



COALITION FOR
CIVIL FREEDOMS

2019 Annual Report



Dear Friend of CCF,

For CCF staff and the prisoners and families that we support, 2019 was a year with a glimmer of hope! The first criminal justice reform bill in many years, the **First Step Act**, was signed into law and CCF decided it was time to work on legislation that could bring justice to inmates who were unjustly targeted in the U.S. "war on terror."

With our families, our volunteers, and our supporters across the country we visited dozens of lawmakers in Congress and surprisingly received mostly positive feedback and encouragement to move forward with this bill. Although we haven't been able to get the bill sponsored yet, we will continue to advocate for it as part of our five-year plan.

We continued our support for inmates and their families with the annual Ramadan gift program and our family conference with dozens of family members in attendance.

We were also honored to receive our first-ever award from one of our coalition members, ICNA-CSJ. CCF was presented with a "Justice Award; for your endless struggle to preserve the rights of Muslim political prisoners." We are most grateful for this recognition and for our valuable partnership.

We continued educational and community programs across the country, and again we collaborated with local Tampa organizations to hold an annual interfaith picnic.

CCF was founded in 2010, this year marks our 10-year anniversary. In our excitement for this milestone, we have completed a logo rebrand, a revised mission statement, and are planning a new website.

We are grateful for your support, and are happy to be moving forward with you into a brighter future!

Leena Al-Arian,
Executive Director

Mel Underbakke, PhD
Deputy Executive Director



I didn't even know this was a problem until it happened to my family. Even more shocking, there were hundreds of other families just like mine, suffering and needing a place to turn in the face of injustice.

Ashley Young
*Prisoner & Family Coordinator
and impacted family member*



Established in 2010, the mission of the Coalition for Civil Freedoms is to defend civil liberties and freedoms, promote a fair U.S. criminal justice system, and advocate for the rights of political prisoners targeted in the war on terror.

Directory of Member Organizations

Committee to Stop FBI Repression (CSFR)

stopfbi.net / Minneapolis, MN

stopfbi@gmail.com

Council on American-Islamic Relations FL (CAIR-FL)

cairflorida.org / Florida, USA

813.514.1414

Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility (CLEAR)

cunyclear.org / Long Island City, NY

cunyclear@law.cuny.edu

718.340.4558

Friends of Human Rights (FHR)

@friendsofhumanrights / Tampa, FL

friendshumanrights@yahoo.com

International Action Center (IAC)

iacenter.org / New York, NY

iacenter@iacenter.org

212.633.6646

Islamic Circle of North America Council for Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ)

icnacsj.org / Vienna, VA

Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)

mlfa.org / Dallas, TX

National Lawyers Guild (NLG)

nlg.org / New York, NY

212.679.5100

The Aafia Foundation (TAF)

aafia.org

peacethrujustice@aol.com

301.441.2300

Project Support and Legal Advocacy for Muslims (Project SALAM)

projectsalam.org

United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)

unacpeace.org / Delmar, NY

unacpeace@gmail.com

518.281.1968

Love Has No Borders

nowallsnoborders.org

nowallsnoborders@gmail.com

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Education and Outreach

A continual effort to change the narrative.

As the FBI continues its modus operandi of entrapping vulnerable young men, pushing them into FBI created terror plots, and arresting and sentencing them to decades in prison, the Coalition for Civil Freedoms continues the important task of education and outreach. These efforts include organizing events and panels at conferences, speaking and tabling at a variety of venues around the country, producing a weekly news digest and maintaining a website and Facebook page.

All CCF staff members speak regularly at events, and impacted family members are included whenever possible to organize and to tell powerful stories of the unjust prosecution of loved ones by the federal government. Family member Sonali Sadeeque, a CCF board member and the sister of a prisoner, organized two events in Atlanta with local organizations and included CCF staff as speakers. Several members of the Board also spoke at other CCF events, including Chair Steve Downs, Dr. Jonathan Brown, Dr. Zahid Bukhari, Mauri' Saalakhan and Hawa Wehelie (another impacted family member). Invited speakers included Murtaza Hussein, Miko Peled, and Omar Suleiman.



