



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019

Highlights from the past year



# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporter,

For over 26 years, KARAMAH has been celebrating Muslim women every day. KARAMAH was founded in 1993. The name KARAMAH comes from the Qur'anic verse 17:70, which reads: "We have given dignity to the Children of Adam." This verse establishes the fact that human dignity is bestowed upon all human beings by God, regardless of gender. One of our founders, Dr. Azizah al-Hibri wanted to make this idea known, especially to Muslim women, and advance the view that Islam does not require a choice between human rights and faith. She wanted to create an organization to support the rights of Muslim women worldwide through education programs, scholarship on Islamic jurisprudence, and the development of a network of Muslim jurists and leaders.

Since 2003, KARAMAH has developed a set of intensive and highly-esteemed educational workshops in the U.S. and abroad. These programs offer a core set of courses about the gender-equitable principles of Islamic law, and help participants develop leadership and conflict resolution skills. The training aims to equip women with the tools necessary to make a beneficial difference from within their own communities as change agents. In addition to our educational programs, KARAMAH has built a network of Muslim women jurists, lawyers and leaders who contribute to gender-equitable Islamic legal scholarship.

In creating KARAMAH, our founders' foremost goal was to advance Muslim women's knowledge of their rights and to empower them in the march towards greater participation in their civil societies and the global community. What began in 1993 as a small group of dedicated individuals quickly grew into a vibrant and distinguished organization. Today we celebrate our accomplishments, our history as the first Muslim women-led organization, and continue every day to break barriers for the next generation of strong Muslim women.

Thank you for all of your support over the last 26 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rahmah A. Abdulaleem". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rahmah" being the most prominent part.

**Rahmah A. Abdulaleem, Esq.**

Executive Director

KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights

## STAFF

Rahmah A. Abdulaleem, Esq., Executive Director

Ghada Ghazal, M.A., Associate Director of Research

Dr. Amr Abdalla, Ph.D., Senior Fellow - Conflict Resolution

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# KARAMAH GROUP PRESENTATIONS

On January 11, 2019, Rahmah Abdulaleem, Executive Director of KARAMAH, presented on KARAMAH's work in the American Muslim Community to students from Centre College as part of their coursework and travels learning about Muslims in the United States. Ms. Abdulaleem discussed the importance of understanding that culture is the dynamic interplay of many different factors, as well as its relevance in our daily lives. KARAMAH is working to spread the message that while cultural information can be very helpful in improving communication and effectiveness, such information is to be used only as a template to provide insight. It should not be a predictor of the values/behaviors of any particular individual. Cultural competency is an area in which KARAMAH is proud to be on the front lines of dealing with the misinformation and bias affecting the Muslim community worldwide.



On March 12, 2019, the Executive Director of KARAMAH, Rahmah Abdulaleem, spoke at the International Visitor Leadership Program: Saudi Delegation. The focus of the conversation revolved around gender equity and differentiated between gender equity and gender equality. KARAMAH's core objective is the empowerment of Muslim women, as well as the broader Muslim community, through education and development programs.

# UDC MUSLIM LAW SYMPOSIUM

In February, KARAMAH attended the Second Annual Muslim Law Symposium, entitled “Our Forgotten Community: Prisoners’ Rights and Religious Freedom,” hosted by the Muslim Law Student Association of the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law (UDC Law). The event focused on the right of Muslim prisoners to freely exercise their religion without interference. KARAMAH’s Executive Director, Rahmah Abdulaleem, spoke on the matter of “Collateral Consequences and Reentry Challenges” in the second plenary panel of the day focusing on issues related to women and girls in the prison system. During the symposium, other distinguished speakers discussed this vital issue including Khaled Beydoun, Senior Affiliated Faculty at the UC-Berkeley Islamophobia Research & Documentation Project, and Lena Masri, the National Litigation Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, as well as a Central Park Five exoneree, Dr. Yusef Salaam.

The event was held just days before the U.S. Supreme Court allowed Alabama to undergo the execution of Domineque Ray without the presence of his Imam on February 7. The symposium reaffirmed KARAMAH’s commitment to join the discussion over such pressing matters concerning human rights and religious freedom, especially for those unable to properly advocate for themselves.





