



ONE AMERICA CAMPAIGN



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NATIONAL OPEN MOSQUE DAY GUIDE

Sunday, October 23, 2016



Table of Contents

About USCMO	2
Introduction	3
National Open Mosque Day Guide	4
Sample Press Release	7
Sample Invitation Letter	8
Sample Program Agenda	9
Islam in United States – Fact Sheet	10
FAQs about Mosques	12



About USCMO

The **U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO)** is an umbrella organization representing the Muslim community in USA. It was founded in December 2014, after detailed consultative process among several national Muslim organizations. The main objectives are to empower the Muslim community, amplify its voice, and unify its efforts. All Mosques, Shura councils and other Muslim organizations are encouraged to become member of USCMO.

The founding members of the US Council of Muslim Organizations are:

Muslim American Society (MAS), Islamic Circle of North American (ICNA), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), The Mosque Cares (Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA), Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA), and Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA).

Vision

America's Muslims will be socially successful in direct proportion to how well we do three things:

1. Streamline "all-way" communication between and among our local and national organizations
2. Build a laser-focused, consensus-based national vision
3. Cooperate in mobilizing the Muslim populations of our local communities and that of our fellow Americans for the good of all

Introduction

Since, September 11, 2001, the American Muslim community has gone through a journey of social roller coaster. Public opinion on Islam and Muslims is changing to more negative with each survey. Hate crimes against Muslims and their mosques are increasing across the country. Islamophobia has become, unfortunately, mainstream during the presidential campaign of 2016. However, at the same time, several prominent political and legal personalities, newspapers editors and columnists and interfaith leaders have spoken forcefully in favor of the Muslim community.

A window of opportunity has also been opened for Muslims to present their own narrative to the American public. Thanks to the racist rhetoric of Republican presidential candidates, Muslims and Islam have now become the topics of prime time and headline news. American Muslims understand the magnitude of the challenge facing our nation and our community and will not allow either Islamophobes or un-Islamic extremist groups like ISIS to define American Muslims or to decide our fate.

Seizing the moment, the US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), a coalition of leading national and local Muslim organizations, announced on December 21, 2015, major educational, outreach and civic empowerment initiatives to address growing Islamophobia in America and to enhance national harmony through the promotion of freedom and justice. The USCMO initiatives include: a **One America Campaign** to enhance understanding of American Muslims and Islam; a **Million Voters Registration** Drive prior to the 2016 presidential election; and a **National Open Mosque Day** designed to help increase interactions between American Muslims and citizens of other faiths and backgrounds.

USCMO is requesting all mosques in the United States to participate in the National Open Mosque Day on **October 23, 2016**. Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, New York Masjid Shura Leadership Council, Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, and many others are participating in this campaign. We advise the organizers of this program to not only have a program about Islam and Muslims but to also dedicate time for civic engagement. We are facing the public rise of anti-Islamic sentiment while some of the country's political leadership, both at home and in Washington, D.C., have become detached from reality. Consequently, the safety and security of our families has become a growing concern for everyone. Muslim-Americans must engage in the civic arena in order to ensure, by Allah's Will, that we construct the America we want for ourselves and for our children. The Open Mosque Day is a great way to invite your local mayor, governor, delegate, school board, or any other local leadership. With civic engagement, your mosque will have a voice in government decisions both big and small; your mosque can achieve solutions for issues in the community; and your mosque can ensure social justice for all – with Allah's guidance and help.

Finally, please be sure to send pictures from the event with the name of the mosque, city, and state to be included on our website www.oneamericacampaign.com. You can e-mail all of these details to rameez@icnacsj.org.

National Open Mosque Day Guide

Prepare

Prepare the members of your Mosque and local community by explaining that an open day is a way of building a positive image of the Mosque in the local area. Inform them that the experiences of other communities have shown that a positive, supportive neighborhood image of the Mosque offers many benefits and leads to greater understanding and acceptance.

Invite

Prepare a list of potential invitees with the support of the management team and Mosque members, don't restrict yourself! You should ensure that notice is given well in advance, as many people will have busy schedules. Please ensure that your key invitees receive written invitations that outline all the details of the open day. Follow up with a personal phone call. Always have a single named person that the media and visitors can contact.

