

10 YEARS OF IMPACT



2025 Civil Rights Report

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On the front cover: Prospective law students take part in an interactive panel during CAIR-MA's "Law School for a Day" program at Western New England University School of Law. Current WNEU law students advised the group on the realities of their lived law school experiences as Muslim students.

Above: Attendees of CAIR-MA's Future Muslim Lawyers program speak with our lawyer panel. Learn more about how CAIR-MA is building the Muslim pipeline on page 7.

About CAIR-MA, Inc.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations—Massachusetts (CAIR-MA) is a chapter of America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. CAIR-MA, Inc., was established in 2015 and serves the estimated 150,000 Muslims living in the Commonwealth. Our mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

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A LETTER FROM OUR LEGAL DIRECTOR

Looking back on a decade.

Ten years ago, CAIR-MA opened its doors with **a promise to stand beside Massachusetts Muslims when their rights were violated and their dignity was under attack.** I have had the privilege of serving as Legal Director for much of that decade, and I am proud to report on what we have accomplished together. We extend a special note of thanks to our legal interns who made our office more efficient and complete over the years.

By the end of 2025, CAIR-MA's Legal Department had **received 1,882 requests for assistance** – 1,882 people who put their trust in us, a humbling responsibility. Some came to us in moments of unimaginable trauma, such as the family of college student Arif Faisal, who was shot and killed by the Cambridge police in 2023. Many

others asked for our help after being threatened, harassed, humiliated, driven from their jobs and homes, or even physically injured.

We did our best to respond to their needs with competence and compassion. But **we also owe our clients a huge debt of gratitude for showing us – and sometimes the world at large – how to respond to hate with dignity and courage.**

As you read the pages that follow, you will see their stories. We are honored to carry this work forward into the next decade.

We dedicate this report to them, our clients, who have taught us so much.

With appreciation,

Barbara J. Dougan, Esq.
Legal Director, CAIR-MA



Barbara J. Dougan (right) with CAIR-MA Board President Rev. Corey J. Sanderson & banquet award winner Mahsa Khanbabai.

