

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful



Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations

**Ramadan 2010
Publicity Resource Kit**

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful



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Dear Imam, activist, community leader, committee, brother or sister:

As-Salamu 'Alaikum wa Rahmatullah. May the peace & mercy of God be upon you. This resource kit has been developed to assist your community in publicizing Ramadan events and activities. It is designed to provide you with the raw materials with which you can contact the media and, through them, people of other faiths in your area.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE KIT:

1. Read the “Ramadan Publicity Campaign Summary and Tips” provided in this kit. You will probably not achieve all these objectives, but the list will give you an idea of what is possible. Also study the “Talking Points” at the bottom of that page. These are the key points you will want to pass on to people of other faiths.
2. Photocopy pages such as “Ramadan Q&A” and “Islam in Canada - The Facts.” These pages can be distributed in the materials you send to the media and hand out at open houses. The announcement for Ramadan will be sent to national and regional media by CAIR-CAN, but the local communities should make contact with local media.
3. Re-type the “Media Advisory” and the “Public Service Announcement” on your group’s letterhead. If this is too difficult, you may just fill in the blanks on the originals and send them that way. This is not the best approach, but it is better than nothing.
4. Re-format and print copies of the Mosque Open House brochure for distribution at your Islamic center’s event.
5. Distribute your announcements to the media no later than **TWO WEEKS** before any event.
6. Make phone calls to follow up with editors, producers, talk show hosts, and so on.
7. Call CAIR-CAN if you have any questions, or if you do not understand any part of the Resource Kit.
8. Clip news articles and record TV items. Send **originals** of newspaper clips (please include the front page of the paper for our files) and clear video copies to CAIR-CAN. Your community may appear in CAIR-CAN's next publication or video production.



RAMADAN PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN SUMMARY AND TIPS

Objectives:

Newspapers (Each editor needs to be contacted individually by phone and fax or mail.)

- I. Feature article on Muslim community - Contact “Feature Editor” and “Religion Editor”
- II. Food section article on Ramadan recipes - Contact “Food Editor”
- III. Calendar items on open house and Eid prayers - Contact “Community Calendar Editor” and “Religion Calendar Editor”
- IV. Letters to the editor about true image of Canadian Muslims - Contact “Letters Editor”
- V. Opinion articles about stereotyping of Muslims - Contact “Editorial Page Editor”
- VI. Photograph of Eid prayers and/or Eid bazaar - Contact “City Desk” and “Photo Editor”

Television

- I. News package (approx. 1.5 minutes in length) about local Muslim community and Ramadan - Contact “News Assignment Editor”
- II. 30 second video item on Eid prayers/open house/bazaar - Contact “News Assignment Editor”
- III. Announcements at beginning of Ramadan and time of sunset each day - Contact “Meteorologists” and “Anchors”
- IV. Daily “Ramadan” announcements - Contact “Public Service Director”

Radio

- I. Talk show appearances by community leaders discussing Ramadan – Contact “Show Producer”
- II. Public Service Announcements (free announcements by radio station) of Ramadan activities - Contact “Public Service Director”

Schools

- I. Lectures on Ramadan in religion and social studies classes
- II. Bringing Eid treats to co-workers and classmates of Muslim students
- III. Requesting school administrators to allow Muslim students to take the first day of Eid off and adjust homework load

Libraries

- I. Reserve display cases for December and install a Ramadan display. (Also reserve for next year.) Include Islamic artifacts (Quran, textiles, cultural items), books on Islam, etc.
- II. Ask the children’s librarian to display Ramadan and Eid books during the month.
- III. Submit a Book Purchase Request at your local library for children’s books like *Zaki’s Ramadhan Fast*, *Magid Fasts for Ramadan*, *One Night*, etc. if your library does not own them. Requests are usually honored.

