



Mission Statement

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.”



Member Organizations

The Aafia Foundation (TAF)

aafia.org / Silver Spring, MD
peacethrujustice@aol.com
301.441.2300

Committee to Stop FBI Repression (CSFR)

stopfbi.org / Minneapolis, MN
stopfbi@gmail.com

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

cairflorida.org / Florida, USA
info@cair.fl.com
813.514.1414

Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility (CUNY-CLEAR)

cunyclear.org / Long Island City, NY
cunyclear@law.cuny.edu
718.340.4558

Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM)

drumnyc.org / Jackson Heights, NY
718.205.3036

Friends of Human Rights (FHR)

[@friendsofhumanrights](https://www.facebook.com/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
info@icnacsj.org

The Jericho Movement

thejerichomovement.com / Chesterfield, VA
jihadabdulmumit@gmail.com

Massachusetts Peace Action (MAPA)

masspeaceaction.org / Cambridge, MA
info@masspeaceaction.org

Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)

mlfa.org / Dallas, TX
972.331.9021

National Lawyers Guild (NLG)

nlg.org / New York, NY
212.679.5100

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

How to reach us:

Coalition for Civil Freedoms

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civilfreedoms.org
info@civilfreedoms.org

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends of CCF,

Although 2024 was a difficult year for many reasons, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the greatly increased surveillance of various minority organizations, CCF continued to fulfill its mission of supporting and advocating for the prisoners who have been unjustly imprisoned in the War on Terror. The numbers are slightly lower than they have been in previous years because some have completed their sentences and been released. Preparation is underway to file a number of compassionate release motions in 2025, and so we hope for the release of more this year.

The Prisoner Sponsorship Program is growing, and at the end of 2024, the number of sponsored prisoners has reached 10. These are prisoners with no other outside financial help, except for the \$100 a month we send them.

Steve Downs has decided to step down as Chair of the Board. He is a founding member and he served as executive director for a number of years, as well as serving as BOD chair. The CCF family greatly appreciates all of the invaluable contributions Steve has made to the functioning of this organization. Although officially Steve has stepped down, I am happy to say that he has not left us, but continues to work with us in many important ways.

Ashely Young has also resigned as Secretary after several years of service. She will be missed as secretary, but she is also continuing to help CCF in a number of critical areas. We greatly appreciate that!

Our social media has made great strides this year with the addition of Ashleigh Crause. Through her efforts, CCF has increased its presence in Instagram, X, and Facebook.

We held a number of events this year in Massachusetts, Georgia, and Florida. Terry Albury was a great addition to our CCF speaking tour. Terry is a former FBI agent turned whistle-blower who exposed Islamophobic government targeting of Muslim Americans and other abusive practices.

The year ahead is filled with uncertainties, but CCF will not be deterred. We must, and will, continue our work for justice!

Sincerely,



Mel Underbakke, Ph. D.
Executive Director



Prisoner and Family Support



2024 By the Numbers

Prisoners Receiving Ramadan Gifts	\$100 to 210 prisoners = \$21,000
Prisoners sponsored monthly	\$100 / month to 9 prisoners
Post Release Grants	\$500 to one prisoner
Correspondence with Political Prisoners	100 prisoners via Prison Email System 229 via Snail Mail
Trial and Hearing Alerts	33
Hearings attended by CCF staff	2
Advocacy Alerts	3

Annual Ramadan Gift and Card for Prisoners

Every year, CCF provides prisoners with a \$100 Ramadan Gift sent directly to their commissary account. In addition, we send prisoners a uniquely designed Ramadan card letting them know they are remembered and supported.

"You cannot believe the joy that we felt when I looked in my commissary account and saw I received \$100 from CCF. We know somebody out there cares about us. There are some people who get nothing – this whole year – except this \$100."