The 5th Annual New Year's CommUNITY Potluck, Tampa, FL

In 2019, CCF presented panels and tables at a number of large conventions, including the 44th Annual ICNA-MAS Convention in Washington, DC., the Annual MAS-ICNA Convention in Chicago, the Ending Mass Incarceration Conference at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Left Forum in New York City, the Muslim Ummah of North America Convention, and the National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression (NAARPR) Refounding Conference in Chicago.

CCF staff members also spoke at regional conferences, mosques, churches, colleges, and community centers. Whenever possible the events were filmed and added to the NCPCF YouTube channel or streamed live on Facebook.

In addition to live appearances,

CCF staff presented information via radio and video. Ashley was interviewed by Ahmed Bedier on WMNF's True Talk about her brother, who was entrapped by an FBI informant and is currently serving a 15-year sentence.



Julie Fischer and Mel Underbakke

Leena Al-Arian and Kathy Manley were featured in a podcast *Mommying While Muslim*. Hawa Wehelie (BOD and impacted family member) and Steve Downs were



Imam Omar Suleiman speaking on CCF panel, "Inventing Terrorists: The Lawfare of Preemptive Prosecution"



Ashley Young speaking at WMNF Community Radio in Tampa

featured in an ICNA CSJ video about FBI tactics and Know Your Rights that was viewed over 1,000 times.

Additionally, during 2019 CCF helped promote Eliie Bernstein's film *No History of Violence* - a film that looks at the controversial investigation and trial of three young Somali men in Minneapolis who were accused and convicted of terrorism in 2016. This film examines both entrapment and the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program.







Prisoner and Family Support

CCF takes a holistic approach to both groups.

CCF is the only organization in direct and regular contact with political prisoners targeted unfairly in the U.S. “war on terror.” We strive to serve both prisoners and impacted family members, who are left dealing with the ongoing trauma of their loved one’s incarceration. We strive to turn the victimization of these families into empowerment. This hands-on work with both groups is the heartbeat of our organization.

Prisoner Support

For the 8th year, we successfully completed our Ramadan Gift Program, sending \$100 to the commissary accounts of over 200 Muslim political prisoners. Umaima Jafri, a wife of a prisoner, organized volunteers in Ohio to send Ramadan greeting cards to each inmate. The card was designed and drawn by their

daughter, Hafsa Mohammad, a talented artist!

We increased our efforts to engage prisoners in 2019. For the first time, we mailed a newsletter to our inmates. The response was overwhelming! Here’s what one prisoner said, “Today I received the CCF newsletter. I have to tell you that nothing has moved me as much as this newsletter in a

GREAT while. I am so grateful to you and the wonderful people at CCF. I am an unjustly convicted 'Muslim Terrorist' and there are so many of us like me who owe you and the amazing people at CCF a ton of thanks. Granted the Ramadan gift is great, but the work you all do in D.C. is incomparable. The fact that many of you care so passionately about men and women whom you have never met is a true testament to the kind of people you all are. From the bottom of my heart...thank you a 1000 times!!!
Thank you, L.D."

We also began to send inmates an electronic weekly news digest and continued our pen-pal program. This program serves as a lifeline to the outside world for many inmates who have no one else to correspond with.

Finally, in 2019, we piloted an emergency funds grant program with four recipients in hopes that this may expand into a functioning future program. Grant recipients included two inmates, a former inmate, and a family in need of financial assistance to travel to visit their loved one in prison.

Family Support

In addition to providing ongoing support to 121 family members, CCF has been holding conferences since 2012 for families impacted by the "war on terror". The goal of these conferences is to help end their persecution and to empower family members to speak out against repression.

Our 9th Annual Family Conference took place during the weekend of October 25-28 in Falls Church, Virginia, with 67 individual family members in attendance, 26 of them for the first time.

We made an effort to bring in various local and national organization representatives to play a role in the weekend. This kind of alliance building is intrinsic to our work, and important to our family members.

We were grateful to have been joined by speakers Jesus Gonzales of the Center for Popular Democracy, Debi Campbell of FAMM, Fahd Ahmed of DRUM, Ahmed Bieder of United Voices, Amith Gupta of Project South, Mauri Saalakhani of the Aafia Foundation, and Dennis Neyman of the Salaam Network.

We were also joined by two journalists who wrote about our work, one from *The New Yorker* and the other from the *Chicago Tribune*.

