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February/March 2014 Newsletter

Assalamu Alaykum!

With the close of the first quarter of 2014, I am reflective on the new strides and incredible growth that KARAMAH has had this year. We formally announced the launch of a new initiative at KARAMAH—we are now providing direct, legal services to victims of violence in family law matters. We also launched our civil rights campaign addressing how bullying, profiling and certain immigration policies adversely affect the core of the ummah—the Muslim family. Both of these efforts solidify KARAMAH's commitment to addressing the intersection of the rule of law, civil liberties and gender justice. I encourage you to join us in our work.

With April showers, and not snow, brings focus to our flagship Law and Leadership Summer Program. These next several weeks and months, KARAMAH will be selecting the class of 2014. KARAMAH is committed to affecting long term change in our society through education. We know that our communities will only grow and prosper if we have a true understanding of Islam and the rights of women and men within it. Moreover, we believe that our future leaders need not only be knowledgeable about faith, but they need to be savvy, professional, well spoken leaders who resolve conflict effectively and peacefully. It is for these reasons that we teach the curriculum we do at LLSP. I encourage you all to take this wonderful opportunity to apply today.

We look forward to hearing from you and wish you all a blessed spring.

Yours,

Aisha Rahman, Esq.
Executive Director

Empowerment Through Education: KARAMAH Presents at the UN CSW

KARAMAH traveled to the UN March 10, to educate the thousands of women and men convening at the annual Commission on the Status of Women on two topics: how education about Islam can economically empower women and how civil rights abuses are keeping Muslim women on the margins and denying their access to education.

Prevailing patriarchal culture and values have often



prevented Muslim women from being empowered. Before a standing room only audience, KARAMAH presented its first panel on women's economic empowerment through education of Islam. Judge Mohamed Ibrahim and Dr. Bushra Jabr presented case studies in Islamic history as well as modern examples of the many women who were economically empowered by Islam and were entrepreneurs in Islam's early history and today.

[Read more.](#)

"It's just a piece of scarf. It won't hurt anyone. I don't understand what they are afraid of," said 14 year old Khadiza in a video about the head scarf

ban in Belgium public schools. KARAMAH's second workshop presented a case of religious freedom in Belgium. A few years ago, the Flemish public school system began to implement a ban on Muslim girls head scarves in schools. This ban has now been implemented in all Flemish public schools in Belgium. So pervasive and insidious is the problem, that even while visiting a school, a Muslim woman has been denied entry because she was wearing a head scarf. KARAMAH EU produced a short video that describes what is happening to the women and girls.



Education for all?

[Read more.](#)

Working with Global Leaders to Affect Change for Women

KARAMAH is becoming a favorite stop for many international delegations. March brought Afghanistan and Libyan women delegations. The Libyan delegation including lawyers, civil service officers, researchers and leaders in the non-profit sector, had just concluded consultations at the UN Commission on the Status of Women as part of a panel March 14, entitled "Libya's Forgotten Women Speak Up". It was sponsored by The Libyan Forum for Civil Society, the Libyan Mission to the UN, and the UN Women. The principal goals of the delegation were sharing Libyan women's perspective on issues related to women and the latest developments in Libya and building



relationships to ensure further support in the future.



Earlier in March, KARAMAH's staff met with ten distinguished Afghan leaders through the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. The delegation, which included community leaders, attorneys, and judges were particularly interested in how KARAMAH uses legal activism (direct services, education, advocacy) and Islamic scholarship to promote human rights in the United States and worldwide. Among other topics, the delegation and KARAMAH staff discussed how correct understanding of Islamic jurisprudence can mitigate patriarchy and strengthen Muslim communities. At the delegation's prompting, KARAMAH staff also explained at

length how women's probate and family law rights under Islamic law can be protected through the U.S.

Social Justice in Theory and Practice: The Abrahamic Traditions

The issues of social justice continue to challenge people of faith. What needs to be done? Are we doing enough and how do we get more people involved? The Rumi Forum, dedicated to interfaith and intercultural understanding, held a panel discussion February 25, with three women of faith to address Social Justice in Theology and Practice: The Abrahamic Traditions.

The audience heard from Rabbi Batya Steinlauf, the Rev. Dr. Carol Flett and KARAMAH's Executive Director Aisha Rahman.



"At KARAMAH, we often lecture about the Islamic worldview. We look at Islam holistically-every action or belief is relevant to another. So if "adl" or "adalah," meaning justice, is a central tenet of Islam-it affects all our actions and beliefs as Muslims," she said.

"Justice is like the core of a wheel in Islam. From the core, there are many spokes. All spokes and the core are necessary to maintain the cosmic balance that God has created. If there is a threat to one component, you are putting the entire cosmos at risk. To explain this, there are several verses in the Qur'an that speak to the belief for justice in Islam."

[Read more](#)

KARAMAH Starts Pro Bono Legal Services



KARAMAH is excited to launch a direct legal services program for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, dating violence, and sexual assault. KARAMAH and its collaborative partner, Asian/Pacific Domestic Violence Resource Project, will provide free legal advice, safety planning, and social service resources to clients. Most importantly, KARAMAH will provide direct legal representation to domestic violence victims in court proceedings on issues of family law and related matters throughout the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Northern

Virginia areas. KARAMAH began providing direct legal services in March 2014. [Read more.](#)

KARAMAH Celebrates African American Muslim Women

What is it like being Muslim on a college campus when most are afraid or embarrassed to be Muslim? What is it like growing up in the Church of Christ and then hearing the "most beautiful sound," the call to prayer (adhan)? Who are the role models for young black women growing up Muslim? Those questions were answered and more as KARAMAH continued its mission to provide a platform for the voices of Muslim women to be heard.

On Wednesday March 19, women and men gathered at KARAMAH to celebrate

Women's History Month with presentations from three African American Muslim women. This event was originally scheduled during Black History to Celebrate the Lives of African American Muslim Women but was rescheduled due to inclement weather. [Read more.](#)



Law and Leadership Summer Program Alumna Spotlight

Meet Fatima Ahmed

She's a member of KARAMAH's LLSP Class of 2010. After completing the program and her undergraduate degree in Peace and Conflict Studies, from the University of Waterloo Fatima decided that instead of graduate school she would study the material easily accessible via portals like KARAMAH's resource centre.

While it was initially a challenge to find the discipline to study on her own, after three years of a hiatus she has found a strong push to re-prioritize her studies. Fatima is currently working as a district Organizational Development Advisor for BONASO (Botswana Organization of AIDS Service Organizations); her job has taken her to a small community in Gantsi, Botswana where the Muslim population is well under 30 individuals.



In spite of such a small community, the challenges and struggles that currently exist around women's access to the only mussala (prayer area) in town have been significant. Had it not been for Fatima's exposure to a program like LLSP, she would not have known that multiple legitimate opinions exist around many "controversial" issues, such as women's access to a mosque etc. Similarly, had she not been equipped with real knowledge, she may not have had the ability to engage community power-players in genuine dialogue on these topics, and may have unconsciously reverted to emotional conversations on these very topics.

While Fatima believes she still has a long way to go in getting even a basic grasp of these issues (she has yet to make her way through all the articles posted on KARAMAH's resource centre), attendance at the LLSP program was unquestionably significant in widening Fatima's focus when it came to her personal, professional and academic aspirations, as well as equipping her with tools and resources as she works to inform herself and her surrounding community on the expansiveness of Islamic discourse. Apply for LLSP, learn what Fatima learned, meet women from all around the world and more.

[Read more](#)

-Upcoming Events-

April

Town Hall on Anti Muslim Bullying
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
April 18, 2014

This event is part of KARAMAH's larger civil rights campaign, Muslim American Stories: A Series of Town Halls on Civil Rights and the Family. In addition to attending or watching the event (which will be live streamed on our website), you can contribute to the ongoing Social Media Town Hall by submitting your story. All Muslim Americans are encouraged to share their stories and experiences with anti-Muslim bullying, profiling, and immigrant discrimination.



Muslim American Stories Call for Submission

Join us in Ft. Lauderdale as KARAMAH tackles the problem of anti Muslim bullying in America. [Read more](#)

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 their 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 May 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.

[Donate](#)

Donate today to continue KARAMAH's work.