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End of Year 2013 Newsletter

Assalamu Alaykum!

2013 was a wonderful year at KARAMAH! This year-end newsletter highlights our activities during the last quarter of 2013, and it truly exemplifies the work that we are so proud to be doing. Whether it is teaching advocates how to better serve survivors of violence or advocating for the civil rights of Muslim Americans at the Department of Justice.

Our work spans across the US and globally—we had the distinct pleasure of meeting a delegation of German leaders that have unique struggles of profiling, advancement and religious freedom.

Our issues are common. Our work continues. We at KARAMAH are pleased to work for the community and hope that you continue to support us in all that we do.

Please stay tuned for the exciting events and lectures we have coming up in 2014. It's going to be a great year, inshAllah.

Yours,

Aisha Rahman, Esq.
Executive Director
Winter 2013



Aisha Rahman, Dr. Raja El Habti, Rabbi Batya Steinlauf, Rev. Susan Hayward Speak on Hawa

Hawa (Eve), Maryam, Sarah and Hajar (Hagar): A Fall/Winter Series

KARAMAH presented a series focused on the shared interfaith legacies of Hawa (Eve), Sarah and Hajar (Hagar), and Maryam (Mary). One event was devoted to Hawa and Mary each individually, and the third event discussed Sarah and Hajar on January 8.

The goal of this series is to provide insight into and lessons from the lives of these great women. For adherents of the Abrahamic faiths, the character and stories behind these historical figures provide an indelible example for all people, regardless of age, background, or gender. Featuring an esteemed panel of speakers specializing in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic scholarship, the lectures presented how modern and historical interpretations differ among faiths, how these perspectives are sometimes colored by societal views on gender, and how their example can be appreciated today. Notably, each of the events was structured to allow robust engagement between the speakers and the audience through an extended Question and Answer session. [Read more](#)

"Addressing Violence in the American Muslim Community" in Minneapolis, Mn.



For several years, KARAMAH has partnered with the Department of Justice to educate professionals on how best to serve survivors of domestic violence and abuse in the Muslim community. One part of this project is conducting in-person trainings for lawyers, judges, advocates, therapists and other service providers. This fall, KARAMAH traveled to Minneapolis October 7-9, to conduct this training. During the three days, KARAMAH spoke with, trained and did interactive exercises with lawyers, interfaith leaders, and advocates from around the country on cultural sensitivity, Islamic family law, and U.S. family law. Executive Director, Aisha Rahman, head of KARAMAH's Family Law Department and a litigator, discussed common misconceptions about Islam and Islamic law, legal remedies for immigrant victims, as well as practical skills for service providers to assess the services and barriers for Muslim victims. The training was designed to increase the knowledge and develop the skills of these advocates to better serve survivors and victims of domestic violence in Muslim communities.

Love Like the Prophet Series



Dr. Zainab Alwani Karamah Board Member and Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies at the Howard University School of Divinity

Meet Nadia, she's one of the lucky ones. After her horrific experience with domestic violence she at least had a green card that allowed her to work. Many of the women who call KARAMAH for assistance like Nadia did are not so lucky. That's why in October KARAMAH took the Prophet's message of love, mercy and equity to Muslim communities in DC, Maryland and Virginia.

KARAMAH's second annual Love Like the Prophet: Ending Domestic Violence in the Muslim Community series discussed the Prophet (PBUH)'s model of healthy families and successful methods to address domestic violence.

Love Like the Prophet's Kick-Off event took place at the community cornerstone, Busboys and Poets on 14th Street NW, which has a tradition of hosting justice movements. KARAMAH Board Chair Dr. Azizah al-Hibri and Executive Director Aisha Rahman spoke to a diverse audience about Islam's tradition of family love and equality.

The audience was especially moved by Nadia's courageous story. Her bravery contextualized the very real need to understand and promote the Prophetic (PBUH) tradition of healthy families.

