In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

CAIR

Council on American-Islamic Relations
1265 El-Camino Real Suite 102-A
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Dear Imam, activist, community leader, committee, brother or sister:

Salaam Alaykum Peace to 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, the non-Muslim community 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 non-Muslims.
2. Photocopy pages such as "Ramadan Q&A," "Facts About Ramadan" and "Islam in America - 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, but the local communities should make contact with local media. (Call CAIR if you need a local list of media addresses and phone numbers.)
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 sent them that way. This is not the best approach, but it is better than nothing. NOTE - If you would like these materials on computer disk (Microsoft Word 6.0) send a blank disk and a self-addressed stamped envelope to CAIR at the above address. The text can also be downloaded from MSA Net.
4. 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, etc.
7. Call CAIR 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 clear copies to CAIR.

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(Insert Your Local Organization Name and Address Here)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January __, 1995

----- MEDIA ADVISORY -----

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

What: On March 2, 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 the fastest growing religion in this country and around the world. There are _____ Muslims in _____ ___ and some 1.2 billion worldwide.)

When: **March 2**
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 America 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. Female reporters and photographers may be asked to put a scarf over their hair while in the actual prayer area. Photographers should arrive by ____ a.m. to get into position for the best shots. Photographers are advised not to step directly in front of worshipers and to ask permission for close-up shots.

-END-

with the prayer, "O God, for You I fasted, and in You I believe, and with Your provision I broke my fast. After eating, Muslims say "*al-hamdu lillah* ("Thanks be to God")."

The Night Prayer

The final of the five daily prayers is said as night falls. Like the four other prayers, it is preceded by the *adhan* and is carried out in congregation.

The *Taraweeh* Prayer

A special, lengthy prayer called *salat al-taraweeh* is said only during the month of *Ramadan*, after the night prayer is completed. It is an optional act of worship carried out to gain God's pleasure. The *taraweeh* is sometimes characterized by long recitations of the *Qur'an*, and can last from twenty minutes to over one hour. Some *imams* recite one-thirtieth of the *Qur'an* nightly during this prayer.

Standing for this prayer can be strenuous, so it is broken into parts. A short spiritual teaching is often read during a break. The elderly, pregnant women and the sick who wish to participate sometimes sit during the prayer if they become tired.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to presenting an Islamic perspective on issues of importance to the American public. In offering that perspective, CAIR seeks to empower the Muslim community in America through political and social activism.

CAIR's mission is carried out through:

- Media Relations
- Conferences and Seminars
- Publications
- Anti-Defamation Work
- Action Alerts

For more information, call CAIR's N. Calif. , office at (408) 249-4001; or fax (408) 249-3979

For more information about the Muslim community in your area, contact:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Welcome to Our Ramadan Fast Breaking

published by

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We Hope You Enjoy Your Visit

Welcome to the *iftar*!

The *iftar*, or "fast-breaking," is an integral part of Muslim community life during the sacred month of Ramadan. At sunset every day during the month, Muslims around the world gather in homes and mosques to break their fast together. This communal meal comes after a day of self-discipline in which Muslims abstained from food and drink, and made an extra effort to avoid impatience and harsh words. After eating, Muslims will spend the evening seeking the pleasure of God through contemplation and prayer.

The Islamic Greeting

The Islamic greeting frequently heard in the mosque is the Arabic phrase, *as-salaam alaykum* ("peace be with you"). It is returned by saying *"wa alaykum as-salaam* ("and with you be peace")."

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan (pronounced rum-a-don) is the ninth month of the lunar calendar used by Muslims. This month is special because the *Qur'an* (Islamic scripture) was first revealed in this month. During *Ramadan*, all healthy adult Muslims must fast by abstaining from food and drink from dawn to sunset every day. They also strive to abstain from all that is evil in speech and action. It is recommended that each Muslim read the entire *Qur'an* during this month.

When will the fast be broken?

At sunset, the *adhan* (call to prayer) will be made. This call to prayer is always recited melodiously in the Arabic language. The *adhan* is the signal for Muslims to break their fast, often with the traditional three dates and water. Before sitting down to a meal, they stand together for the sunset prayer, one of five prayers Muslims must make every day.

The Call to Prayer (translation)

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 [the One] God
I bear witness that there is no god but [the One] 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
There is no god but [the One] God

Washing Before Prayer

Muslims must strive for physical and mental purity before standing in prayer. To that end, they are required to wash their faces, hands, arms, and feet before praying.