Hospitals


- I. Visiting Muslims who are ill
- II. Discussing Ramadan needs of Muslim patients with administrators

Other

- I. Delivery of iftar meals to the homeless and canned food drives for the needy

Messages or “Talking Points” to be Used When Communicating with People of Other Faiths

- Muslims are a growing and vital segment of Canadian society.
- Muslims are productive members of the society who contribute much to the general welfare.
- Islam is a belief system that has much to offer in terms of providing solutions to problems such as crime, drug abuse and family disintegration.
- Muslims are reaching out to people of other faiths to help them better understand the Islamic community in Canada.



Steps to Take:

1) Form a local committee to handle publicity for Ramadan activities. Make sure the committee has representatives from all local communities. Do not waste time and energy setting up a formal structure. Just choose a coordinator and include people who are willing to do the work.

2) This committee should have a name such as Windsor Ramadan Information Committee, etc.

3) Decide which activities your community will undertake. The main suggestions are:

- Moonsighting event
- Ramadan “Taste of Islam” open house at the Islamic Center
- Eid Bazaar
- Public lectures on Ramadan and Islamic solutions for societal problems
- School presentations by parents and students
- Iftars for the homeless
- Canned food drive
- Eid treats for non-Muslim classmates
- Fast-a-thon: to have other faith groups and non-faith groups share in your fast for a day and have iftaar together with, as an option, general information about Ramadaan and/or Islam at the Iftaar.

4) To publicize these events, modify the attached materials for your own organization’s use. Use these materials when contacting the people listed in the “objectives” section. To find the phone and fax numbers for these people, just call the media outlet in question and ask. Use your “talking points” whenever communicating with the media.

5) **TIMING** - Don’t wait until Ramadan to start calling faxing and mailing materials to the media. Calendar editors need at least two weeks lead time to publish an item. Feature editors and others need at least that long to develop and schedule stories. Public service announcements also need time to be approved and scheduled. Make initial contact as soon as you can and then follow up with phone calls to the same people a couple of days before each activity. When you make calls close to the day of any event, focus on the television news assignment editors and newspaper city and photo editors.

6) **IMPORTANT** - Make sure you send a copy of all your announcements and news releases to the Associated Press “Daybook” Editor at the Associated Press office in your area or in the nearest large city.

7) Clip copies of any news articles and tape any broadcast reports. Send copies of these to CAIR-CAN.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSLIM Fast of Ramadan begins August 11, 2010*
Fast offers opportunity to learn more about Islam and Muslims

(Ottawa, Canada – 11/08/2010) - On **August 11, 2010**,* the Muslim community in Canada and around the world will begin the month-long fast of Ramadan (rom-a-don). Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset. (To download CAIR-CAN's "RAMADAN 2010 MEDIA KIT," go to <http://www.caircan.ca>. The kit includes "Ramadan Facts," "Ramadan Q&A" and "Q&A about Islam and Canadian Muslims.")

The fast is performed to learn discipline, self-restraint and generosity, while obeying God's commandments. Fasting (along with the declaration of faith, daily prayers, charity, and pilgrimage to Mecca) is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. Because Ramadan is a lunar month, it begins about eleven days earlier each year. The end of Ramadan will be marked by communal prayers called "Eid ul-Fitr," or Feast of the Fast-Breaking, sometime on or around September 9, 2010.*

"The fast of Ramadan offers people of all faiths an opportunity to learn more about Islam and about the Islamic community in Canada," said Ihsaan Gardee, Executive Director of the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), an Ottawa-based, grassroots, human rights and civil liberties group.

The Quran, Islam's revealed text, states:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint...Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting..." (Chapter 2, verses 183 and 185)

There are an estimated 800 000 Muslims in Canada and some 1.2 billion worldwide.

-END-

* Because the beginning and end of Islamic lunar months depends on the sighting of the new moon and different communities use varying methods to determine this, the start and end dates for Ramadan may vary. For more exact information about start dates check with your local mosque.

CONTACT: Ihsaan Gardee at 613-254-9704. Email: info@caircanDOTca

RAMADAN FACTS

Who Must Fast?