## UN CSW PRESENTATION ON ANGELS HADITH

In March, KARAMAH's Executive Director, Rahmah Abdulaleem and Associate Director of Research, Ghada Ghazal, presented at a parallel event for the UN's 63rd Session on the Commission on the Status of Women. They presented the second paper from KARAMAH's "Debunking the Myth" series entitled "Debunking the Myth: Angels Hadith." KARAMAH's paper built on the CSW's priority theme on gender equality. The parallel event addressed an issue of specific concern to Muslim women who may be unjustly expected to accede to their husband's sexual demands so as to avoid being cursed by angels. Such anxieties stem from a grave, yet common misunderstanding of the religious readings perpetuated by centuries of patriarchal interpretations. KARAMAH continues to educate women from around the world on the gender-equitable foundations of Islam.



# DALLAS WEEKEND INSTITUTE

In celebration of International Women's Day, KARAMAH conducted a Weekend Institute of Law, Leadership, and Conflict Resolution on March 2-3rd in Dallas, Texas. The Texas Muslim Women's Foundation hosted the Weekend Institute. Our 2017 Executive Session LLSP alumna, Hind Jarrah, Ph.D. is the Executive Director the Texas Muslim Women's Foundation and was instrumental in bringing KARAMAH to Texas to help us spread our gender equitable Islamic scholarship. Dr. Azizah al-Hibri was the keynote speaker at the luncheon held during the event. KARAMAH travels throughout the United States and the world to spread our message of dignity for all.



# WORLD CONGRESS IN SWITZERLAND

On July 9th, Dr. Azizah al-Hibri gave a lecture at the biannual World Congress of Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy. The World Congress was organised in Lucerne, Switzerland by the IVR, the International Association of the Philosophy of Law and Legal Philosophy and a consortium of the major Swiss Universities. Dr. al-Hibri received the invitation to speak at this prestigious event which brought together approximately 900 scholars from around the world to speak on the foundations of human rights with a focus on human dignity. As our name KARAMAH indicates, we are passionate about opportunities to talk about the inherent dignity of all human beings.



# CRITICAL RACE THEORY CONFERENCE AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

In April, KARAMAH's President Saleema Snow presented on a panel at the First Annual Critical Race Theory Conference at Harvard Law School. She was also joined by KARAMAH Board Member, as well as Harvard Law Alumna, Raheemah Abdulaleem. The topic of the discussion focused on civil rights. The history of Critical Race Theory began when students wished for substantive education on the topic of civil rights and prejudice, which the school fell short on, so the students created their own alternative courses. Conference sessions included (1) CRT: Origins, Developments, and Futures; (2) The Alternative Course: Reclaiming Student Organizing, Power, and Action; (3) Models of Effective Movement Lawyering for Racial Liberation; (4) An Abolitionist #MeToo Movement: Approaches to Anti-carceral Anti-violence Advocacy; (5) Scaling Movement Lawyering with(out) Critical Race Theory; and (6) Various workshops with scholars, activists, and movement lawyers. KARAMAH continues to work in all areas that pertain to human rights including the vital area of civil rights.







# MOROCCO DELEGATION OF IMAMS

In April 2019, at the invitation of the Kingdom of Morocco's Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs, KARAMAH convened a delegation of Imams to travel to Morocco. The Delegation of Imams included both established and up-and-coming Imams from the African American Muslim Community in the United States. KARAMAH's Founder, Dr. Azizah al-Hibri, led the delegation and KARAMAH's President, Saleema Snow and Executive Director, Rahmah Abdulaleem, also participated in the trip to Morocco. The Imams had the opportunity to visit multiple schools and universities to observe the rigor and depth of the religious education in the Kingdom of Morocco.

## MOROCCO DELEGATION OF IMAMS





# PROMOTING INTRA-MUSLIM DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA

In April, Dr. Amr Abdalla, Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution at KARAMAH, led the facilitation of the National Conference on Promoting Intra-Muslim Dialogue in Nigeria. This is only one component of the project, Achieving National Stability Through Intra-Religious Dialogue in Nigeria. This was implemented by the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) of Nigeria. The conference addresses many issues of urgent national importance, these include: causes and dynamics of Intra-Muslim community conflicts; causes and dynamics of community needs and interests; Intra-Muslim engagement and dialogue on these issues; and others. The conference included over fifty Islamic scholars and religious leaders drawn from both the Sunni and Shi'a communities.

KARAMAH is dedicated to equipping Muslims from around the world with a better capacity for dialogue and effective engagement with community issues. The conference and the interaction within it illustrated that Intra-Muslim dialogue is needed to both address ongoing jurisprudential issues as well as community needs and interests. KARAMAH is on the front lines dealing with these critical issues affecting the Muslim community worldwide.



