

Muslim Imams and Leaders Letter to the Community on the 2024 Elections

We are all heartbroken and in deep pain over the war in Gaza and the escalation in Lebanon. We stand with the global wide outcry to immediately stop the continued Genocide against the Palestinian people. The collective conscience, inherent soul, and sense of justice of all humanity is assaulted, disturbing the peace of all. We are all one in our frustration to the point of anger.

We are taught by our beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw) to “resist becoming angry” for it eats up goodness and overrides rational thinking. Our lives in these United States of America are not in a vacuum, and as such the election choices, the decisions that we make are not either. They don't just affect us, but all American citizens for years, maybe decades to come. We are to be future oriented, strategic, and rational rather than just focus on the present. Thus, it is an imperative that we elect leaders who have committed to a ceasefire, an independent Palestine, stabilizing our democracy and who stand with our community.

In assessing the candidates for President, for us it's not the lesser of two evils. For us, as people of faith, specifically as Muslims, it's the measure or estimate (**Qadar**) of the **Harm** (*Sharr or Darri*) and the **Benefit** (*Khayr or naf'ee*). When faced with a choice, we are expected to carefully assess the potential benefits and harm involved, prioritizing actions that bring better and minimize negative consequences. This was modelled in our beloved prophet's (pbuh) signing the unjust Treaty of al-Hudaybiya with the enemy. This was also integral to the thinking of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, the first Imam in America's history who, along with the great Muhammad Ali, promoted embracing our American and Muslim identity when he picked up the American flag and began engaging in interfaith relations. This was present-future oriented as both of which weren't popular at the time. But what's popular is not always right and what's right is not always popular. In our estimation, the present-future benefits of voting for Vice President Harris far outweighs the harms of the other options. Let's consider the broad picture in addition to the one in our immediate vision.

First, in fact, what is happening is not on her for she is not the President of these United States. Prior to serving in her current position, Vice President Harris has been regularly engaging with the Muslim community throughout her long and distinguished career. When Donald Trump passed the Muslim Ban, it was the then Senator Harris who filed a bill in the Senate seeking to provide access to legal counsel for our brothers and sisters caught in the Muslim Ban. Vice President Harris held the first Eid Al-Adha celebration in American history at her home, welcoming Muslim leaders from across America into her living room. This is beyond symbolism; it is an affirmation that Islam is an American religion.

When the war in Gaza began, she traveled and met with regional leaders and made clear that the U.S. would pursue a two-state solution, and what reconstruction of Gaza would look like, she also made clear that international humanitarian law must be respected. She stood on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, on hallowed ground for the civil rights warriors who fought for the Voting Rights Act. She was the first in the Administration to demand a ceasefire and she spoke about the devastating loss of life in Gaza and the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Just two months ago, when she met with Prime Minister Netanyahu, she held a press conference afterward and was clear as to her dismay with him and said she would not be silent about the suffering in Gaza. She has spoken with Palestinian Americans returning from Gaza, she has spoken with Palestinian Americans who have lost family in Gaza, she has met with doctors returning from medical missions in Gaza. She is a committed ceasefire candidate too and is the best option for ending the bloodshed in Gaza and now Lebanon.

Our community is in pain, but we must also remember that we cannot allow our country to return to Jim Crow America, this is not a reality our community can afford. Knowingly enabling someone like Donald Trump to return to office, whether by voting directly for him or for a third-party candidate, is both a moral and a strategic failure. Particularly in swing states, a vote for a third party could enable Trump to win that state and therefore the elections.

In 2016, Trump won Michigan by merely 11,000 votes mainly because of votes cast for third-party candidates. This enabled Trump to inflict great harm on our communities and country in numerous ways. Trump is funded by pro-settlement donors who support Israeli annexation of the West Bank, he has promised to give Netanyahu what he needs to “finish the job” in Gaza, and even promised to deport pro-Palestinian students and activists who he refers to as “jihadists” Jared Kushner, his son-in-law has promised to turn Gaza into “lucrative beachfront properties.”

Given his well-documented history of harming our communities and country, as well as what he has promised he will do to Muslims and Palestinians should he return, it is incumbent upon us not to allow our high emotions to dictate our actions to our detriment. We cannot turn our backs on our diverse Muslim community at home and those abroad who are impacted by U.S. policies in our moment of pain and anger. And we have a responsibility, an *Amana*, not to place our community in harm's way. Vice President Harris and Governor Walz have been clear, they see a New Way Forward and are not going back. We stand with moving forward, and call on other imams and our communities to move forward with us.

In Service and Sincerity,

- 1- Imam Talib Shareef, Washington, DC
- 2- Imam Rashad Abdul Rahmaan, Georgia
- 3- Imam Joel Saahir, North Carolina
- 4- Imam Abdul Rahman Shareef, North Carolina
- 5- Imam Albert Sabir – Washington, DC
- 6- Imam John Bilal, Maryland
- 7- Imam Naim Muhammad, North Carolina
- 8- Dr. Basheer Ahmed, Dallas, TX
- 9- Imam Faheem Shuaibe, Oakland, California
- 10- Imam Plemon Elamin, Atlanta, Georgia
- 11- Qadir Abdus Salaam, Maryland
- 12- Hassan Muhammad, Washington, DC
- 13- Anwar Saleem, Washington, DC
- 14- Imam Benjamin Abdul Haqq, Washington, DC
- 15- Imam Mansoor Sabree, Atlanta, Georgia
- 16- Ms. Soumaya Khalifa, Atlanta, Georgia
- 17- Ms. Laila Mohammed, New Jersey
- 18- Imam Mikail Stewart Saadiq, Detroit, Michigan
- 19- Imam Bashar Arafat, Maryland
- 20- Commissioner Fleming El-Amin, Masjed Al-Mu'Minun, NC
- 21 - Commander Lyndon Bilal, Washington DC
- 22- Imam Saafir Rabb, Baltimore, MD
- 23- Imam Muhammad Abdul Aleem, Philadelphia, PA
- 24- Imam Fahad Muhammad, Milwaukee, WI
- 25- Imam Salaam Muhsin, PA