- Fasting is compulsory for those who are mentally and physically fit, past the age of puberty, in a settled situation (not traveling), and are sure that such fasting is unlikely to cause real physical or mental injury.

Exemptions from Fasting (some exemptions are optional)

- Children under the age of puberty (young children are encouraged to fast as much as they are able.)
- People who are mentally incapacitated or not responsible for their actions
- The elderly
- The sick
- Travelers who are on journeys of more than about fifty miles
- Pregnant women and nursing mothers
- Women who are menstruating
- Those who are temporarily unable to fast must make up the missed days at another time or feed the poor.

Special Events

- During Ramadan there are special prayers, also called *taraweeh*, performed daily after the night time prayer, also called *isha* prayer.
- *Lailat ul-Qadr* (“Night of Power” or “Night of Destiny”) marks the anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. Muslims believe *Lailat ul-Qadr* is one of the last odd-numbered ten nights of Ramadan.

Traditional Practices

- Breaking the daily fast with a drink of milk and dates
- Reading the entire Quran during Ramadan
- Social visits to open the fast with a shared meal are encouraged.

Eid ul-Fitr (“Festival of Fast-Breaking”) Prayers at the End of Ramadan

- Eid begins with special morning prayers on the first day of *Shawwal*, the month following Ramadan on the Islamic lunar calendar.
- It is forbidden to perform an optional fast during *Eid* because it is a time for relaxation.
- During *Eid*, Muslims greet each other with the phrase “*taqabbalallah ta'atakum*,” or “may God accept your deeds” and “*Eid Mubarak*” (eed-moo-bar-ak), meaning “blessed *Eid*”

RAMADAN Q&A

Q: How did the fast during Ramadan become obligatory for Muslims?

A: The revelations from God to the Prophet Muhammad that would eventually be compiled as the Quran began during Ramadan in the year 610 CE, but the fast of Ramadan did not become a religious obligation for Muslims until the year 624 CE. The obligation to fast is explained in the second chapter of the Quran:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint... Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting...” (Chapter 2, verses 183 and 185)

Q: What do Muslims believe they gain from fasting?

A: One of the main benefits of Ramadan is an increased compassion for those in need of the necessities of life, a sense of self-purification and reflection, and a renewed focus on spirituality. Muslims also appreciate the feeling of togetherness shared by family and friends throughout the month. Perhaps the greatest practical benefit is the yearly lesson in self-restraint and discipline that can carry forward to other aspects of a Muslim's life such as work and education.

Q: Why does Ramadan begin on a different day each year?

A: Because Ramadan is a lunar month, it begins about eleven days earlier each year. Throughout a Muslim's lifetime, Ramadan will fall both during winter months, when the days are short, and summer months, when the days are long and the fast is more difficult. In this way, the difficulty of the fast is evenly distributed between Muslims living in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Q: What is *Lailat ul-Qadr*?

A: *Lailat ul-Qadr* (“Night of Power”) marks the anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. An entire chapter in the Quran deals with this night: *“We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: and what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by God's permission, on every errand. Peace! ... This until the rise of morn.”* (Chapter 97) Muslims believe *Lailat ul-Qadr* is one of the last odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

Q: Is it difficult to perform the fast in Canada?

A: In many ways, fasting in Canadian society is easier than fasting in areas where the climate is extremely hot. This year at least, the number of daylight hours will be less than when Ramadan occurs during the spring or summer. In Muslim countries, most people are observing the fast, so there are fewer temptations such as luncheon meetings, daytime celebrations and offers of food from friends. Many Canadian Muslims would prefer a daytime work shift during Ramadan so that they may break the fast with their families and attend evening prayers.

Q: How can non-Muslim co-workers and friends help someone who is fasting?