For our youth track, activists Hany Massoud and Ayesha Hoda created an impactful session providing a platform for youth to express their ideas, concerns and hopes through the production of a short film. Our youth wrote, acted, and directed their own stories, while gaining knowledge of how powerful their voice can be when they harness the power of the media and the arts.

Following the conference, seventeen family members stayed behind to lobby on Capitol Hill for our proposed legislation. In total, our team met with the staff of 25 lawmakers.



Today I received the CCF newsletter. I have to tell you that nothing has moved me as much as this newsletter in a great while. I am so grateful to you and the wonderful people at CCF.



Legal Advocacy

A continual effort to seek justice.



Kathy Manley is the legal director for CCF and currently practices law in the state of New York.

Legal Director Kathy Manley maintains and updates a database of all the cases CCF follows (over 1200 prisoners) and analyzes these cases to determine whether they qualify for our Ramadan Gift Program, based on specific criteria.

Legal advice and assistance are provided directly to the prisoners and their families, through phone calls, email and snail mail. Legal calls were made to a number of prisoners in response to complaints regarding prison conditions. Kathy also submitted legal requests on

behalf of prisoners to meet a variety of needs, such as ordering medical records, and requesting transfers, compassionate release, or mental health treatment.

In late 2019, Kathy and Steve Downs filed **2255 motions** for Shain and Dritan Duka in an effort to get the unfair extra 30-year sentences thrown out. All three Duka brothers, as well as Mohamed Shnewer, are serving life sentences based on a horrendously unfair sting operation. Kathy also filed an immigration habeas petition for Yassin Aref and

appeared for it in Scranton, PA in June. Directly afterwards, he was sent back to Iraqi Kurdistan, where he is thriving.

Last year, CCF was grateful to have legal assistance by attorney Amith Gupta, who worked as a volunteer on some compassionate release petitions and helped facilitate a community organizing workshop during our family conference. We are happy to announce that he has now officially joined the CCF legal team as a staff attorney to assist with the many legal requests we receive!



Research & Tracking

CCF partnered with the Islamic Circle of North America – Council on Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ) to reissue CCF's 2014 groundbreaking report, *Inventing Terrorists: The Lawfare of Preemptive Prosecution* (pictured above). The report was released in April with updated statistics including the most recent Department of Justice list of "terrorism" convictions between 3/18/10 and 12/31/15. Like the previous report, this study found that over 90% of terrorism cases posed no such threat.

Grassroots Advocacy

CCF has always recognized the importance of showing up at courtrooms to support fairness and justice for defendants. When inmates face abuse in prison or are denied their rights, including medical attention, we intervene by calling the prison and contacting counselors.

In one case, an inmate who was denied an eye exam for years was finally granted one and given eyeglasses after CCF advocated for his rights.

Last year, CCF staff attended important court dates, hearings, and sentencing, as well as wrote letters to the judge on behalf of defendants. This public courtroom support for individuals will never change.

Legislative Advocacy

At the beginning of 2019, the CCF team sought a legislative solution that would block future preemptive prosecutions and provide a basis to free those already convicted. No other group was pursuing this kind of a legislative solution, and we at CCF believe that we can not wait any longer to push back against the anti-Muslim bigotry directed at the Muslim community.

Legal Director Kathy Manley drafted a bill entitled the Entrapment and Governmental Overreach (EGO) Relief Act, aimed at closing three obvious loopholes which the government exploited to obtain unfair preemptive prosecution convictions:

1. **EGO codifies** (for the first time) an Entrapment defense to limit prosecutions of targets for involvement in crimes initiated and created by the government
2. **EGO limits** material support to terrorism prosecutions to cases where there is proof that the target intends to support violence
3. **EGO requires** that any classified evidence shown to the judge by the prosecution must also be disclosed to security-cleared defense counsel

In 2019, CCF began a long-term campaign to get the EGO bill adopted into law. Board chairman, Steve Downs, made six trips to Washington, D.C. looking for sponsors on Capitol Hill. And several families lobbied both during our Family Lobby Day in October and throughout the year. Steve's efforts culminated in a week-long trip where he met with the staff of 53 Members of Congress and gave information packets to others. The reaction to our meetings was overwhelmingly positive from both sides of the aisle. A politicized FBI is a danger to everyone.





What the future holds

We are stronger than ever.

The CCF team is very excited to celebrate its 10-year anniversary in 2020 with a new logo, refreshed brand and a new website with a prisoner database in the works.

