



Awareness, Action and Advocacy on Hunger and Poverty During Ramadan

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Ramadan is the time to remember those who are less fortunate and an opportunity to reinforce the spiritual reason for fighting hunger and poverty. It is also an ideal time to educate the Muslim American community. The hungry and poor should be, and always are, emphasized in supplication during Ramadan *Taraweeh* prayers. As we experience hunger, the best way to follow that spiritual experience is through action on behalf of poor and hungry people. The following ideas can be intensified during Ramadan in the spirit of *zakat*.

Your Mosque or organization can hold an event highlighting the diverse issues related to hunger and poverty. These gatherings may include leaders of other faiths and members of their respective congregations which would allow non-Muslims an opportunity to visit during Ramadan. With minimal effort your mosque and others in your area can team up for fundraisers, food drives, advocacy efforts or direct feeding programs, which will make a considerable difference in the lives of people who are hungry and poor.

“They will ask you about almsgiving. Say, ‘Whatever you bestow in charity must go to parents and to kinsfolk, to the orphans and to the destitute and to the traveler in need. God is aware of whatever good you do.’”

– The Cow 2:215

Awareness: The Scope of Hunger

Global

- More than 850 million people in the world are hungry.
- Every five seconds a child dies from malnutrition and related causes.
- Poor nutrition and calorie deficiencies cause nearly one in three people to die prematurely or have disabilities.

Domestic

- In the United States, 12.4 million children live in households where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet. That means one in ten households in the U.S. are living with hunger or are at risk of hunger.
- 35 million people in America are threatened by hunger and 25 million depend on food banks and charities to have enough to eat.

Action

1.) Coordinate Food Pantry/Shelter Efforts. Your mosque can connect and coordinate its efforts with local charitable institutions that can guide your community to be as active and helpful as possible in your collective efforts to serve hungry and poor people. You will learn a great deal about your surrounding community and find that you can have a significant and lasting impact. [America's Second Harvest—the Nation's Food Bank Network](#) is the largest charitable hunger-relief organization, serving 25 million low-income hungry people in the U.S. To access free food for your charitable efforts and learn more about your local food bank, simply enter your zip code and approach your local food bank, or contact [Dennis Brown](#) at 800-771-2303.

2.) Join Islamic Relief's Humanitarian Day. Islamic Relief is one of the lead coordinators of [Humanitarian Day](#) and partners with various community organizations, since its inception in 2002. Thousands of volunteers across the nation will be in local neighborhoods on the *weekend of September 29-30, 2007*, to provide essential services to the homeless population, including distribution of clothes, blankets, hygiene kits, toys for children, and hot meals. In addition, beneficiaries will also be provided with health screenings and medical check-ups, as well as referrals to other social and health services.

Humanitarian Day exemplifies Islamic Relief's commitment to provide aid to communities and people in need right here in our own backyard, in addition to its projects overseas. The following cities will be taking part in Humanitarian Day 2007: Baltimore, Baton Rouge, Boston, Chicago Dallas, Detroit, Elizabeth, Fort Thompson, Houston, Kalamazoo, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Seattle and Washington DC. To learn more about Humanitarian Day, please contact [Christina Tobias-Nahi](#) at 202-347-0774.

3.) Organize Campus or Community Action. Thousands of Muslim American students have capitalized on their powerful positions as agents of change. They have been successful in galvanizing their communities to understand the needs and responses to the unjust realities of poverty and hunger that millions face at home and abroad. The Muslim Students Association (MSA) is organizing [Fast-a-thons](#) during Ramadan. This unique program challenges Muslims and non-Muslims alike to donate the money they would have spent on food that day to a food bank. Last year, more than 250 campuses participated in the nationwide program. The [Muslim Students Association](#) also created the National \$1 Campaign, which calls on all Muslim students to donate \$1 for orphaned children and quality healthcare for the underserved. Donations are given to Islamic Relief and UMMA clinic. For more information, contact their [national office](#) at 703-820-7900.

Other creative initiatives, such as "Takin' It To The Streets" an all-day music festival, carnival, and sports tournament hosted by the [Inner-City Muslim Action Network \(IMAN\)](#) in Chicago, demonstrate that people are open to unique charity events.

Advocacy

4.) **Write letters or e-mail to Members of Congress.** Communication with your Representatives or Senators is most effective if it is personalized and makes a specific request. Letters from constituents are potent tools of democracy and can have an impact on the political process, especially when received in numbers. Letters from individuals discussing the same issue will make an impression in your representative's office or on the pages of your local newspaper. Another way to make such efforts fruitful is if they are drawing attention to a specific event. For instance, your mosque can organize an interfaith hunger awareness event and invite the member to speak. A Christian organization that has been very effective in winning legislative changes for poor and hungry people is [Bread for the World](#). They have advocacy resources and materials for effective letter writing and ways to locate your respective political leaders. They are now working with interfaith efforts through the [Alliance to End Hunger](#). We welcome you to learn more about the possibilities of building strategic partnerships in building the public and political will to end hunger by contacting [Gabriel Laizer](#) at 800-822-7323.

5.) **Meet with your federal, state, or local elected officials.** When walking into the office of a representative your greatest opportunity for success comes when you work in coalitions. A Member of Congress or staff member will respond very positively to an Interfaith Lobby/Awareness Day that brings together constituents of varying faiths to talk about the importance they place on ensuring that their representative is attentive to the needs of hungry and poor people. It is important to show that you are looking for a sustained effort on the part of your elected officials. Political leaders are very concerned with what their voters think. The specific issues may be complicated, but speaking about them doesn't need to be. [RESULTS](#), a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization, has developed an [activist tool kit with specific instructions](#). They are focused on helping individuals exercise their personal and political power by lobbying elected officials for effective solutions and key policies that affect hunger and poverty. For further assistance, contact [Meredith Dodson](#) at (202) 783-7100.

“Do not tamper with the property of orphans, but strive to improve their lot until they reach maturity. Speak for justice, even if it affects your own kinsmen. Be true to the covenant of God.” –The Table 6:152

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