A: Employers, co-workers and teachers can help by understanding the significance of Ramadan and by showing a willingness to make minor allowances for its physical demands. Special consideration can be given to such things as requests for vacation time, the need for flexible early morning or evening work schedules and lighter homework assignments. It is also very important that Muslim workers and students be given time to attend *Eid* prayers at the end of Ramadan. *Eid* is as important to Muslims as Christmas and Yom Kippur are to Christians and Jews. A small token such as a card (there are *Eid* cards available from Muslim bookstores) or baked goods given to a Muslim co-worker during *Eid ul-Fitr* would also be greatly appreciated. Hospital workers should be aware that injections and oral medications might break the fast. Patients should be given the opportunity to decide whether or not their condition exempts them from fasting.

Q: Do people normally lose weight during Ramadan?

A: Some people do lose weight, but others may not. It is recommended that meals eaten during Ramadan be light, but most people can't resist sampling special sweets and foods associated with Ramadan.

Q&A ABOUT ISLAM AND CANADIAN MUSLIMS

Q: What is Islam?

A: Islam is not a new religion. It is the same truth that God revealed to all His prophets (Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, etc.) throughout history. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness. Islam means “one who submits to God”, and the word Muslim is the participle of the same verb.

Q: Who are Muslims and what do they believe?

A: Muslims believe in One, Unique, and Incomparable God, creator of the universe. They believe in the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. God’s eternal message was reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on them all). One becomes a Muslim by saying, “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. There are an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide. No more than 20 percent of Muslims live in the Arabic-speaking world. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia, with large communities found also in China, and Russia.

Q: What is the Quran?

A: The Quran is the record of the exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions. The text of the Quran was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet. The 114 chapters of the Quran have remained unchanged through the centuries. Translations of the meaning of the Quran exist in almost all languages.

Q: What are the “Five Pillars” of Islam?

A: 1) The Declaration of Faith - This consists of the two sentence declaration described above.

2) Prayer - Muslims perform five obligatory prayers each day. Islamic prayers are a direct link between the worshiper and God. 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 capital. 4) Fasting - Every year in the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from first light until sunset. The fast is another method of self-purification. 5) Pilgrimage - A pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, is an obligation for those who are physically or financially able.

Q: What about the Canadian Muslim community?

A: There are an estimated 800 000 Muslims in Canada. The Muslim community in Canada is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins. Muslims are active in all walks of life. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions around the world.

Q: What about Muslim women?

A: Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education and otherwise take part in community life. Men and women are to be respected equally. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to both women and men equally. (Men cannot expose certain parts of their bodies, wear gold or silk, etc.) If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it.

Q: What is *Jihad*?

A: *Jihad* does not mean “holy war.” Literally, *jihad* means to strive, struggle 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.

ISLAM IN CANADA --- THE FACTS

Fact 1

There were an estimated 842 000 Muslims in Canada in 2006. The Muslim community in Canada is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins.

Fact 2

The worldwide population of Muslims is 1.2 billion and growing.

Fact 3

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions around the world.

Fact 5

Demographers also say that by the year 2025, one in four people on earth will be a Muslim.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Allah - Allah is the Arabic word for “God.” It is the same word Arabic-speaking Christians use when referring to God. Allah is not the “Muslim God,” but is the same God worshipped by Christian and Jewish faiths.

Fundamentalist - Muslims view the label “fundamentalist” as stereotypical and ill defined. Muslims also object to the use of terms such as “radical” and “extremist.” These terms lack definition and are seen as pejorative. More neutral and objective terms include “Islamist” or “Islamic activist.” If the person in question is involved in a criminal act, name that act, not the faith of the person who commits the crime.

Jihad - *Jihad* does not mean “holy war.” Literally, *jihad* means to strive, struggle 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. The equivalent of the term “holy war” in Arabic is *harb muqaddasah*, a term that cannot be found in the Quran or the Prophet’s sayings (*hadith*). There is no such thing as “holy war” in Islam, as some careless translators may imply. It is rather a loaded medieval concept that did not arise from within the Muslim community. Because of this myth’s frequent repetition, most people in the West accept it as if it were a fact.

Black Muslims - This term, first used to describe the followers of the late Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam, is no longer accurate when used to describe African-American Muslims. Minister Louis Farrakhan does not represent the Muslim community in America.