CCF will continue the important task of education and outreach in support of prisoners and their families. In addition to the annual conference, we plan to reach more families by holding regional conferences. While we have well over 200 prisoners on our list, we have only 121 family members.

CCF will continue providing legal advice and assistance directly to the prisoners and their families, researching and tracking new cases, and advocating for justice.

Finally, we hope to organize our first-ever congressional briefing on the EGO Relief Act and the need for it, which will include impacted family members telling their stories. CCF will continue the quest to find sponsors and ways to move our bill forward toward passage.

Onward together to justice!



Meet the Coalition

The CCF Team



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Amith Gupta
Staff Attorney
Effective Feb. 2020
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Board of Directors

Stephen Downs, Esq.
Chairman of the Board

Lynne Jackson
Project SALAM

Fahd Ahmed
DRUM

Ghassan Ballut
Al-Nahda and former
political prisoner

Jonathan Brown, PhD
Georgetown University

Dr. Zahid Bukhari
ICNA-CSJ

Sara Flounders
International Action Center

Theodore Micceri, PhD
Friends of Human Rights

Sonali Sadequee
Impacted family member

Mauri' Saalakhan
The Aafia Foundation

Hawa Wehelie, Esq.
Impacted family member
(2018-2020)

Advisory Council

Ahmed Bedier
United Voices

Tom Burke
Committee to Stop FBI
Repression

Fred Bryant
Friends of Human Rights

Ramzi Kassem
CLEAR-CUNY School
of Law

Marilyn Levin
UNAC

Joe Lombardo
UNAC

Hassan Shibly
CAIR-Florida



**The fact that many of
you care so passionately
about men and women
whom you have never
met is a true testament to
the kind of people
you all are.**

L.D.
Inmate



2019 Financials

Beginning Balance

January 1, 2019

\$31,380.93

Ending Balance

December 31, 2019

\$21,134.41⁽¹⁾

Total Revenue by Type

All Revenue Summary	\$92,216.15	% of Total
General Donations	\$24,377.68	26.4%
Program - Ramadan Gifts	\$33,145.00	35.9%
Program - Annual Family Conference	\$32,193.47	34.9%
Grants/Foundations	\$2,500.00	2.7%
Ticket Sales	\$0.00	0.0%
Membership	\$0.00	0.0%
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	0.0%

(1) \$20,000 donated through Facebook fundraisers is not yet reflective of this total. Rather than a net loss of \$10,000, there was a net gain of an estimated \$10,000.



Total Expenses by Type

All Expenses Summary	\$102,462.67	% of Total
Operations	\$33,336.52	32.5%
Staff Compensation	\$30,000.00	—
Website/Communications	\$1,121.47	—
PayPal/Bank Fees	\$793.00	—
Post Office	\$140.00	—
Printing/Stationary	\$244.05	—
Postage/Shipping	\$188.00	—
Rebrand - Designer	\$850.00	—
Development	\$1,956.00	1.9%
Programs	\$67,170.15	65.6%
Prisoner & Family Support	\$56,417.93	—
Education & Outreach	\$2,379.03	—
Legal Services/Advocacy	\$3,980.00	—
Research/Publications	\$1,755.64	—
Legislative Advocacy	\$2,500.00	—
Grassroots Advocacy	\$137.55	—



CCF Programs

Goal: **Self Sufficiency**

This Table Reports Totals, including Cash Expenses & Donations

Detailed Expenses

Program Expenses Summary	\$67,170.15	% of Total
Prisoner & Family Support	\$56,417.93	84.0%
Ramadan Gifts Program	\$22,240.73	
Annual Family Conference	\$31,807.20	
Prisoner Newsletter	\$584.00	
Emergency Aid	\$1,786.00	
Education & Outreach	\$2,379.44	3.5%
Travel/Transportation	\$417.00	
Hotel/Meals	\$1,527.44	
Conference Fees	\$260.00	
Media/Film	\$175.00	
Legal Services/Advocacy	\$3,980.00	5.9%
Research/Publications	\$1,755.64	2.6%
Design	\$770.64	
Printing	\$985.00	
Legislative Advocacy	\$2,500.00	3.7%
Direct Lobbying	\$2,000.00	
Consulting Fees	\$500.00	
Grassroots Advocacy	\$137.55	0.2%