The second Love Like the Prophet event took place at the Islamic Society of Frederick, Md. As the second year conducting this event in Frederick, the esteemed panel focused on higher-level education and action. Dr. Zainab Alwani, a member of KARAMAH's Board of Directors, presented on how Islamic scripture and the Prophet's example clearly reject family violence. Discussing specific passages and stories, Dr. Alwani tackled controversial interpretations and provided a religious roadmap for all Muslims on how to maintain a health family dynamic. [Read more.](#)





German Muslim Delegation Learns From KARAMAH

On October 1, KARAMAH staff conducted Islamic jurisprudence and legal advocacy trainings with a German delegation of young Muslim leaders. The diverse group spent a week in the U.S. through the Meridian International Center. They included lawyers, financial consultants, students, and political activists. The trainers were KARAMAH's former Research Director, Dr. Raja El Habti and Associate Director of Civil Rights Law, Awais Khaleel.

Dr. El Habti's presentation focused on Islamic law's value on religious pluralism and democracy, as well as a critique of non-specific states that practice or allow attacks on people of other faiths. She relied on assorted scriptural materials, discussing both Qur'anic passages and the Prophet (PBUH)'s example. Mr. Khaleel discussed KARAMAH's current civil rights work, and presented how religious law can harmoniously exist within a secular legal framework. He also detailed the status and narrative of Islamic law in the U.S., and how advocacy groups have played a key role in America's tradition of religious freedom and liberty. While different environments require nuanced consideration, Mr. Khaleel trained participants on tried-and-true advocacy methods that the German leaders can adopt in their home communities.