Publicize

Publicize the event by sending a well-written media release to the local print and broadcast media. You may also consider placing paid advertisements in a local newspaper. Send announcements to local houses of worship (churches and temples). Don't forget to send information to other local Mosques and invitations to their leadership. Make sure the Mosque notice board and internal newsletters have the Mosque open day well publicized. Check your website has also details of the event and instructions for people whom wish to attend, especially contact details of relevant persons responsible for the day. You may also set up a Facebook event and boost it. There is also the option to do direct mailing.

Inform

Inform your guests of Mosque etiquette before they arrive. Remember for some of your visitors this will be the first time they have been in a Mosque and they may well have some misconceptions about etiquette and customs. By providing them with details in advance visitors will feel more at ease and you will avoid any unnecessary embarrassment. Be ready to answer questions about prayer, separation of men and women and other common issues.

Clean

Keep in mind Sights, Smells and Sensations. Deep clean the Mosque. For visitors the first impression is the one that will last. Make sure bathrooms are immaculate.

Set-Up

It is important to have friendly greeters at the door to direct arriving guests and to make them feel welcome. Have knowledgeable, friendly people to conduct tours of the facility and to answer any questions guests may have. Do not leave guests alone to wander about the Mosque as

they may feel unwelcome and confused unless otherwise stated. Give each guest a nametag and if possible a brief description of the Mosque and the religious rituals you carry out. Make sure sisters are available to make female guests feel welcome. It is important to brief all those involved with the open day in advance of your guests arriving. You may even consider information packs with small gifts to remember their visit by. An exhibition about Islam and the Mosque may need to be brought in or prepared for the day, give someone the specific responsibility to organize this and have their own team to walk people around the exhibition.

Provide

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. Having local dishes is also important to relay the harmony of cultures and faith in Islam. You should be prepared to talk to your guests and explain where the dishes you are serving come from. Provide a translator for when the *adhan* (call to prayer) is heard or when the Salah (5 daily prayers) are conducted. This can be a very moving and deep experience and a responsible person needs to be on hand to explain the rituals and their significance in Islam. Maybe have materials at hand to distribute to visitors while prayers are being conducted to give greater clarity on the spiritual and emotional dimension of Islamic worship.

Select

Select literature to be given to the guests. Do not push materials on guests. Let them select what they wish to read. You should also be prepared to explain what the materials you have available contain and to answer any questions your guests may have. Select a team, well in advance of the open day. There should be diversity in the team, male and female, young and old, a reflection of the community in which the Mosque is functioning. Select team members for a specific task and their focus should be that task alone, depending on the size of the team, for instance someone to greet at the door, he or she shouldn't leave that task until the program has ended.

Post

Post signs at appropriate locations in and out of the facility to help guests find their way around. For instance have signs from where guest may park their car to the designated entrance of the Mosque, especially if you have separate entrances for male and female. Many of them have never been to a Mosque before and may be nervous of offending their host. Some guests may not wish to follow the official guided tour and wish to explore the Mosque on their own and take time to ponder on what they are observing, give them space and do not hurry or force anyone. You may wish to have a suggestion/or question box for the guests who don't wish to ask questions or make comments publicly, make guests aware of this facility on their arrival.

Pray & Thank

Renew your intentions all the time. Pray that your efforts will open the hearts of your guests. Pray that your best efforts are rewarded. Be very patient throughout the day, especially if there are perceived hostile or offensive questions. Be patient with worshipers whom were unaware of

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the open day and find the whole experience a little intrusive. Be patient with the team members who didn't turn up on time or haven't followed instructions! At the end of the event thank all the team, the Mosque Management/Trustees, the neighbors, sponsors and maybe you had partners supporting you in the delivery of the event. Thank the guests for coming to the event and send letters to specific invitees who made an extra effort to come to the event. Ultimately, thank Allah (swt) for the opportunity to conduct the event.