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN BEIRUT

On May 22-23, Dr. Amr Abdalla, KARAMAH's Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution participated as an international expert in a workshop conducted in Beirut by the Lebanese government's task force on preventing violent extremism. The workshop was part of the process undertaken to develop and implement the National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism. It focused on Pillar 06 of the strategy: Education, Training and Skills Development. Representatives of the government, international organizations, educational institutions and civil society participated in the workshop to produce action plans around the strategy's recommendations. Dr. Abdalla presented on educational models to prevent violent extremism in different parts of the world. He also supported facilitators and small groups with his expertise on the topic. "Excellent vision and process with participation from all pertinent agencies, groups and youth," commented Dr. Abdalla on the workshop.





## MASJID IFTAR

In May 2019, during Ramadan, KARAMAH sponsored a community Iftar at Masjid Muhammad in Washington, DC. One of Ramadan's greatest blessings is the gift of community, in which Muslims and non-Muslims from all walks of life come together during the holy month to eat, laugh and indulge in the company of old friends and new faces alike. The Iftar provided an opportunity for people to connect with members of the D.C. Muslim community as well with KARAMAH's work and mission. In sponsoring community Iftar events such as these, KARAMAH hopes to increase the scope of its reach by disseminating the message of equality and justice in Islam while simultaneously promoting greater cohesiveness within the Islamic community at large.



# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CENTER PANEL

On June 7th, Rahmah Abdulaleem, Executive Director of KARAMAH, presented on the Community Talkback Panel at the Knight Conference Center. She spoke for the “Disrupt the Narrative” program, on the topic of “Centering African American Voices on Religious Freedom at the Religious Freedom Center.” This program was a multi-day, second phase in a series of public events that intended to explore the politics of civil rights and religious freedom through the center’s “Religious Freedom: African American Perspectives” project



# 17TH ANNUAL LLSP

KARAMAH held its 17th annual Law and Leadership Summer Program (LLSP) from June 17th - July 5th, in Washington, DC. KARAMAH's mission has been to give women tools to strengthen their academic and leadership skills while creating lifelong friendships and connections with leaders in DC. KARAMAH hosted 35 Muslim women who attended the program. These women got to hear lectures from speakers such as: Dr. al-Hibri, Dean Okianer Dark, Sara Omar, Saleema Snow, Farhan Latif, Brenda Abdelall, and many more. This flagship program covered a variety of topics including: "The Islamic Worldview", "Leadership Theory and Leadership Style", Islamic Jurisprudence, Leadership Skills, "The Islamic Marriage Contract,"



"The Laws of Divorce," and many more.

The LLSP program consists of two sessions: the Executive and the General. The Executive session is only a week long. It is geared towards mid-career professionals who are unable to take as much time away from their home and work lives but would still like to take part in the program. For some, this program aided in reinforcing their faith in the beauty of Islam, for others, rediscovering

it. The religion of Islam has been persistently hijacked by a variety of its adversaries including terrorists and misogynists, and LLSP helps to reclaim it. There was substantial knowledge delivered by the lawyers, professors, deans, Imams, and Islamic scholars debunking myths about Islam and Shari'a, and educating these women on their rights. LLSP successfully cultivated an environment where Muslim women could feel safe and express their beliefs and ideas freely.

The participants embodied diversity in every sense of the word, in terms of race, nationality, regional, academic and career backgrounds, as well as age. With no specific target age, KARAMAH's LLSP contained candidates ranging from ages 17 to 65. KARAMAH does not have an age range requirement because we believe participants gain a wealth of information from the diversity of generations present in the classroom. The age of this year's candidates range from 17 to 65 years old.

KARAMAH is thrilled to announce that the organization will be conducting the 18th LLSP in 2020 from June 22nd to July 10th, and are currently accepting applications.



## 17TH ANNUAL LLSP







## SUPREME COURT SWEARING IN CEREMONY

On October 16, 2019, KARAMAH returned to the Supreme Court! KARAMAH has a long history with Supreme Court: from the meeting with Supreme Court Justices to resolving the Frieze dispute to submitting amicus briefs on issues of vital importance to Muslims and non-Muslims. We are happy to continue to broaden the diversity of the Supreme Court Bar by adding five new Muslim members. In collaboration with the Capital Area Muslim Bar Association, this inaugural class was inducted. In front of all nine of the Supreme Court Justices, KARAMAH Board Member Raheemah Abdulaleem moved for the admission to the Supreme Court Bar of the five new members. Hearing the Muslim names spoken eloquently by Ms. Abdulaleem and having the five new members on the very front row brought a special excitement to the courtroom.