Muslim/Arab - Not all Muslims are Arab, just as not all Arabs are Muslim. In fact, Arabs are a minority within the Islamic world. According to modern usage, “Arab” is a linguistic, not an ethnic, designation. An Arab can be Christian or Jewish.

Women’s Rights - Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education and otherwise take part in community life. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to women and men equally. (Men cannot expose certain parts of their bodies, wear gold or silk, etc.) If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it.

Arabic Names - Compound Arabic last names, such as “Abd Al-Wahid,” which often refer to attributes of God, should be used in full on second reference. If the second reference referred to “Al-Wahid,” that person would be taking on an attribute of God (“the One”), something a Muslim would abhor.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

----- **MEDIA ADVISORY** -----

**CANADIAN MUSLIMS CELEBRATE END OF
RAMADAN FAST WITH COMMUNAL PRAYERS**

What: On **September 9, 2010*** (date may vary, see below), the Muslim community in Canada will celebrate the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with communal prayers in locations around the country. Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset.

The prayers mark the beginning of the *Eid ul-Fitr* (eed-al-fitter), or “feast of fast breaking” holiday, in which Muslims exchange social visits and seek to strengthen bonds of brotherhood in the community. During this holiday, Muslims greet each other by saying “*Eid mubarak*” (eed-moo-bar-ak), meaning “blessed *Eid*,” and “*taqabbalallah ta'atakum*,” or “may God accept your deeds.” Many communities hold bazaars following the prayers.

(**Note** - *Eid ul-Fitr* is the first of the two major Muslim holidays. The second holiday comes at the end of the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. Demographers say Islam is one of the fastest growing religions around the world. There are an estimated 800 000 Muslims in Canada and some 1.2 billion worldwide.)

When: **September 9, 2010** (*Because Ramadan is a lunar month, the actual date is governed by sighting of the new moon. The exact date for *Eid* may vary.) Prayers are held early in the morning. Ask local coordinators for exact dates and times.

Where: The Eid prayers are held either in local mosques or in public facilities designed to accommodate large gatherings. Call local community representatives for details.

Contact: Call local Muslim organizations for details about *Eid* celebrations. If there are no known contacts in local communities, call CAIR-CAN at 613-254-9704 to obtain phone numbers.

Photo Opportunity: Each year, Muslims from Canada and many different countries come to the prayers in colorful dress. The prayers themselves are quite visual, with worshipers arranged in neat rows and bowing in prayer in unison. Participants exchange embraces at the conclusion of the prayers.

Note: Because this is a religious service, reporters and photographers of both sexes should dress modestly. That means no shorts for men or short skirts for women. Some communities may ask female reporters and photographers to put a scarf over their hair while in the actual prayer area. Photographers should arrive early to get into position for the best shots. Photographers are also advised not to step directly in front of worshipers and to seek permission for close-up shots. Shots of shoes removed for prayer, and rear-angle shots of prostrating worshipers are considered inappropriate.

* Because the beginning and end of Islamic lunar months depends on the sighting of the new moon and different communities use varying methods to determine this, the start and end dates for Ramadan may vary. Check with your local mosque to find out when they are celebrating.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

(Insert Your Local Organization Name and Address Here)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

----- **MEDIA ADVISORY** -----

**Local Muslims Celebrate End of Month-Long Fast
with Prayers and Multicultural Bazaar**

What: On September 9, 2010 (date may vary*), the Muslim community in _____ will celebrate the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with communal prayers and a multicultural bazaar. Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break-of-dawn to sunset.

The prayers mark the beginning of the three-day *Eid ul-Fitr* (eed-al-fitter) holiday, in which Muslims exchange social visits and seek to strengthen bonds of brotherhood in the community. During this holiday, Muslims greet each other by saying “*Eid mubarak*” (eed-moo-bar-ak), or “blessed Eid.”