~ LF

Quote From a Prisoner Regarding Ramadan →





A Ramadan Card



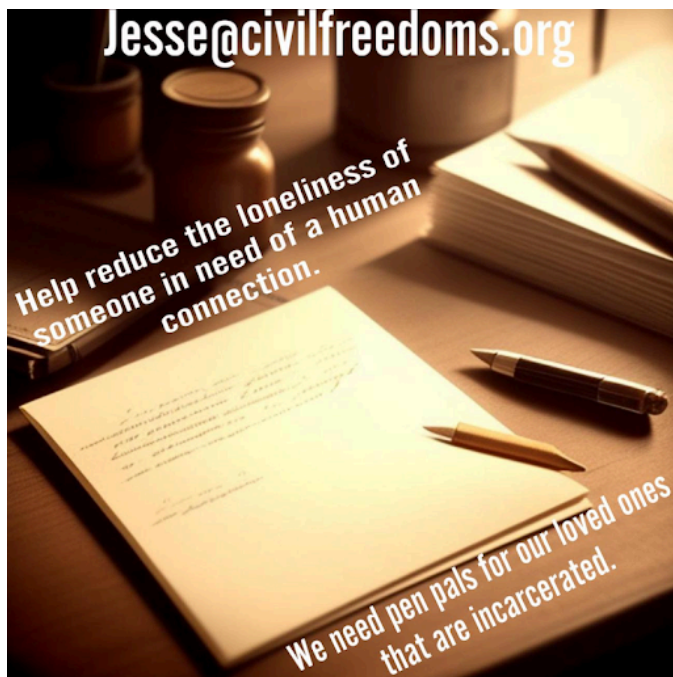
Volunteers writing money orders. From left to right, Joann Hagan, Julie Fischer and Fred Bryant



Preparing Ramadan Cards for Mailing. From left to right, Jeanne Finley, Miriam Straw, Steve Downs and Kathy Manley

Prisoner Correspondence, Support, and Advocacy

Hello everyone! I'm Jesse McGraw, the Support Coordinator for our incarcerated loved ones. Through Corrlinks, we not only provide correspondence, but also research, legal aid, financial assistance and penpal services to those in need. Currently, I am corresponding with approximately 100 individuals. One of the challenges of being incarcerated is the isolation from the outside world and the inability to form meaningful relationships outside of the prison subworld. This is why I manage the CCF's penpal program. At present, we have nearly matched every loved one with a penpal. Additionally, in an effort to give their creativity a voice beyond the walls, I collect poetry and creative writings, which we publish on social media and in our weekly newsletter to provide these men and women something to look forward to.



Poem Power

My last poem burns to breathe light
My poem is words, raw nerves, rhymes,
Sorrow and delight wants to ripen
Into fruits hanging low on every
Branch willing to bend and serve fruits
For hungry souls to pick and become
Songs, sweet and balsamic

Songs for open wounds itching to close
Songs for birds sniped out of native nests
Songs for women in black tired
Of kissing their last goodbyes
Songs for men bolted to concrete slabs
Crying for freedom to break loose
Songs for dream gagging in bottlenecks

I will embroider my last poem on my
Daughter's scarf, tuttreez is evergreen
I will whisper it to Adam, he's only three
Whispers last for beyond when I am gone
More fruits hanging low- God bless
Sweet and balsamic, ripened
Under an oppressive sun

Shukri Abu Baker 12-17-24

Prisoner Newsletter

Once again, CCF produced and mailed one issue of its prisoner newsletter, Until Freedom. It included articles about current events as well as prisoner art, poetry, and useful resources. The Bureau of Prisons blocked delivery of the newsletter to many of the prisoners. This is an issue that we are working to resolve.

Until

COALITION FOR CIVIL FREEDOMS // JUNE 2024 // ISSUE 06

FREEDOM

 COALITION FOR CIVIL FREEDOMS

PO Box 55713, Washington, D.C. 20040
www.civilfreedoms.org

FREE



Group photo from the 12th Annual Conference for Families of Political Prisoners, in Tampa, Florida on December 8-19, 2023. People from 10 different states from coast to coast attended. The theme of this conference was *Redefining Justice in our Communities*. Participants worked together to develop methods of finding allies in their local communities and making needed changes for justice.