Guests are welcome to observe the prayers. Your hosts will direct you to an appropriate place to sit. Islamic practice prevents guests from joining the prayer line. Please observe silence and remember to remove shoes before entering the prayer hall. Women are requested to cover their heads with the scarves provided.

The Sunset Prayer

After the call to prayer, Muslims will hasten to the prayer hall to line up for the congregational prayer. They will form tight ranks, a symbol of unity and equality within the Muslim community. Men and women form separate lines for the prayer in order to maintain modesty and concentration during the physical movements of standing, bowing and prostration. Their separation does not indicate any relative superiority or inferiority.

The prayer begins as the *imam*, or prayer leader (pronounced ee-mom), raises his hands with the words, "Allahu Akbar ("God is Most Great")." From that moment, worshippers are required to devote total concentration to the prayer as they follow the words and actions of the *imam*.

The *imam* first recites the opening chapter of the *Qur'an* (entitled *al-fatiha*) aloud, and follows this with more Qur'anic verses of his own choosing. After the recitation, worshippers bow and prostrate in unison, silently glorifying God.

The prayer ends as worshippers turn their faces to either side with the Arabic words meaning, "Peace be with you and the mercy of God." Some of the congregation will then stand to leave the prayer hall while others will add their own, personal devotions.

Al-Fatiha (Translation)

(The opening chapter of the Qur'an)
In the name of God, the Compassionate, the 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.

Children in the Prayer Hall

Children will often be present during prayers, whether participating, watching, or in the case of very small children, imitating the movements of their elders. Their presence continues the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, who was very tender 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.

The *Iftar*

After completing the sunset prayer, Muslims join in a joyous and nutritious meal. Because Islam is a global religion, there are many special *Ramadan* foods enjoyed by different ethnic groups. Among these are soups and salads, rice dishes and meats, and of course, sweets.

Since Islamic etiquette enjoins modesty in behavior, many mosques will have separate seating areas designated for single men and single women. Families may choose to sit together as a unit, or family members may choose to sit down with their friends in their respective areas. Seating arrangements will vary from one community to another.

During *Ramadan* Muslims begin their meal

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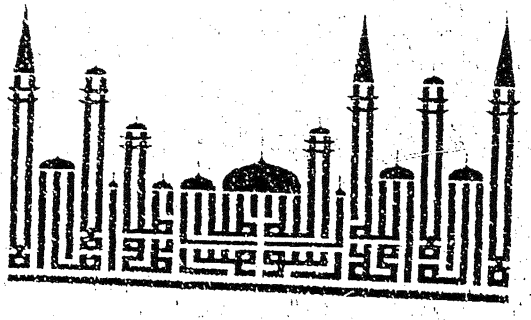
In the Name of God, Most Gracious Most Merciful

Welcome to Our Mosque



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We Appreciate Your Visit

What is a mosque?

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 to the floor.

How is a mosque used?

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.

Is a mosque a holy place?

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 can pray on any clean surface. In the Muslim world, people often pray in public places.

How big are mosques?

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

Do mosques accept visitors?

Mosques in North America welcome visitors and can arrange for tours of their facilities. It is always best to ask mosque administrators before arriving. They will want to make sure your visit is enjoyable.

What are the distinctive features of a mosque?

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. The 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 prayer, 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.

What else is in the prayer area?

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*.

What about the rest of the building?

Most mosques have a minaret, the large tower used to issue the call to prayer five times every day. In North America the minaret is largely decorative.

Facilities to perform *wudu*, or ablutions, can be found at all mosques. Muslims wash their hands, faces and feet before prayers as a way to purify and prepare themselves to stand in front of 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 *Qur'an* are always available to worshippers.

Calligraphy is used to decorate nearly every mosque. Arabic quotations from the *Qur'an* 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 American mosques also have administrative offices.

Is a mosque used exclusively for prayer?

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, Qur'anic instruction, and youth groups.

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 gymnasiums, game rooms and weight equipment as well as a library and classrooms.

Do mosques have special rules?

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. Shelves are usually provided to hold shoes. Women should 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 should feel free to ask questions about the mosque, its architecture, furnishings and activities. Muslims are happy to answer questions about their religion.

Special thanks to *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* and Greg Noakes for permission to use the article, "*Mosque a Vital Part of Islamic Life*," in preparing this pamphlet.