Review

Find some time after the open day to reflect on how it went and what you would like to do differently next time. Maybe bring the team back and have a debriefing and feedback session. Pay particular attention to feedback given by guests, mosque management, neighbors, sponsors and partners.

Who should be invited?

Please invite the following at the local level:

- Muslims around the Mosque
- Non-Muslims who live around the Mosque
- Faith communities, who have religious centers in the neighborhood.
- Police or police community officers
- School teachers and children
- District leaders
- Imams from the other Mosques in your area.
- Mosque committee members of other Mosques
- Fire department officers
- City and County officials
- Community voluntary agency leaders
- Women's groups leaders Muslim and non-Muslim
- Political party representatives
- Youth leaders
- Business leaders
- Members of the deaf community (make sure they come with a sign language translator)
- Counsellors and advice center representatives
- Homeless center representatives
- Charity organization representatives, e.g. Islamic relief, Helping Hand, ICNA Relief, etc.
- Religious leaders from other faith communities
- Representatives from cultural groups
- Hospital representatives
- Hospice or retirement center representatives
- Doctors, dentists, maternity and outpatient clinics, NHS/Trust leadership

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE - [date]

[Your mosque's name]
[Your mosque's address]
[Your mosque's phone number]
[Your mosque's website]
[Your mosque's e-mail]

LOCAL MUSLIMS HOLD NATIONAL OPEN MOSQUE DAY

Mosque neighbors and local dignitaries invited to learn more about the local Mosque and Islam.

On October 23, 2016, members of the local Islamic community will hold an open mosque day at [location] to offer people of all faiths an introduction to Islam and Muslims. This free event will feature discussions about Islamic beliefs and the positive role Muslims play in American society.

Only through getting to know one another on a personal level can people of different faiths build bridges of understanding and tolerance. People of all faiths and no faith are welcome to attend and meet with their Muslim neighbors.

There are an estimated [number of Muslims] in [your area] and some 3.3 million Muslims living nationwide. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

Please come and join us in what we hope will be an interesting and rewarding experience.

WHEN: [date and time]

WHERE: [location and address with directions]

CONTACT: [names and numbers of media contact people on your side]

- END -

Sample Invitation Letter

Subject: An invitation to visit your Muslim neighbors on Sunday, the 20th of Aug

Assalam Alaikum (Peace be onto you),

Dear Sir or Madam:

I pray that you receive this in the best of your health and spirit. I am writing this with a sense of profound pleasure and pride for being your neighbor. My community has designated **October 23, 2016** as a **National Open Mosque Day** and wishes to invite you (for lunch) with family and friends.

The program will be held between **12:45 pm to 3 pm**. We hope and pray your visit will greatly enhance mutual understanding, love and respect. May we request you to kindly extend this invitation on our behalf to everyone you know.

We will greatly appreciate if you kindly apprise us (by such and such date) an approximate number of guests who will grace us with their presence.

Sincerely yours,

[President / Imam Name]

[President / Imam Title]

[President / Imam e-mail]

[Your mosque's name]

[Your mosque's address]

[Your mosque's phone number]

[Your mosque's website]

[Your mosque's e-mail]

Sample Program Agenda

12:45 PM – 1:05 PM

Gathering and Welcome Address

1:15 PM – 1:45 PM

Tour of the Mosque & Congregation Prayer (*Duhr*)

1:45 PM – 2:10 PM

Break for Lunch

2:10 PM – 2:40 PM

Presentation(s) on Islam and Muslims

[Be sure to also add positive contributions the mosque is making in the local community]

2:40 PM – 3:00 PM

Questions, Discussions, or Socialization

3:00 PM

Conclusion

Note: You can also do the program in the evening with or without dinner and include public officials and other faith leaders as part of the program.

Islam in United States – Fact Sheet

It is the third largest religion in the United States after Christianity and Judaism.

There are various estimates of the Muslims living in the United States because the census does not ask any question about the religious affiliation. The range of these estimates is from 3 million to 6 million, about 1% to 2% of the total U.S. population.

Muslims are one of the most racially diverse religious groups in the United States originating from more than 80 countries.