The multicultural bazaar will feature games for children, Islamic books and clothing, and foods from around the Muslim world. The bazaar is free and open to the public. People of all faiths are encouraged to attend and sample the diversity of Islamic culture. (**Note** - Islam is one of the fastest growing religions around the world. There are _____ Muslims in _____ and some 1.2 billion worldwide.)

When: **September 9, 2010 (*date may vary)**

Community gathers at ____ a.m.

Prayers begin at ____ a.m.

Bazaar opens at ____ a.m. and lasts until ____ p.m.

Where: Prayers - Address:

Bazaar - Address:

Contact: For more information, call _____ at _____ (not for _____ publication), or call _____ at _____ (for publication).

Photo Opportunity: Each year, Muslims from Canada and many different countries come to the prayers in the colorful dress. The prayers themselves are quite visual, with worshipers arranged in neat rows and bowing in prayer in unison. Participants exchange embraces at the conclusion of the prayers.

Note: Because this is a religious service, reporters and photographers of both sexes should dress modestly. That means no shorts for men or short skirts for women. Some communities may ask female reporters and photographers to put a scarf over their hair while in the actual prayer area. Photographers should arrive early to get into position for the best shots. Photographers are also advised not to step directly in front of worshipers and to seek permission for close-up shots. Shots of shoes removed for prayer, and rear-angle shots of prostrating worshipers are considered inappropriate.

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- END -

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
(Insert Your Local Organization Name and Address Here)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

--- **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT** ---

Local Muslim Community Holds Mosque Open House
“A Taste of Islam” organizers seek to increase understanding between faiths

What: On _____, September ____, the Muslim community in _____ will hold an open house offering people of other faiths an introduction to Islamic culture. The free event, called “**A TASTE OF ISLAM,**” will feature displays of Islamic handicrafts, clothing and books as well as samples of foods from around the Muslim world. The open house is designed to help people of all faiths gain a better understanding of the positive role Islam can play in Canadian society.

Demographers now say Islam is the fastest growing religion around the world. There are _____ Muslims in _____ and some 1.2 billion worldwide.)

When: _____, **September** ____
6-9 p.m.

Where: Location:
Address:
Directions:

Contact: For more information, call _____.

-END-



Sample Script for Phone Conversations with the Media

You are speaking to receptionist at newspaper:

“HELLO...COULD I HAVE THE NAME AND DIRECT PHONE NUMBER OF THE FOOD EDITOR (OR RELIGION EDITOR, ASSIGNMENT EDITOR, ETC.)?”

Operator:

“YES THE FOOD EDITOR’S NAME IS MARY SMITH...HER DIRECT LINE IS 543-1234...WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO CONNECT YOU?”

You:

“YES”

Food Editor:

“THIS IS MARY SMITH...”

You:

“YES...MY NAME IS ANISA ABDULLAH...I AM A MEMBER OF THE TORONTO RAMADAN INFORMATION COMMITTEE...OUR COMMITTEE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN DOING A STORY ABOUT THE SPECIAL FOODS MUSLIMS ENJOY DURING THE UPCOMING MONTH OF RAMADAN...ARE YOU AWARE OF WHAT RAMADAN IS?”

Food Editor:

“YES...I KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT THE FAST OF RAMADAN AND MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN DOING SOMETHING WITH IT...CAN YOU SEND ME SOME INFORMATION?”

You:

“YES...I HAVE FACT SHEETS AND BACKGROUND MATERIAL DEALING WITH RAMADAN...I CAN ALSO PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WHO COULD PROVIDE RECIPES FOR RAMADAN SPECIALTIES FROM AROUND THE MUSLIM WORLD.”

Food Editor:

“THAT’S GREAT...SEND ME THE MATERIAL AND I’LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO”


You:

“I’LL SEND IT OUT TODAY...OR I COULD FAX IT TO YOU IF YOU WOULD PREFER...I’LL ALSO CALL BACK IN ABOUT A WEEK TO SEE WHAT YOU THINK OF THE MATERIALS...”