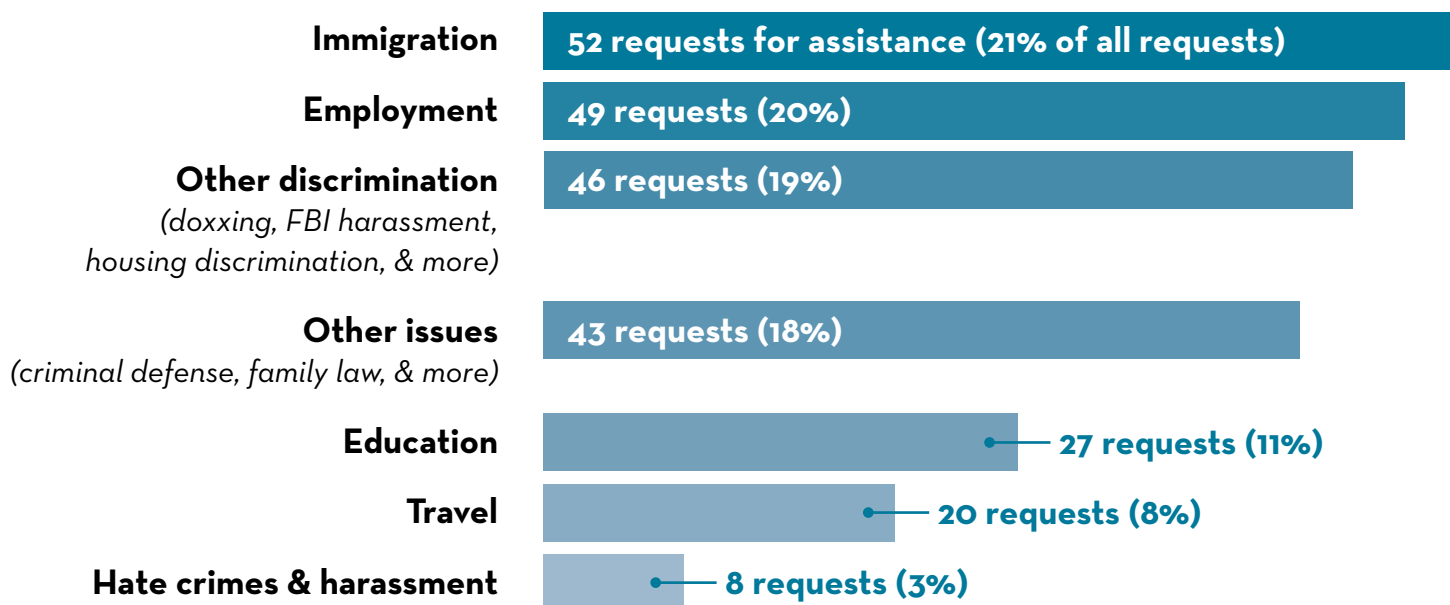


L-R: CAIR-MA's Vincent Ware, Barbara, & legal intern Payton Rogers leave the Massachusetts State House following meetings with state lawmakers.

2025 OVERVIEW

We received **245 requests for assistance in 2025, a 17% increase from 2024** – and nearly as many as in 2023, when we received the most calls in CAIR-MA's history (249). Immigration (21%) and employment (20%) were the top areas of demand. Calls about international travel jumped nearly 600% as travelers were detained or denied re-entry at Logan International Airport. Only eight people reported hate crimes or harassment, a far cry from the all-time high of 28 in 2024.

The **245 requests for assistance** were categorized as follows.



WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

Muslim woman beaten by co-worker

Our client endured a lengthy campaign of anti-Muslim slurs, threats, and physical abuse by a co-worker, culminating in an attack that required medical treatment. We are representing them.

Model employee fired after complaining about supervisor's treatment

A woman who was the only Muslim at her job received glowing performance reviews – until she told the company's CEO about her supervisor's discriminatory treatment. She was abruptly fired. We filed an MCAD complaint alleging both discriminatory treatment and retaliation.

Muslim employees navigate workplace discrimination

We advised many employees working to prevent or end discriminatory treatment, including: a Muslim doctor disciplined for reposting mainstream media coverage of Gaza on his personal Facebook page; a newly hired employee pressured to sign a vague anti-terrorism statement targeting pro-Palestinian expression; and a Muslim teacher isolated in a basement classroom, denied evaluations, given a separate lunch schedule, and stripped of her Friday prayer accommodation – who, following our guidance, was able to resolve many of these issues on her own.

HATE CRIMES & HARASSMENT

In 2025, we received fewer calls from victims of hate crimes and harassment, although the level of violence was no less shocking. For context, 2024 marked an all-time high of 28 reports, several victims needed medical attention; one required surgery.

Coffee shop worker convicted in attack on Muslim customer

In 2023, a coffee shop employee chased an Arabic-speaking Muslim man with scissors and threw a glass container at him. A sign in the window read "Glory to the army of Israel." In 2025, a jury convicted the employee of assault, and the judge sentenced him to probation.

Axe-wielding man pleads guilty to threatening protesters

A well-known Muslim Palestinian activist was threatened by a man with an axe who was screaming slurs at anti-genocide protesters. At CAIR-MA's urging, the District Attorney added a civil rights charge. The defendant pleaded guilty and was sentenced to probation. Our client's words stay with us: "Can you imagine if the roles were reversed? If I, a Palestinian Muslim, had threatened [the defendant] with an axe while screaming death threats?"

Teen pleads guilty to brutal assault on Muslim student

A Muslim high school student required surgery after a classmate who had routinely harassed him with anti-Muslim slurs punched him in the face and slammed his head into a wall. CAIR-MA represented the student and his family, helped draft a victim impact statement, and arranged a meeting with the prosecutor to explain the Juvenile Court process. The classmate pleaded guilty and was sentenced to probation.

Man pleads guilty to anti-Palestinian attack

A Palestinian American client was attacked in a parking lot. His car was blocked, his window spat on, and his Palestinian flag ripped off. The perpetrator pleaded guilty to destruction of property. At sentencing, we read our client's victim impact statement; the judge then added a letter of apology to the terms of probation.

What Our Clients Say *Their words speak for themselves.*

“The effectiveness of your work came through this morning. An hour before I was supposed to go into a meeting where I would need to explain Islamic practices, I received your letter. I said to myself, OMG, Allah have mercy on CAIR-MA! **I pulled out the letter in the meeting and read the law – and everything was resolved.** I felt like Allah came to me with that letter.”