Native-born American Muslims are mainly African Americans who make up about a quarter of the total Muslim population.

An estimated 10 to 30 percent of the slaves brought to colonial America from Africa arrived as Muslims.

Prior to the late 19th century, most documented non-enslaved Muslims in North America were merchants, travelers, and sailors.

In 1776, John Adams published "Thoughts on Government," in which he mentions the Islamic prophet Muhammad as a "sober inquirer after truth" alongside Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, and other thinkers.

In 1797, President John Adams signed the Treaty of Tripoli, declaring the United States had no "character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen."

In his autobiography, published in 1791, Benjamin Franklin stated that he "did not disapprove" of a meeting place in Pennsylvania that was designed to accommodate preachers of all religions. Franklin wrote that "even if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mohammedanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service."

While President, Thomas Jefferson also participated in an *iftar* with the Ambassador of Tunisia in 1809.

Thomas Jefferson defended religious freedom in America including those of Muslims. Jefferson explicitly mentioned Muslims when writing about the movement for religious freedom in Virginia.

Among South Asians in the country, the large Pakistani American community stands out as particularly well educated and prosperous, with education and income levels exceeding those of U.S.-born whites. Many are professionals, especially in medicine (they account for 2.7-5% of America's physicians), scientists, engineers, and financial analysts, and there are also a large number of entrepreneurs.

The number of mosques in the United States in 2011 was 2,106. The six states with the greatest number of mosques were: New York 257, California 246, Texas 166, Florida 118, Illinois 109, and New Jersey 109.

Muslims in the United States have increasingly made their own culture; there are various Muslim comedy groups, rap groups, Scout troops and magazines, and Muslims have been vocal in other forms of media as well.

America's Islamic Heritage Museum in Washington, DC opened on April 30, 2011 dedicated to the history of Islamic culture in the U.S.

After the September 11 attacks, America saw an increase in the number of hate crimes committed against people who were perceived to be Muslim, particularly those of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent. A publication in Journal of Applied Social Psychology found evidence that the number of anti-Muslim attacks in America in 2001 increased from 354 to 1,501 following 9/11. Arab American Institute reported an increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes ranging from discrimination and destruction of private property to violent threats and assaults, some of which resulted in deaths.

51% of American Muslims express worries that women wearing hijab will be treated poorly, 44% of American Muslim women who always wear hijab express a similar concern

In a 2007 survey, 53% of American Muslims reported that it was more difficult to be a Muslim after the 9/11 attacks. Asked to name the most important problem facing them, the options named by more than ten percent of American Muslims were discrimination (19%), being viewed as a terrorist (15%), public's ignorance about Islam (13%), and stereotyping (12%).

2014 Pew poll found that Muslims were the most disliked religious group in the United States with an average 40% cold rating.

54% of Muslims in America believe that the U.S. government's anti-terrorism activities single out Muslims.

76% of surveyed Muslim Americans stated that they are very or somewhat concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism around the world, while 61% express a similar concern about the possibility of Islamic extremism in the United States.

Overall, from restaurants to supermarkets, halal meat sales are projected at \$20 billion in 2016, up by one-third since 2010, according to the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America, which certifies halal food and promotes education on the topic.

FAQs about Mosques

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 on the floor, as a gesture of submission to One Creator.

How is a Mosque Used?

Mosques play a vital role in the lives of Muslims. The primary function of the mosque is to provide a place where Muslims perform obligatory [five] daily prayers. 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 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 may pray on any clean surface. Muslims often pray in public places.

Do Mosques Welcome Visitors?

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.

What Are 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. 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 prayer hall, 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 miche 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

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minbar, or pulpit, to the right of the *mihrab*. During the Friday prayer service, the Imam delivers a sermon from the pulpit.

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, 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.

Do Mosques Have Special Rules?

Men and women should always dress modestly 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 may be asked to cover their hair when visiting a mosque. Many mosques have scarves on hand for visitors to borrow. You may 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.



The largest coalition of national and local American Muslim organizations.

Founding Members:

