

Middle East Forum

# Islamism in Pennsylvania

A Brief Overview

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*Actual image appearing on CAIR-Philadelphia Facebook page*

**The Middle East Forum is currently tracking more than 1,500 Islamist organizations throughout the U.S., and many of these nonprofits, religious centers, and community advocacy groups are located in Pennsylvania.**

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## Philadelphia: the roots of terrorism

Although CAIR has grown into a national organization with more than 30 chapters, the scheme to transform CAIR from a Hamas cell into a socially acceptable Muslim advocacy group occurred in Pennsylvania. CAIR's origins as a front group for Hamas, a Sunni-Islamist terrorist organization, can be traced back to a [1993 meeting](#) in Philadelphia. FBI wiretap evidence from this secret conference demonstrated how CAIR's future leaders, then part of a Hamas propaganda wing called the Islamic Association of Palestine, discussed the need to start an Islamist organization that could disguise its loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

Also present at this meeting, which occurred at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in Philadelphia, were [four officials](#) working for the now-defunct Holy Land Foundation charity who were later charged in federal court with providing material support to Hamas.

## Anti-Semitism

Islamists in Pennsylvania have a history of making inexcusable anti-Semitic statements. CAIR and other Islamist groups have either refused to condemn these statements, or they minimize such attacks as legitimate criticism of Israel.

- Speaking at [Al Aqsa Mosque](#) in North Philadelphia in November 2018, guest Imam Abdelmohsen Abouhatab said, "Oh Servant of Allah, There is a Jew behind me, come and Kill him." Less than two months later, Abouhatab argued that "the propaganda and the media are controlled by the Jews." In February 2019, he called Jews "the vilest people."
- Imam Naeem Abdullah, of the Masjid Al-Mu'min mosque and the Nur Uz-Zamaan Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was [recorded](#) in January 2019 saying that Jews are "running everything" and "have all the money," and that Allah "changed some of them"

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into apes and pigs ... we are asking Allah to guide us on the straight path and [to not] make us like the Jews... 'And not like those who go astray' — the Christians."

- A CAIR-Philadelphia official responded to a deadly attack on a San Diego synagogue in April 2019 by holding a [press conference](#) disparaging mainstream Jewish support for Israel and attacking Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
- Following an "Ummah Day" celebration at the Muslim American Society Islamic Center and Masjid Al Hidayah Mosque in Philadelphia, a [video](#) surfaced showing Muslim children singing a virulently anti-Semitic song and promising to "chop off" the heads of Israeli Jews. CAIR-Philadelphia executive director Jacob Bender publicly condemned the video, but only before adding a disclaimer: "We should be careful, however, not to conflate criticism of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians with anti-Semitism. Thousands of American and Israeli Jews like myself are critical of the oppressive policies of the government of Benjamin Netanyahu."
- Bender has been a prominent [supporter](#) of the anti-Jewish Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) agenda. While BDS proponents claim to merely be supporting Palestinians rights, BDS founder Omar Barghouti rejects a "two-state solution," and has said that, "No Palestinian, rational Palestinian, not a sell-out Palestinian, will ever accept a Jewish state in Palestine."

### **Religious Duty to Vote**

While violent jihadists believe in spreading the faith "by the sword," or via militant conquest, lawful Islamists have chosen to manipulate the state's democratic institutions to reach the same endstate. This is as true in Pennsylvania as anywhere in the West, where Islamists speak of political participation as a religious obligation.

The Muslim Ummah of North America's 2019 [convention](#) in Philadelphia brought together a number of leading Islamists organizations. Keynote speakers discussed the need for Islam to dominate all facets of life — especially the political.

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- CAIR co-founder Nihad Awad told the audience that it is their “duty as Muslims” to engage in civil and political advocacy. “Our faith is based on action,” Awad proclaimed, arguing that Muslims on the political sidelines are not “true believers.”
  - Movita Johnson-Harrell, a recently elected state representative from Pennsylvania, called on Muslims to “occupy every space of this world.”
  - Ayman Hammous, executive director of the Muslim American Society, stated that “Islam is needed at the spiritual level, at the social level, at the political level.”
  - Finally, Georgia state senator Sheikh Rahman told Pennsylvania Muslims that “they have the responsibility” to get involved in local politics.

### **Nation of Islam**

CAIR will be bussing participants for its lobby day from Masjidullah, an [extremist mosque](#) with ties to the Nation of Islam, a black nationalist organization that the [Anti-Defamation League](#) accuses of maintaining “a consistent record of anti-Semitism and racism since its founding in the 1930s.”

Minister Louis Farrakhan was honored as a keynote speaker at a 2014 Masjidullah event. Farrakhan has spent his 30-year career as head of the Nation of Islam spewing militantly anti-Semitic rhetoric. He has called Jews “Satan” and accused them of orchestrating the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York, which he refers to as “Hymietown” because of its Jewish inhabitants.

Of the LGBT community, Farrakhan once asked: “Do you think Allah is pleased with you for bringing the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah to the entire world?”

Despite these statements, Masjidullah leaders are proud of their Nation of Islam roots. “We trace our history, our origin all the way back to the beginning of the Nation of Islam ... Wherever the mosque is, we automatically become a stabilizing influence in the community; we have that reputation,” said Mr. Ali Salahuddin, Masjidullah’s chief fundraiser.

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Muhammad Abdul Aleem, a longtime Imam at Masjidullah, called the Nation of Islam “the brightest light.” He praised Nation of Islam’s founder Elijah Muhammad: “We respect and honor him, (because) the Qur’an says to reverence the womb that bore you.”

The Nation of Islam has been [compared](#) to the Klu Klux Klan. Yet, former members who are still sympathetic to this black supremacist group will be holding one-on-one meetings with Pennsylvania lawmakers.