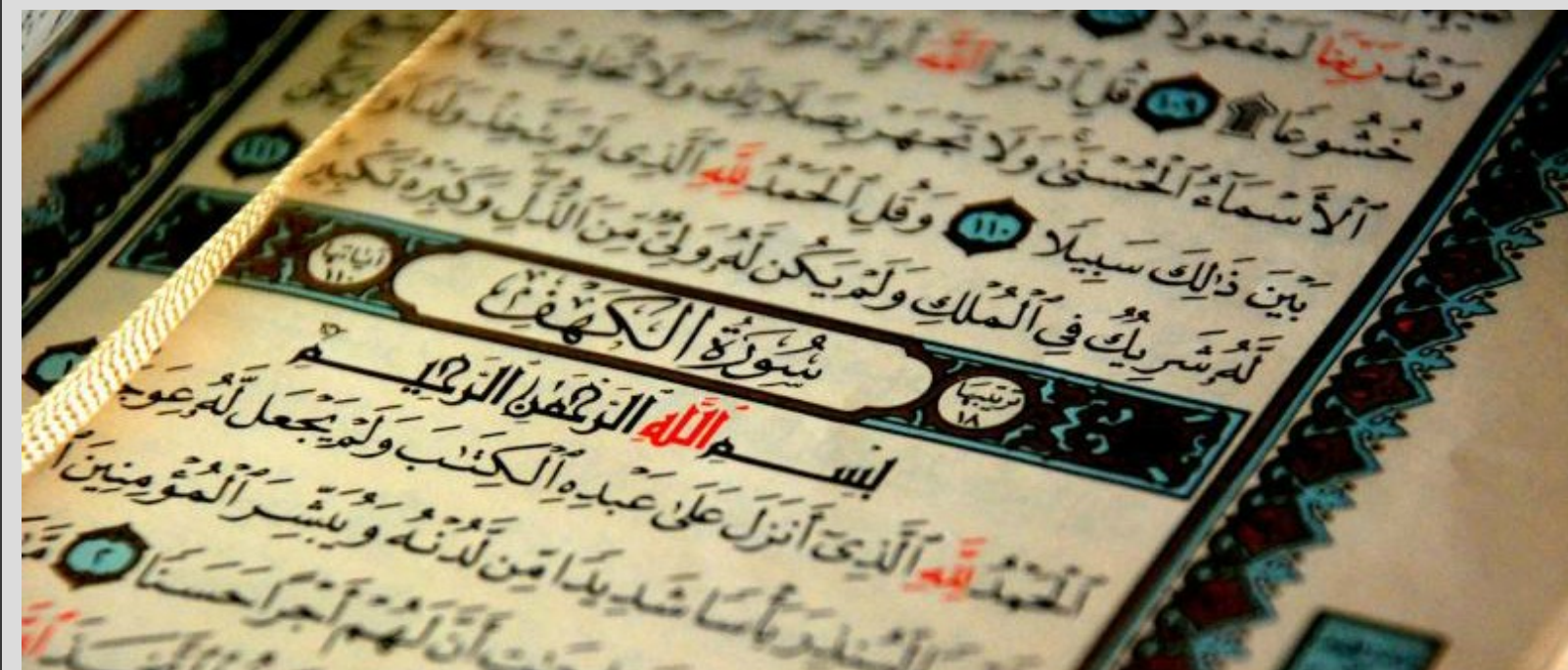


Department of Justice Inter Agency Meeting

Associate Director of Civil Rights Law and Programs, Awais Khaleel took KARAMAH's message of fairness and equity to the Department of Justice's (DoJ) federal interagency meeting December 14. Mr. Khaleel spoke on the federal government's need to address three pressing issues of paramount concern to KARAMAH.

First, Mr. Khaleel asserted the need for federal officials to intervene in the New York Police Department's invasive and discriminatory

surveillance tactics or Muslim and Arab Americans. As a representative from a broader coalition of civil rights organizations, KARAMAH resubmitted the coalition's letter requesting DoJ assistance and ensured circulation of the document with all meeting attendees. Department of Justice officials assured KARAMAH that the situation is being investigated, and all legal options remain on the table. [Read more](#)



Research

What Do We Have to Hide? The Islamic Principle of "Satr" and Cultural Bias

Many of the victims who reach out to KARAMAH face a serious dilemma. They are told by those around them that bringing such issues into the public eye violates the Islamic principle of satr. However, the popular understanding of the principle of satr in our community is loaded with cultural biases. It reduces the options of a victim into two equally unfair and unrealistic ones:

- * Obey God who ordered us Muslims to cover each other's shortcomings and flaws, and remain silent at the expense of the victim's safety and well being; or
- * Speak up and publicly denounce the perpetrator of the abuse, and hence disobey God and create fitnah (chaos and conflict) in the community.

This understanding shows no regard to victim's rights. In fact, it contributes to the problem by injecting it with an element of spiritual abuse. It forces the abused to abandon legitimate protections or feel deeply guilty for defying God. Furthermore, Muslim women who opt against the advice of some "well intentioned," "God fearing" relatives and friends, and publicly disclose the abuse or harassment, are often faced with hostility and pushed out of the community. [Read more](#)

-Upcoming Events-

Law and Leadership Summer Program 2014

Spend three weeks learning with other women from around the world about Islamic Jurisprudence, Leadership, and Conflict Resolution. "Fantastic", "Incredible", and "I'm so glad I came" are just a few of the ways LLSP Alum have described the experience. Meet friends for life as you delve deeper into the unique challenges facing Muslim women today, while, at the same time, emphasizing individual's talents and opportunities available to participants. Apply today. Deadline March 1. International applicants must apply early to expedite the visa process. LLSP will not be just three weeks of your life, it will be three weeks that will change your life. [Read more](#)

Black History Month Lecture Series

KARAMAH celebrates Black History with two lectures during the month. February 12, join us at the El Hibri Foundation 1420 16th Street as we Celebrate Black Women in Islam. Our presenters include KARAMAH Board Chair, Aisha Al Adawiya and leasha Prime, founder of Sisterhood in Action.

February 26, we take the series to the Islamic Heritage Museum, 2315 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE, 7:00 pm. Our theme is Making Malcolm X's legacy Real. Our panel will feature Khalil Shadeed, producer of the award winning program the Scholar's Chair, Dr. Jared Ball, author of A Lie of Reinvention: Correcting Manning Marable's Malcolm X and Okianer Dark, Dean of Howard University's Law School. Come early and get a good seat

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