STEPS NECESSARY TO HOLD A MOSQUE OPEN HOUSE

1. **PREPARE** the members of your local community by explaining the necessity of building a positive image of the mosque in the surrounding area. Let them know that experience of other communities has shown that a positive neighborhood image offers many benefits. Ask for input concerning the details of when and at what time the open house should be held. There are no hard and fast rules for such things.
2. **INVITE** local community leaders, clergy, law enforcement officials, activists, and government officials. Remember to invite the mayor, congressional representatives, the chief of police and members of the city council. These people should all receive written invitations. Follow up with a personal phone call. Letters are not enough.
3. **PUBLICIZE** the event by sending a well-written news release (see sample) to the local media. You may also place paid advertisements in the local newspaper. Send the news release to the religion calendar editor, the city editor and the feature editor at the newspaper. Send a release to the assignment editor at the local television stations. Also send copies to news directors at the local radio stations. Send announcements to local churches.
4. **INFORM** your guests of mosque etiquette before they arrive (see “Welcome to Our Mosque” brochure). This will make them feel at ease and avoid embarrassment. Be ready to answer questions about prayer, separation of men and women and other common issues.
5. **CLEAN** the mosque. The first impression is one that will last. Make sure bathrooms are spotless. Have a mosque clean up day prior to the open house. Consider touching up areas that need painting.
6. **SET UP** a reception area where guests are to be received, told about mosque etiquette and served refreshments. Have greeters at the door to direct arriving guests. Have knowledgeable people conduct tours of the facility. Do not leave guests alone to wander about the mosque. If liked, give each guest a nametag. Make sure sisters are available to make female guests feel welcome.
7. **PROVIDE** snacks and drinks to make your guests feel welcome. Serving a variety of ethnic dishes is an excellent introduction to the diversity of our community.
8. **SELECT** literature to be given to the guests. Avoid material with a strong political message. Do not push materials on guests. Let them select what they wish to read.
9. **POST** signs at appropriate locations in the facility to help guests find their way around. Many of them have never been to a mosque before.
10. **PRAY** that your efforts will open the hearts of your guests.



WELCOME TO OUR MOSQUE

We hope you enjoy your visit.

Q: WHAT IS A MOSQUE?

A: A mosque is a place of worship used by Muslims. The English word “mosque” is derived from its Arabic equivalent, *masjid*, which means “place of prostration.” It is in the mosque that Muslims perform their prayers, a part of which includes placing the forehead on the floor.

Q: HOW IS A MOSQUE USED?

A: Mosques play a vital role in the lives of Muslims in North America. The primary function of the mosque is to provide a place where Muslims may perform Islam’s obligatory five daily prayers as a congregation. A mosque also provides sufficient space in which to hold prayers on Fridays, the Muslim day of communal prayer, and on the two Muslim holidays, called *Eids*, or “festivals.”

Q: IS A MOSQUE A HOLY PLACE?

A: A mosque is a place that is specifically dedicated as a place of prayer. However, there is nothing sacred about the building or the place itself. There is no equivalent of an altar in a mosque. A Muslim may pray on any clean surface. Muslims often pray in public places.

Q: HOW BIG ARE MOSQUES?

A: In North America, mosques vary in size from tiny storefronts serving a handful of worshippers, to large Islamic centers that can accommodate thousands.

Q: DO MOSQUES WELCOME VISITORS?

A: Mosques in North America welcome visitors. Tours can be arranged at most facilities. It is always best to call mosque administrators before arrival. They will want to make sure your visit is enjoyable.

Q: WHAT ARE THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF A MOSQUE?

A: The *musalla*, or prayer hall, in each mosque is oriented in the direction of Mecca, toward which Muslims face during prayers. In North America, Muslim worshippers face northeast. Prayer halls are open and uncluttered to accommodate lines of worshippers who stand and bow in unison. There are no pews or chairs. Members of the congregation sit on the floor.

Because Muslim men and women form separate lines when they stand in prayers, some mosques will have a balcony reserved for the use of women. Other mosques will accommodate men and women in the same *musalla*, or they may have two separate areas for men and women.

Q: WHAT ELSE IS IN THE PRAYER AREA?

A: All mosques have some sort of *mihrab*, or niche, that indicates which wall of the mosque faces Mecca. The *mihrab* is often decorated with Arabic calligraphy. Its curved shape helps reflect the voice of the *imam*, or prayer leader, back toward the congregation. Many mosques also have a *minbar*, or pulpit, to the right of the *mihrab*. During the Friday prayer service, the *imam* delivers a sermon from the *minbar*.

Q: WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN IN THE PRAYER AREA?

A: Children will often be present during prayers, whether participating, watching or imitating the movements of their elders. Their presence continues the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, who behaved tenderly toward children. The Prophet sometimes carried one of his grandchildren on his shoulder while leading the prayer and was also known to shorten the prayer if he heard a baby cry.



Q: WHAT MIGHT I HEAR DURING MY VISIT?

A: You might hear Muslims exchanging the Islamic greeting, the Arabic phrase “*as-salaam alaykum*” (“peace be with you”). Muslims return this greeting by saying, “*wa alaykum as-salaam*” (“and with you be peace”).

You might also hear the call to prayer. The call, or *adhan*, contains the following phrases (in Arabic):

God is most great, God is most great.
God is most great, God is most great.
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that there is no god but God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God.
I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God.
Hasten to prayer, Hasten to prayer.
Hasten to success, Hasten to success.
God is most great, God is most great.
There is no god but [the One] God.

All Muslim prayers begin with recitation of *Al-Fatihah*, the opening chapter of the Qur’an:

In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.
Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.
The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.
Ruler of the Day of Judgment.
Only You do we worship, Only You we ask for help.
Show us the straight path.
The path of those whom You have favored,
not that of those who earn Your anger, nor those who go astray.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE BUILDING?

A: Many mosques have a minaret, the large tower used to issue the call to prayer five times each day. In North America, the minaret is largely decorative. Facilities to perform *wudu*, or ablutions, can be found in all mosques. Muslims wash their hands, faces and feet before prayers as a way to purify and prepare themselves to stand before God. *Wudu* facilities range from wash basins to specially designed areas with built-in benches, floor drains and faucets.

Bookshelves are found in most mosques. They contain works of Islamic philosophy, theology and law, as well as collections of the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Copies of the *Quran*, Islam’s revealed text, are always available to worshippers.

Calligraphy is used to decorate nearly every mosque. Arabic quotations from the *Quran* invite contemplation of the revealed Word of God. Other common features found in the mosque are clocks or schedules displaying the times of the five daily prayers and large rugs or carpets covering the *musalla* floor. Many Canadian mosques also have administrative offices.

Q: IS A MOSQUE USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR PRAYER?

A: Though its main function is as a place of prayer, the mosque plays a variety of roles, especially in North America. Many mosques are associated with Islamic schools and day care centers. Mosques also provide diverse services such as Sunday schools, Arabic classes, Quranic instruction, and youth activities.

Marriages and funerals, potluck dinners during the fasting month of *Ramadan*, and *Eid* prayers and carnivals are all to be found in North American mosques. They are also sites for interfaith dialogues and community activism.

Many mosques serve as recreational centers for the Muslim community and may have a gymnasium, game room and weight equipment, as well as a library and classrooms.



Q: DO MOSQUES HAVE SPECIAL RULES?

A: Men and women should always dress conservatively when visiting a mosque, covering their arms and legs. Examples of inappropriate clothing would be shorts for men and short skirts for women.

Shoes are always left at the entrance to the prayer area so as not to soil the rugs or carpets where prayers are performed. Shelves are usually provided to hold shoes. Women may be asked to cover their hair when visiting a mosque. Many mosques have scarves on hand for visitors to borrow, but it is better to bring a head covering in case none are available.

Visitors to mosques should behave as they would when visiting any religious institution, but they should feel free to ask questions about the mosque, its architecture, furnishings, and activities. Muslims are happy to answer questions about their religion.

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