walks of life with the common desire to help make Canada a better place for all. While there will likely continue to be challenges and setbacks, rather than shout at the darkness I would urge each of you to take another approach and light a candle.

I am confident that when a new Executive Director is selected, she or he will bring their own ideas and passion to help guide the organization to even greater achievements. I look forward to following, with interest, these new developments both as a supporter and donor which I

also encourage you to become.

Thank you again for the honour of serving you and I ask you for your forgiveness for my mistakes.

A bientôt.

Wa salamu’alaykum,

Ihsaan Gardee
Executive Director



Our Mission

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) is a national, not-for-profit, grassroots organization that professionally represents the human rights and civil liberties concerns of Canadian Muslims. CAIR-CAN works to address these concerns through:

01

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CASE WORK

02

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & OUTREACH

03

PUBLIC ADVOCACY

04

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

A Brief History

In 1996, a group of concerned Canadian Muslims started an informal network to work in Canada with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a U.S. based human rights and advocacy organization. In the spring of 1997, CAIR-Montreal was informally established. Soon after, CAIR-Ottawa replaced CAIR-Montreal.

It was almost immediately apparent that addressing human rights in the Canadian context necessitated a uniquely Canadian approach.

In 2000, the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) was incorporated as fully autonomous and entirely separate organization from the Washington-based CAIR. CAIR-CAN's relationship

with CAIR in the U.S. remains amicable and the two organizations may consult on areas of mutual concern.

CAIR-CAN's national headquarters are located in Ottawa. CAIR-CAN's website www.caircan.ca features a historical archive of CAIR-CAN's work, press releases, action alerts, opinion pieces and more.



Our Board

CAIR-CAN’s National Board of Directors plans future strategy and is responsible for organizational oversight. They are united in their commitment to the mandate of CAIR-CAN and the constituents it serves: all Canadians. We have profiled some of our Board Members here



01 SELMA DJUKIC, ACTING CHAIR Selma Djukic is a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Toronto, and President of White Owl Global Services Ltd., a pharmaceutical drug development consultancy based in Toronto. A pioneer amongst the early youth workers, Selma has dedicated the last 30 years to empowering youth and women through the initiation and development of numerous grassroots, national and international organizations. CAIR-CAN has come to depend on Selma’s considerable technical and management expertise, which she is enhancing through the completion of the University of Toronto’s Advanced Certificate in Strategic Leadership.

02 KASHIF AHMED, J.D. Kashif Ahmed is a Vancouver-based lawyer practising commercial litigation and corporate & securities law. Kashif was called to the Bar of British Columbia in 2011 and he has been active with CAIR-CAN since 2006. He earned his Juris Doctor law degree from the University of Saskatchewan and holds a business administration degree in finance from the University of Regina. At CAIR-CAN, Kashif has extensive experience in media relations and civil rights advocacy.

03 DR. JAMAL BADAWI Dr. Jamal Badawi, one of North America’s most renowned Islamic scholars, is a professor at Saint Mary’s University in Halifax, where he is a cross-appointed faculty member in the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Management. Often called upon to comment on issues relevant to Canadian Muslims, he has also produced publications on gender equity as well as an impressive collection of audio materials introducing Islam.

04 KHALID ELGAZZAR, LLB Khalid Elgazzar is an Ottawa-based lawyer who has been an active member of the community since moving to Ottawa nearly 12 years ago. Khalid obtained his LL.B. in 2005 from the University of Ottawa after completing his Bachelor of Commerce at the same institution. He currently practices in the areas of civil liberties, national security, access to information and civil litigation at a litigation boutique firm in Ottawa. In representing his clients, Khalid has appeared before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, the Court of Appeal for Ontario, the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal, as well as bodies such as the Security Intelligence Review Committee and the Military Police Complaints Commission. Khalid was one of the lawyers that represented Canadian citizen Abousfian Abdelrazik in his successful bid to be repatriated from Sudan after six years in exile.

Our Staff

CAIR-CAN’s day-to-day activities and operations are led by our committed and diverse staff whose ongoing efforts form the backbone of the organization.



- 01

IHSAAN GARDEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR • A graduate of the University of Windsor (B.Comm Honours) and the University of Western Ontario (BA) Ihsaan has been with CAIR-CAN since 2006 where he first served as CAIR-CAN’s Community Relations & Operations Director for the better part of two years. He became CAIR-CAN’s executive director in October of 2008. Ihsaan has a background working in different industry sectors primarily in marketing and communications and has worked, lived and travelled extensively across Canada, Europe, the Middle East and South Africa.
- 02

JULIA WILLIAMS, HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES OFFICER • Julia Williams joined the CAIR-CAN as Human Rights and Civil Liberties Officer in 2009. Prior to joining CAIR-CAN, Julia was extensively involved in youth work within the Muslim community in Hamilton and Ottawa beginning in 2002. She obtained her bachelors degree in History from McMaster University in 2006. In 2009, she completed her Masters degree in Globalization and International Development, with a focus on international human rights law, from the University of Ottawa.
- 03

SHIRIN EDARECHI, OFFICE COORDINATOR • Shirin Edarechi joined CAIR-CAN as the Office Coordinator in March 2010. Shirin has working experience in immigration and free lance interpreting for the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Shirin obtained her LL.B degree in Iran in 2003 and completed her Masters degree in Legal Studies, with a focus on law and social transformation in 2008 from Carleton University.
- 04

MARYAM DADABHOY, COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR (TORONTO) • Maryam has been with CAIR-CAN since early 2004, at first as a volunteer, and later in the year, as the Greater Toronto Area Community Relations Officer. Maryam obtained her Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration at California State University Fullerton. Prior to joining CAIR-CAN, Maryam was with the Los Angeles Chapter of CAIR. Maryam has also been involved extensively with the GTA Muslim community. Maryam lives in Milton with her husband and their two children.