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

In His Own Words



My wife and I are proud Palestinian Christians whose parents were Nakba survivors. When the war in Gaza started, we hung a Palestinian flag in our window – while a neighbor displayed Israeli flags. That was fine with us. **Yet we were the ones threatened with fines and legal action.** CAIR-MA filed a housing discrimination complaint, which was settled when the condo board made a donation to World Central Kitchen and agreed to attend a discrimination training. **I tell everyone how CAIR-MA helped this Christian family.**

– George Hallack

PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Iranian man's gym membership revoked after Islamophobic attack

We helped an Iranian man – who is not Muslim but was perceived to be – file a discrimination complaint at MCAD after he and his friends were called "terrorists" at their gym. Staff took no action. When he complained to the company, his membership was revoked.

INCARCERATED MEN'S RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Incarcerated men permitted to make up Ramadan fast

When a county sheriff's department sought guidance on accommodating incarcerated Muslims seeking to make up missed Ramadan fasting days, we advised them to grant it – grounded in state and federal law and in the words of Allah in Surat al-Baqarah (2:185): "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship."

CAIR-MA demands religious accommodations in county jails

We sent demand letters to county Houses of Correction requiring compliance with federal and state law, including appropriate meals on Muslim holidays, prayer rugs, prayer oils, and other supplies necessary to practice the faith.

What Our Clients Say *Their words speak for themselves.*

“Thank you so much for all the hard work you put into our case. You have been amazing. It was a long and exhausting process, and it wasn't easy, but **your guidance and support gave us the strength to keep going.** It has made a huge difference for our family. **We're really pleased with the outcome,** especially knowing that this case can serve as a deterrent to help prevent similar incidents.”

Below: The Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center hosted CAIR-MA's Future Muslim Lawyers program on Feb. 1, drawing more than 100 attendees for a day of education and mentorship. The event featured a panel of 14 Muslim attorneys who spoke about their career paths, the challenges and opportunities within the legal profession, and how to navigate the road to law school.



BUILDING THE MUSLIM PIPELINE: FUTURE LAWMAKERS & LAWYERS



Top: Attendees of CAIR-MA's Future Muslim Lawyers program took part in a discussion on Islam & justice with Sheikh Omar. Bottom: CAIR-MA hosted a "Law School For a Day" event at WNEU Law, including a mock law class, law student panel, admissions info session, & more.

In its tenth year, CAIR-MA marked a new chapter that made room for an intentional theme: building the Muslim pipeline for lawmakers and lawyers.

CAIR-MA's Civil Rights Attorney, Mariam Aydah, launched the **Future Muslim Lawyers program, a series of workshops for aspiring law students.**

Hosting three widely attended sessions, participants heard directly from attorneys across multiple practice areas about the breadth of the legal profession, and participated in a Q&A with the lawyer panel. Mariam also held individual consultations for those with specific questions about law school applications or their path to practice.

On a parallel track, **students in the Muslim Youth Leadership Program (MYLP) visited the State House** three times during the year: first for CAIR-MA's historic legislative briefing in June; then in August for a full-program tour where all students met Muslim legislative staff, interns, and lobbyists working in the building; and again in October for a hearing, where a smaller cohort of students had the opportunity to observe the legislative process firsthand.

In both programs, participants received a consistent message: Muslims belong in the halls of power, where justice is made and enforced.

WITH OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION

THANK YOU for your unwavering support!

We deeply appreciate all of our donors, friends, volunteers, and our entire community! *Special thanks to:*

- American Muslim Community Fund
- Boston Advertising Professionals for Good
- Boston Bar Foundation
- Boston Children's Hospital
- Cummings Foundation
- Hyams Foundation
- Islamic Council of New England

We are also honored to partner with several *Mosques That Support*, including:

- Islamic Center of Boston (Wayland)
- Islamic Center of New England (Quincy/Sharon)
- Islamic Society of Boston (Cambridge/Roxbury)
- Islamic Society of Greater Lowell
- Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts
- Masjid Al Hamdulillah
- Masjid Al Quran



L-R: CAIR-MA's Tahirah Amatul-Wadud with Sajida Khudairi. Mrs. Khudairi, along with her husband & others, co-founded the Islamic Council of New England 41 years ago.

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 **facebook.com/CAIRmassachusetts**

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Give Your Time

Volunteer or Intern with CAIR-MA:

cairma.org/employment

Donate



Make a general donation to support our legal & advocacy work:

cairma.org/donate

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