The five new Supreme Court Bar members are: Rahmah Abdulaleem, Executive Director of KARAMAH; Saifuddin Kalowala, Secretary of Capital Area Muslim Bar Association; Ameenah Karim-Capers, 2017 Alumnae of KARAMAH's Law and Leadership Summer Program; Juvaria Khan, 2019 President of Capital Area Muslim Bar Association; Fatema Merchant, 2018 President of Capital Area Muslim Bar Association, and former intern of KARAMAH.

All five new members are active in the legal community in the Washington DC area. KARAMAH looks forward to this becoming an annual event to continue to increase the diversity Supreme Court Bar and to continue to show the world that there are Muslim lawyers fighting for social justice.

# KARAMAH IN ASIA

This Fall, KARAMAH's Founder Dr. Azizah al-Hibri visited Singapore and the Philippines. On October 7-8, Dr. al-Hibri was in Singapore at the invitation of the Office of the Mufti of Singapore, whose office had organized a symposium on family law. She was asked to speak at a symposium on family law that had been organized by the Office of the Mufti of Singapore. On the first day, Dr. al-Hibri spoke on "Reading the Classical Tradition in Muslim Family Law" which followed right after the Mufti's remarks. On the second day, Dr. al-Hibri led a workshop on "Interpreting Muslim Family Law in the Context of Contemporary Societies." One of the main organizers of the symposium was Nurhanna Binte Irwan, an alumnae of our March 2018 Philippine Institute.

On October 9-10, Dr. al-Hibri was in the Philippines lecturing at the Law School of the University of the Philippines. The Law School invited male and female leaders from the Mindanao autonomous region to attend a conference on family law. Mindanao had been recently declared by President Duterte a Moro nation (Bangsamoro) governed by its own Shari'a laws. Dr. al-Hibri was invited to lecture to this audience on important matters of concern to them. Her lectures were building on previous lectures she had presented in the



Philippines over the past several years. On the first day, Dr. al-Hibri gave a lecture limited to women who were judges, professors, and women activists from the region of Mindanao. Their main concern was developing a legal mechanism, consistent with Islamic law, that would allow families to take into their homes orphans who were casualties of the vicious ISIS attacks on the city of Marawi in Mindanao the previous year. Dr. al-Hibri explained to the audience the Islamic laws on adoption and fostering, and what sort of amendments to Philippine's laws of adoption were necessary to provide options consistent with Islamic law. At the end of her presentation, Dr. al-Hibri and the women leaders were able to develop a legal proposal based on the Islamic concept of Kafalah. On the second day, Dr. al-Hibri met with both male and female representatives and leaders from Mindanao, and spoke to them about gender equity. This Asia trip by Dr. al-Hibri reinforced KARAMAH's vision of education Muslims around the world on gender equity in Islam.



# KARAMAH WELCOMES FOUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS IN 2020

Our new members include LLSP alumnae, an attorney, an Islamic jurist, a certified public accountant, and a storyteller. We look forward to working together with the new members of our board of Directors to take KARAMAH to the next level in 2020.



**SALMA HASAN ALI, MA**



**DR. ZAINAB ALWANI, PH.D.**



**NAURIN KHALIQ, CPA**



**NOHA MOUSTAFA, ESQ.**



## HISTORY OF KARAMAH

Over 25 years ago, three Muslim women lawyers sat together in a Manhattan coffee shop. They were all disappointed in the way that Islam was portrayed in the public square, particularly as it related to women. Immigrating from different Muslim countries, they knew that the Islam they knew and practiced was not being discussed, taught, or written about in the U.S. So they formed KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights.

KARAMAH was incorporated in 1993 by Dr. Azizah al-Hibri. The name KARAMAH, which means “dignity” in Arabic, comes from the Qur’anic verse 17:70 which reads: “We have given dignity to the Children of Adam.” This verse establishes the fact that human dignity is bestowed upon all human beings by God, regardless of gender. Dr. al-Hibri wanted to make this idea known, especially to Muslim women, and advance the view that Islam doesn’t require a choice between human rights and faith.

In creating KARAMAH, Dr. al-Hibri’s foremost goal was to advance Muslim women’s knowledge of their rights and to empower them in the march towards greater participation in their civil societies and the global community.

Throughout the years, KARAMAH’s views on legal issues related to Islam have been solicited by various audiences, including branches of the U.S. and other governments, the media, academics, and a host of other human rights and grassroots organizations. Today, KARAMAH has a talented team based in Washington, D.C. focused on expanding both the educational programs and research endeavors in the U.S. and around the world.



LEARN MORE AT [KARAMAH.ORG](https://www.karamah.org)