Consultative Committee

CAIR-CAN’s “Shurah” is comprised of a dedicated and dynamic team of volunteers across Canada that generates ideas, provides constructive feedback, vets draft publications including letters and articles and contributes to the organization’s overall body of work.

DR. AISHA SHERAZI

A successful biologist, Aisha Sherazi migrated to Canada in 2000 from the UK. The former Principal of a full time Muslim elementary school in Ottawa, Aisha now freelances as a writer for the Ottawa Citizen and blogs for the paper online. Aisha also sits on the Boards of several committees including the Community Advisory Committee to the RCMP and the Islamic Social Services Association of Canada. When she’s not working as a teen counselor Aisha is giving presentations and workshops on topics including education, youth, and Islam.

ANWAAR SYED

A professor at Centennial College in the School of Advancement. He is also a communications specialist with his consultancy company, Jara Communications. His company is working on projects including CBC’s Little Mosque on the Prairie, CTV’s Flashpoint, and he works with many independent businesses. Anwaar earned his undergraduate degree in Communication Arts and Post-Colonial Literature at York University and completed Graduate Studies in Corporate Communications and Public Relations at York University and Centennial College.

IGOR ZVEREV

An economist with an interest in complex systems and Aboriginal history. He is currently studying how history, culture, environment and colonization contribute to the long-term dynamics of tuberculosis in Aboriginal communities in Canada.

Human Rights Committee

A team of dedicated and highly trained volunteers, including lawyers and law students, assist in the strategizing and handling of human rights complaints at CAIR-CAN. Some members of our Human Rights Committee include:

COMMITTEE CHAIR: MIHAD FAHMY

A graduate degree in law and works as a labour and human rights lawyer based in London, Ontario with the law offices of Peggy E. Smith. Mihad has worked closely with CAIR-CAN on human rights and anti-discrimination issues for several years.

NAFAY CHOUDHURY

Nafay recently graduated from the Faculty of Law at McGill University, with interests in legal pluralism, comparative law, and civil rights. During law school, Nafay founded Legal Frontiers: McGill’s Blog on International Law, which is presently ranked as one of the top 25 international law blogs on the internet. Nafay is fluent in English and French and is currently spending a year in Qatar acquainting himself with Arabic. He has been involved with CAIR-CAN since 2004.

AMIR MUSHTAQ

An employment and human rights lawyer based in downtown Toronto. He provides training to various employers in employment law related matters including diversity in workplace, human rights, disability issues and anti-harassment. Amer is also an adjunct professor at Seneca College where he teaches Law and Corporate Governance to post-graduate students. Prior to starting his own law firm in February, 2009, Amer was an associate at FMC Law LLP where he both summered and articulated. Amer is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School and was called to the Ontario bar in 2007.

There are many volunteers including students and professionals who selflessly give their time to assist CAIR-CAN. Many of these individuals do so with no wish for thanks or recognition. From all of us, thank you – you know who you are.

Financial Report: Overview

The following graphs reflect CAIR-CAN’s expenses for the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years. When CAIR-CAN was founded, it was decided that the organization would not charge for its services and we have held true to this ideal.



	2009	2010
INCOME	\$ 231,003.82	\$ 189,150.64
EXPENSES	\$ 243,279.42	\$ 252, 417.18
TOTAL	- \$ 12,275.60	- \$ 63,266.54



Income

All of our income is derived from one main source: private donations. To ensure the organization’s independence and autonomy, CAIR-CAN does not take funding from foreign governments or from overseas organizations. Donations are divided in to 4 categories:

01

RAMADAN
CAMPAIGN

02

MONTHLY DONORS

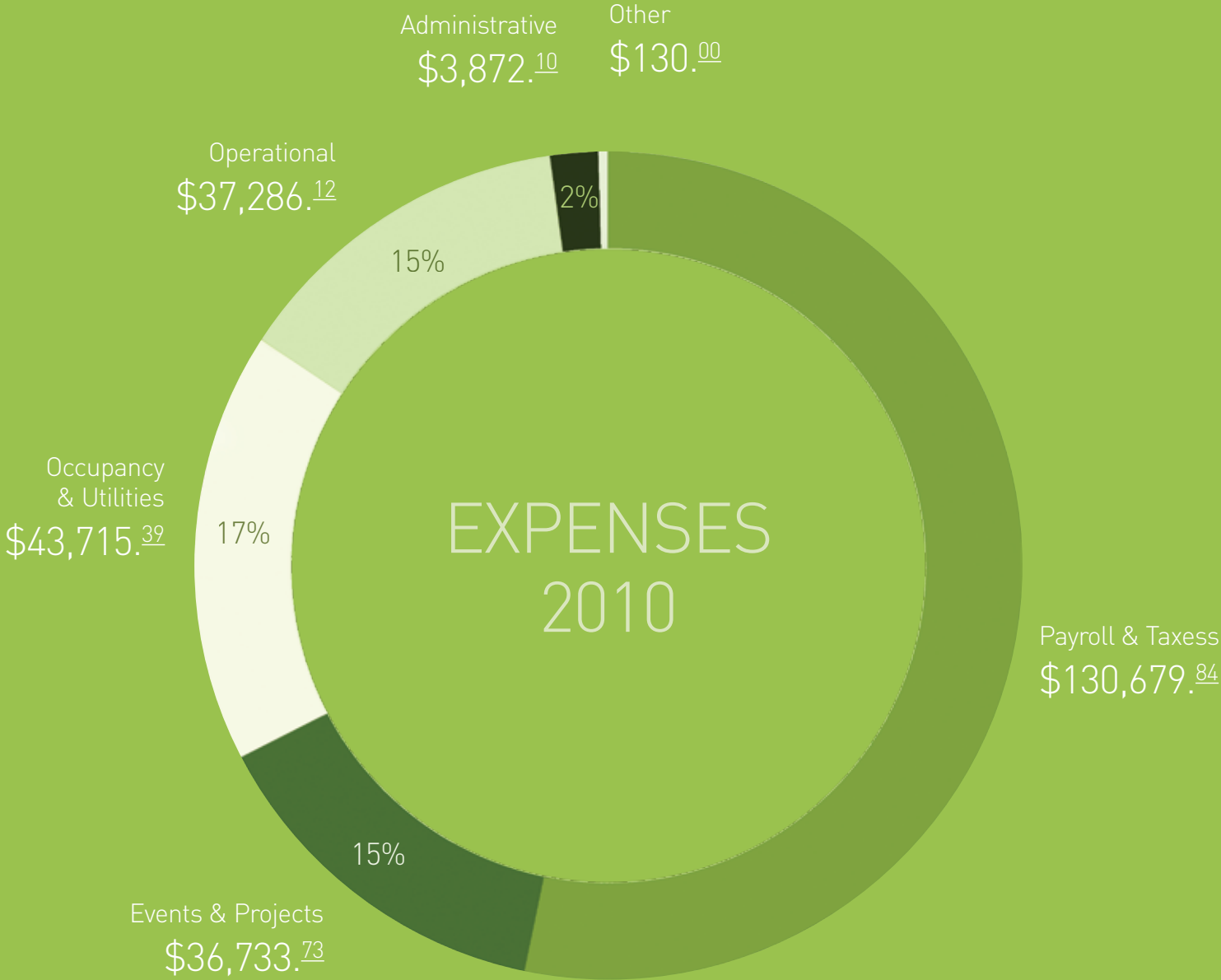
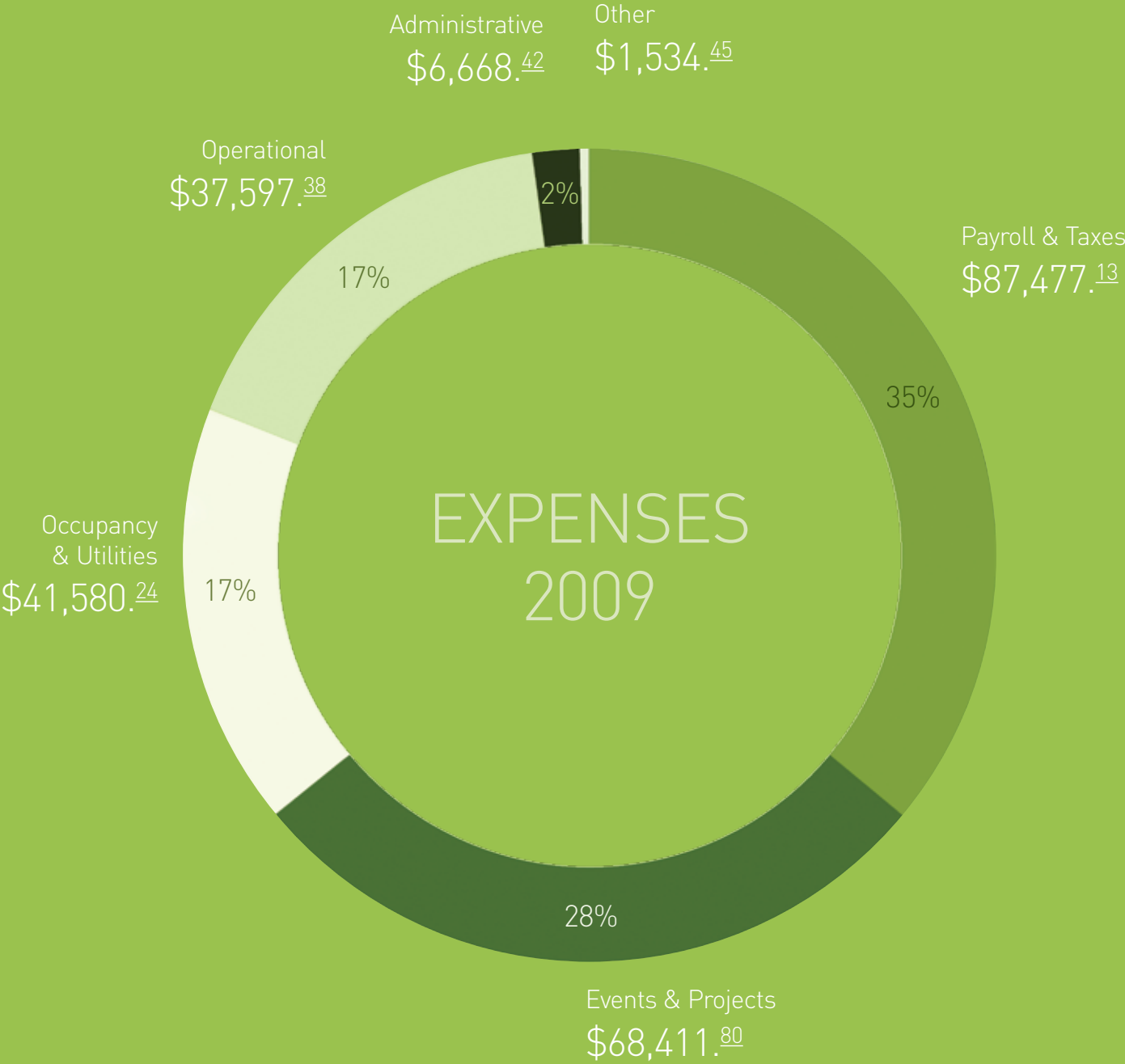
03

ONE TIME DONORS

04

SPEAKING
HONORARIUMS





What We Do

01. Anti-Discrimination Case Work

CAIR-CAN’s Civil Rights Department advocates on behalf of Canadian Muslims and others who have experienced discrimination and hate crimes based on their religion.

02. Community Education & Outreach

The Education and Outreach Department strives to communicate CAIR-CAN’s work, mission, and mandate to our constituents and interested groups.

03. Public Advocacy

Protecting the interests of Canada’s Muslim communities requires vigilance and sustained advocacy.

04. Media Engagement

CAIR-CAN’s staff and national board actively engage with media from meeting with editorial boards to liaising with journalists in regards to stories related to Muslims and Islam within the Canadian context.



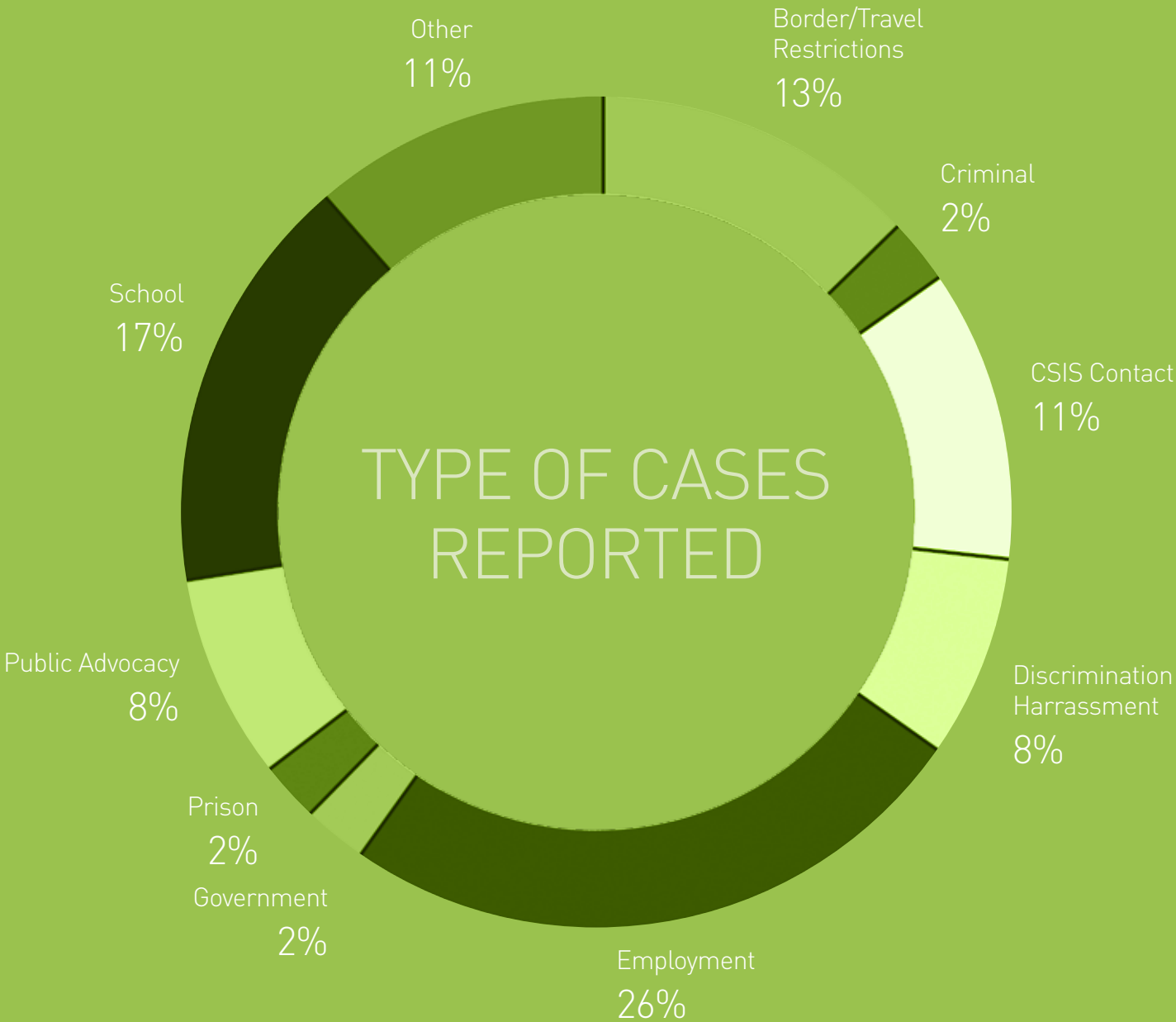
Anti-Discrimination Case Work

CAIR-CAN’s Civil Rights Department works to defend and uphold Canadian rights and liberties against the politics of fear and division. In doing so, CAIR-CAN offers suggestions and advice to individuals who file complaints with CAIR-CAN. CAIR-CAN also assists in mediating cases with employers, educators, and public institutions to help resolve complaints. CAIR-CAN only addresses complaints that fall within our mandate. In select circumstances, CAIR-CAN may directly assist with a complaint before a human rights commission.

IN 2009 AND 2010 CAIR-CAN PROCESSED 124 COMPLAINTS ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES. CAIR-CAN COMMONLY ASSISTS IN COMPLAINTS BY TAKING ON A MEDIATING ROLE. BELOW ARE TWO SUCH SAMPLES:

In 2009, CAIR-CAN mediated between two college students and their school administration to allow for them to continue performing their daily prayers on school property.

In 2010, CAIR-CAN guided a call centre employee through the process of negotiating a work schedule with his employer that accommodated his need to attend jummah (Friday) prayer services.



Community Education & Outreach

CAIR-CAN offers regular seminars and workshops on Islamic practices, anti-discrimination, and media engagement. CAIR-CAN also distributes “Know Your Rights” pocket guides in both English and French outlining Islamic religious practices for journalists, employers, educators, and health care providers. These publications are regularly requested by government departments, local and national media outlets, police services, hospitals, schools, private firms, and various non-profit groups.



CANADA’S ABANDONED CITIZENS -Toronto, ON

On June 25, 2009 CAIR-CAN, Amnesty International Canada, and the Muslim Law Students’ Association at the University of Toronto held a CPAC-televised panel discussion entitled: “Canada’s Abandoned Citizens – Aousfian Abdelrazik, Huseyin Celil, & Omar Khadr.”

The forum was moderated by CAIR-CAN and it provided a meaningful public discussion about Canadian citizens detained abroad and the government’s duty to protect its citizens. The constitutionality of the government’s decisions to date in the cases of Abdelrazik, Celil, and Khadr were the focus of the discussion.

The panel featured four experts: Paul Champ, lawyer for Aousfian Abdelrazik; Dennis Edney, lawyer for Omar Khadr; Chris Macleod, lawyer for Huseyin Celil; and Barbara Jackman, immigration and refugee lawyer.

MUSLIMS IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES-Singapore

In mid-July 2010, CAIR-CAN executive director Ihsaan Gardee travelled to Singapore as a guest speaker to present a paper on ‘Muslims and Islam in Canada’ at a conference on the theme of ‘Muslims in Multicultural

Societies’. Organized by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore; Oxford University; University of Melbourne; and the National University of Singapore, this conference served as a platform for Muslim communities from around the world to share their experiences and exchange ideas for the development of Muslim communities in multicultural societies. Speakers included the conference’s convener, Dr. Tariq Ramadan and other well known scholars and public personalities such as Imam Dr. Feisal Abdul Rauf and Professor Rabbi Reuven Firestone.

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS -Nationwide

CAIR-CAN provides seminars to community groups, employers, law enforcement, universities and public institutions on topics such as Understanding Islam, Women and Islam, Muslims and the Media, and Racial Profiling.

CAIR-CAN also conducts workshops within the Canadian Muslim community on Human Rights and Media Engagement. In the summer of 2010, CAIR-CAN executive director Ihsaan Gardee travelled across Western Canada to deliver a series of “Know Your Rights & Responsibilities” and “Media Engagement 101” seminars. The trip was also an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with local community members and leaders.

Public Advocacy

In order to advance its mission, CAIR-CAN endeavors to be active in influencing decision makers by promoting the maintenance of a just and harmonious society for Canadians. CAIR-CAN continues to be at the forefront in publically defending the human rights and civil liberties of Canadian Muslims.



BILL 94 QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

In May of 2010, CAIR-CAN prepared and submitted a brief to the Quebec National Assembly pertaining to Bill 94: An Act to establish guidelines governing accommodation requests within the Administration and certain institutions.

Bill 94 would, in effect, restrict the right of Muslim women who wear the niqab (face-veil) from giving or receiving government services in the province of Quebec.

CAIR-CAN’s brief outlined our firm position that, if passed, Bill 94 would infringe upon the fundamental religious freedoms of Muslim women who choose to adopt the niqab as a sincerely held religious belief. This infringement would substantially affect the daily lives of these women by restricting access to vital services.

CAIR-CAN concluded that the proposed legislation, Bill 94, is discriminatory in that it specifically targets a minority of Muslim women and singles out a specific religious practice for de facto prohibition.

Bill 94 is currently in the committee review stage at the Quebec National Assembly and has not yet been passed into legislation. CAIR-CAN appeared before the Quebec National Assembly in November 2010 to discuss our position on the Bill with the Committee studying the legislation.

Bill C-42 AIRLINE PASSENGER INFORMATION

In November 2010, CAIR-CAN appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities regarding Bill C-42: An Act to Amend the Aeronautics Act.

Bill C-42 would permit airlines over-flying a foreign state to share certain passenger information with that state. The underlying impetus for this legislation is to allow the United States to implement their “Secure Flight” program in Canada. This would mean that the U.S. government would be given passenger information regarding travelers on planes that merely over-fly U.S. airspace. Based on this information, U.S. authorities could then deny Canadian travelers permission to board flights.

CAIR-CAN was concerned about the lack of consideration the proposed legislation would grant to issues of privacy protection and potential human rights violations.

The Bill includes no guarantees regarding how or with whom the U.S. might, at its own discretion, choose to use or share passenger data. The lack of caveats or controls on information sharing has already had devastating impacts on the lives of a number of Canadian Muslims.

The experience of the last ten years has demonstrated that Canadian Muslims and Arabs have been disproportionately

affected by U.S. “no-fly” security measures. The lack of a robust redress system ingrained within the “no-fly list” system, upon which the Secure Flight rules will rely, is illustrated today by the plight of citizens such as Maher Arar and Abdullah Almalki. Deemed by Canadian courts or Commissions of Inquiry not to pose a risk to the national security of Canada, they still find their ability to fly severely restricted as a result their inclusion on U.S. no-fly lists.



BILL C-17 REINSTATING SECURITY PROVISIONS

In December of 2010 CAIR-CAN, was appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security regarding Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (investigative hearing and recognizance with conditions).

The proposed legislation would allow persons to be detained for up to three days without charge (“preventative arrest”) and would also compel individuals to testify before a judge in an “investigative hearing.”

As a national Muslim civil rights organization, CAIR-CAN raised a number of serious concerns with respect to Bill C-17. Chief amongst these was the affect the provisions may have on the human rights and civil liberties of Canadian Muslims.

CAIR-CAN notes that, apart from a singular and widely criticized misuse of an investigative hearing during the Air India trial, neither of the proposed provisions has ever been utilized by the authorities from the time they were introduced as amendments to the Criminal Code in 2001 to when they expired in early 2007.

The current powers of law enforcement have allowed security agencies to pursue and successfully prosecute terrorism-related crimes over the past nine years.

CAIR-CAN also raised concerns regarding the danger posed by the gathering of information that could be shared with foreign governments whose record on human rights is questionable.

It has always been and remains CAIR-CAN’s belief that our law enforcement agencies should continue to be given support in executing intelligent and efficient policing that is carried out within the bounds of the rule of law and the Charter.

CANADIANS DETAINED ABROAD

CAIR-CAN has consistently advocated on behalf of Canadian citizens detained abroad. Abousfian Abdelrazik, Omar Khadr, Bashir Makhtal, and Huseyin Celil are four examples of Canadian Muslims held overseas that have been subject to gross human rights violations.

After an extensive campaign on the part of his lawyers and civil society organizations, including CAIR-CAN, Mr. Abdelrazik returned to Canada in June 2009. He now faces an ongoing legal battle to have his name removed from a United Nations no-fly list and to have his basic civil liberties in Canada restored.

Omar Khadr, the child soldier being held as an enemy combatant at Guantanamo Bay, has yet to be repatriated

to Canada. Despite the fact that Mr. Khadr was 15 when captured by US forces, successive Canadian governments failed to honour his rights as a Canadian citizen and child soldier by securing his return to Canada. In 2010, Mr. Khadr accepted a plea bargain before a military tribunal that will allow him to apply for a transfer to a Canadian prison after a further year of incarceration at Guantanamo.

Bashir Makhtal and Huseyin Celil are both serving life sentences in foreign jails despite having been subjected to what human rights observers have declared sham trials. Mr. Makhtal still languishes in an Ethiopian prison and Huseyin Celil continues to endure near solitary confinement in China. CAIR-CAN continues its effort to speak out on behalf of these individuals and is committed to the struggle to see both men freed and returned to Canada.

SECURITY CERTIFICATES

Security Certificates, a contentious part of Canadian immigration law, allow the government to detain and deport non-citizens such as permanent residents and refugee claimants for reasons of national security. The information used to support a certificate is often gathered by intelligence agencies and is kept secret, not even disclosed to the named person or their legal counsel.

2009-2010 saw major breakthroughs in more than one Security Certificates case. Adil Charkaoui and Hassan Almrei have both had their Security Certificates thrown out. Mohamad Harkat had his Certificate upheld, though much of his court hearing was still held in secret. He is currently fighting a deportation order to Algeria, where he fears imprisonment and torture. Rulings have yet to be made in the cases of Mohmoud Jaballah and Mohammad Mahjoub who continue to live under some of the strictest bail conditions in Canadian history.

Muslim men have been the primary target of Security Certificates over the last ten years. CAIR-CAN continues to advocate for and support all efforts to ensure fair and open court hearings and procedures in these cases.

PARTNERING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

CAIR-CAN has proactively worked to build partnerships with other organizations to meet common goals and address issues critical to human rights work.

Some of these organizations include Amnesty International Canada, the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), the Muslim Coordinating Council of Ottawa (MCC), Voices / Voix, and the RCMP's National Security Community Outreach Committee.

In 2009 / 2010, CAIR-CAN continued to reach out to local, provincial and national groups to ensure that Muslim voices were represented and heard by the Canadian government and government representatives.

In October 2009, CAIR-CAN participated in consultations with the United Nations (UN) independent expert on minority issues during her visit to Canada.

CAIR-CAN, along with other prominent national human rights groups, was able to shed light on the human rights concerns of Muslim Canadians since 2001.

The disproportionate impact of anti-terrorism legislation and the implementation of no-fly lists are two examples of some of the issues raised. The UN independent expert on minority issues released her report in March of 2010 with much of the feedback brought forth by CAIR-CAN and other included.

In June 2010, CAIR-CAN was invited by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who is an independent officer of the Parliament of Canada, to peer-review a preliminary draft of a guideline on Integrating Privacy Protection with Security Policies and Measures.

CAIR-CAN was acknowledged in the final guideline for our contribution to this project.



Media Engagement

CAIR-CAN regularly monitors local, national and in some cases international media in order to confront Islamophobia and respond to misinformation and negative stereotypes about Islam and Canadian Muslims. We also applaud and promote positive and accurate representations of Islam and Muslim communities.



PRINT / RADIO / TV

CAIR-CAN is frequently called upon to respond to issues relating to Islam and Muslims in the media. In 2009 and 2010, CAIR-CAN has appeared on radio, on television and in print on such issues as Security Certificates, the Niqab, Anti-Terror arrests, Omar Khadr, national security legislation, and much more.

ENGAGING JOURNALISTS & EDITORS

In October 2010, CAIR-CAN executive director Ihsaan Gardee visited four cities in Canada’s Western Provinces (Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg) to conduct information and training seminars, meet with the editorial boards of various media outlets, and discuss local issues and challenges with community leaders. In Vancouver, Mr. Gardee met with members of the editorial boards from CBC Television, The Province, and Vancouver Sun newspapers. While in Winnipeg he met with members of the editorial board of the Winnipeg Free Press.

One of the main purposes of the trip was to meet with local media so that they were aware of the organization, its history, and ability to speak to issues concerning Canadian Muslims and Islam in Canada. CAIR-CAN was able to successfully convey the need for open communication with major media outlets and for capacity building at the local level.

ONLINE

Each week CAIR-CAN publishes a Media Watch to share stories relating to Islam and Muslims with the community and voice our concerns regarding the issues that affect our lives as Canadian Muslims. Anyone may join our mailing list by contacting us at info@caircan.ca. CAIR-CAN is also active on Facebook™ and Twitter™ and YouTube™.



PRESS CONFERENCES

In 2009 and 2010 CAIR-CAN participated in numerous press conferences on a variety of issues concerning the Muslim Community, including:

May 27, 2009
SUBJECT: REPATRIATING ABOUSFIAN ABDELRAZIK FROM SUDAN
CAIR-CAN Spokesperson: Ihsaan Gardee

July 23, 2010
SUBJECT: DETENTION OF CANADIAN CITIZEN BASHIR MAKHTAL
CAIR-CAN Spokesperson: Ihsaan Gardee

Jan 15, 2010
SUBJECT: SECURITY CERTIFICATES
CAIR-CAN Spokesperson: Ihsaan Gardee

December 10, 2010
SUBJECT: FEDERAL COURT DECISION ON MOHAMED HARKAT SECURITY CERTIFICATE
CAIR-CAN Spokesperson: Ihsaan Gardee

What You Can Do

01. Donate

Your support and donations allow CAIR-CAN to effectively advocate for and protect civil rights and cultivate an accurate understanding and appreciation of Canadian Muslims and Islam as part of the fabric of Canadian society.

02. Write

Take the time to write in your city’s daily newspaper, respond to CAIR-CAN action alerts and communicate with your Member of Parliament and elected officials at all levels of government.

03. Volunteer

Your help is always needed. You and others can benefit from the time you contribute to your community.

04. Vote

We strongly believe that the only way democracy works in a society is when citizens are active participants. Voting is your right as a citizen.

05. Report

Contact CAIR-CAN if you feel you have been the victim of anti-Muslim bias or discrimination.

01. DONATE

CAIR-CAN relies entirely on the generosity of our constituents to operate. Your support and donations allow CAIR-CAN to protect civil rights, launch important public advocacy initiatives and create a strong understanding and greater appreciation of Canadian Muslims and Islam. When you donate, we commit to using your gift wisely.



02. WRITE A LETTER TO PARLIAMENT

One of the benefits of living in a democracy is that your Member of Parliament (MP) is there to represent you. MPs are the “voices of the people.” If you feel strongly about the issues that affect either your local community or the country as a whole then you should consider writing to your MP.

10 TIPS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO YOUR MP

1. Try to keep the letter to one-page in length if possible.

2. Focus on and single topic / concern.

3. Emphasize two or three main points.

4. Request a specific action(s).

5. Request a response.
6. Have one or two individuals proof-read your letter.

7. If you are mailing the letter, no postage is required. You can email or fax letters as well.

8. Save a copy of all correspondence for your reference.
9. Follow-up by thanking your MP / Minister for their response and reminding them of your concerns.

10. Inform CAIR-CAN if the discussion is relevant to our mandate. Send us a copy of your letter and your MP’s response.

SAMPLE LETTER

March 24, 2010

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
Email: Cannon.L@parl.gc.ca

RE: Bashir Makhtal

Dear Minister,

We are writing you to urge you to become personally involved in efforts to safeguard the human rights of Bashir Makhtal, a Canadian citizen facing life imprisonment after a grossly unfair trial in Ethiopia. Mr Makhtal was convicted on charges of supporting the Ogaden National Liberation Front. Mr Makhtal has consistently denied any personal involvement with the ONLF, although his grandfather helped found the group.

We appreciate that Canadian officials, including the Minister of Transport John Baird, have repeatedly raised the case with the Ethiopian authorities. Mr Makhtal’s situation nonetheless remains unresolved. It is time for you as the Minister of Foreign Affairs to press for long overdue justice.

As you may be aware, Mr Makhtal’s case has been marked by serious human rights violations over the past three years. He was detained in Kenya in early 2007 after fleeing the renewed violence in Somalia. He and some 140 other people were detained for several weeks before being illegally transferred to Ethiopia via Mogadishu. Once in Ethiopia, he was held incommunicado for an extended period of time, and did not see his family for two years. Access to legal counsel and consular officials has been limited. Both his initial military trial and civilian trial in 2009 were marked by serious irregularities and provided little or no opportunity to mount a defense.

Minister, all indications are that any appeal proceedings in Ethiopia – or a re-trial should that become a possibility – will similarly fail to meet international standards for due process. We are calling on you to seek the release and return of Mr. Makhtal to Canada without further delay. This is simply the only redress for the serious and ongoing human rights concerns in this case.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and welcome an opportunity to discuss the case further with you.

Yours Sincerely,

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN)

02. WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

One important and vital part of communicating the perspective of Canadian Muslims to the broader public is through writing letters to the editor. You can write when you disagree with an opinion or article or to express your appreciation for a well written and thought provoking piece.

Writing a letter to the editor need not be time consuming. Letters are typically a maximum of 150 words in length and highlight one key message or argument. We encourage you to use this tool to voice your thoughts and take advantage of our right to freedom of expression.

7 TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

1. Be polite. Just to repeat: always be polite. It is a fundamental and unchanging guideline. Your goal is to make your point without using language that is crude—no matter how good it might feel to “vent your feelings” or how much you feel the person you are addressing may deserve it. Avoiding ad hominem (personally directed) attacks makes your argument the focus of the letter and increases your credibility and likelihood of having your letter printed.
2. Assume that the paper to whom you are writing are open to reasonable debate and discussion around the topic you are addressing.
3. Follow the guidelines provided by the newspaper in terms of length – going over the maximum number of words decreases the likelihood of having your letter printed.

4. Time is of the essence. Try to submit your letter within 48 hours. Any longer and it is highly unlikely the paper will print your letter.
5. Deal with a single topic. Begin by referencing the argument you are opposing, followed by a statement of your own position. Then present your evidence using facts, figures and expert testimony whenever possible. This elevates your letter above the “he said, she said” class. Conclude with a short restatement of your position.
6. Get someone you trust to proofread your letter to check for spelling and grammatical mistakes. Avoid using clichés or jargon.
7. Be sure to sign your letter with your full name and include your address and contact details. Most reputable newspapers will not print anonymous letters and they will usually call you before printing your letter to verify that you wrote it.

SAMPLE LETTER

Included below is a letter to the editor submitted by CAIR-CAN and published by the National Post. CAIR-CAN writes different letters to editors in response to different issues and not necessarily just those affecting Canadian Muslims. As you will see, though brief, the letter still conveys the thoughts of the writer in a concise and convincing manner.

National Post · Monday, Nov. 8, 2010

Re: The Walking Coffin, Afsun Qureshi-Smith, Nov. 4.

Afsun Qureshi-Smith’s story about her own experience and the sad incident of her daughter’s experience with a school playmate are indeed heart-rending. One would have to be completely devoid of emotion not to sympathize with the plight of a four-year-old who is told by her classmate that she cannot play with her because they are from different religious backgrounds.

Moreover, this kind of thing probably happens far more than we might like to think between all kinds of people from different backgrounds. But this is part and parcel of living within the framework of a diverse multicultural citizenry for which Canada is renowned. Instead of seeing it as an instance of an unavoidable culture clash (as some will no doubt describe it), perhaps what Ms. Qureshi-Smith should do is to reach out the mother of her child’s classmate.

In doing so she may begin to understand that the perceived other and her likely share a lot of things in common. More importantly, it would serve as a teachable moment for both of their children by demonstrating the values of acceptance, inclusion and respect we all cherish.

Ihsaan Gardee
Executive Director
Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations
Ottawa

03. VOLUNTEER

Effective advocacy requires people with common goals acting together. By joining local causes we enrich ourselves and the cause. Civic participation is a meaningful way to contribute to something immediate and connected to you.

1. Introduce yourself to your neighbours

2. Join your child’s school council

3. Donate well-written books or audio cassettes about Islam to the local public & school libraries

4. Vote in all municipal, provincial and federal elections

5. Volunteer for CAIR-CAN.

6. Attend school board meetings and city council meetings. Check newspaper calendars.
7. Submit an opinion piece to your newspaper about an issue of local importance

8. Hold an open house at your local mosque. Contact CAIR-CAN for tips.

9. Host other public events such as blood drives and health fairs in your mosque.

10. Schedule local and national officials to speak about community issues at your mosque (federal and provincial politicians, police chief, mayor, city council members).

04. VOTE

CAIR-CAN encourages everyone to participate in elections and vote. We strongly believe that the only way democracy works in a society is when citizens are active participants. Voting is your right as a citizen.

When you vote, it signifies your interest in issues affecting your community and country.

Casting your vote tells those in positions of authority that they should hear and be aware of your concerns. Every vote counts! So remember to do your part and become an informed and engaged citizen.



05. REPORT

We know that hate crimes and other incidents of discrimination are underreported. Contact CAIR-CAN if you feel you have been the victim of anti-Muslim bias or discrimination.

Contact your local police department and speak to the hate crimes unit if you feel you have been the victim of a hate crime.

Let CAIR-CAN know. Reporting is one easy step towards raising public awareness and eventually eradicating Islamophobia, hatred and discrimination.



NOTABLE QUOTES

“Muslims should have no hesitation in giving part of their Zakah to CAIR-CAN which has a reputation for professionalism, efficiency, commitment and integrity.” - Shaikh Ahmad Kutty

“Whether it’s the issuing of a ‘Good News’ alert, providing an overview of media coverage on an issue of specific pertinence to Canadian Muslims, or analyzing the effects of anti-Muslim discrimination and harassment, CAIR-CAN provides an important service to all Canadians.” - Lois Sweet, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University

“CAIR-CAN is an Islamic organization that has an impressive track record of Islamic work in Canada. I would strongly recommend to Muslims to consider CAIR-CAN when they distribute their zakah.” - Shaikh Mohammad Zahid

“I hope Muslims all over the country help CAIR-CAN by their donating zakah money for CAIR-CAN’s noble cause. CAIR-CAN is an Islamic organization dedicated for serving Muslim needs” - Shaikh Mohammed Iqbal Nadvi

“CAIR-CAN is a valuable resource for writers, reporters, producers and editors.” - Karlene Nation, Diversity Reporter/Producer, CFTO/

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