Financial Sponsorship Program for Prisoners

Incarceration creates a significant financial burden on prisoners and their families. With most services and operations being outsourced to predatory for-profit companies, prisoners are charged outrageous prices to make phone calls, send emails, and purchase basic essentials like hygiene products and supplemental food. For many prisoners, the \$100 Ramadan gift is the only financial support they receive all year. Prisoners are required to work prison jobs and earn only 12c to 40c per hour. In addition, many prisoners have no outside help and so CCF started a Prisoner Sponsorship program which currently provides \$100 a month to nine prisoners. This program is growing. We also provide a \$500 post release grant to prisoners needing financial assistance.

"CCF is more to me than an advocacy group. They are my family. Since my incarceration, both my mother and father have passed away, and CCF stepped in immediately and began supporting me."

~ LD

Family Support

Shelley MacInnes, Family Support Coordinator

In 2024, we started our TRUTH, JUSTICE and FREEDOM through the ARTS program. Although the prisoner artwork has been displayed in the past, we have expanded the program to include all forms of art to include poetry, painting, drawing, and short writings. A performing arts production will be in the planning phases this coming year. Our mission through this program is activism through the arts. Along with displaying the talent of our imprisoned loved ones, we will work on telling our stories in their proper context, reclaiming our identities and involving families in portraying these stories in their own creative way. Telling our stories is a very important part of fighting for justice.

Accomplishments: Our first art gallery display was in April at Siena College in NY. Steve Downs gave a presentation about a few of the pieces of art and poetry for the law students. A month later, I spoke about CCF and our new art program to a group of criminal justice/pre-law and art students.

Our second art gallery display opened in October at Williams College in the Berkshires of Massachusetts at the Center of Theater and Dance at Corridor "62" gallery. The art was on display for three months. The next step is to work with families to plan the next show and hopefully an on-stage presentation done by the families. We are grateful for our amazing artists and their participation in this program.

This past year I reached out to a number of families to support and welcome new families whose loved ones have been imprisoned. It is important for the families to receive support when first faced with this overwhelming and frightening situation.

GOALS FOR 2025

- ❖ Road trip/event travel tour
- ❖ Designing and displaying the billboard
- ❖ Planning the next art gallery and live stage event
- ❖ Re-structuring family night with the help of those interested
- ❖ Finding what works to get more families involved and connected



← Family Support Coordinator, Shelley MacInnes attended the 2025 Gathering and presented information about CCF. (Shelley is 6th from the left, front.)

Education and Outreach



2024 By the Numbers

Videos posted to Youtube for the public	6
Public Events	5
News Digests	51
Speaking Engagements	3
Media Interviews	15
Tabling at conferences	4

CCF in Georgia and Florida

As many of you know, compounding the ongoing injustices in Palestine is the resurgence of the most insidious "war on terror" intimidation tactics and surveillance of communities here in the U.S. Many of our organizations have already been flooded with complaints from concerned community members reporting FBI visits at their mosques, homes, universities, and businesses.

In May and September, The Coalition for Civil Freedoms were invited by the local communities and mosques of Atlanta and Tampa for a panel discussion on how to protect our communities.

We were graciously hosted by Masjid Maryam, Masjid Jafer, Roswell Community Masjid and Islamic Community of Tampa.

We heard from Legal Director Kathy Manley, Political Advocacy Director Sarwat Malik-Hassan, former Executive Director Leena Al-Arian, and FBI whistleblower Terry Albury, who exposed the Islamophobic government targeting of Muslim Americans an agent "knocking other abusive policies. Terry provided his powerful first-hand account and insights as formerly the on the door."



The discussion was followed by a lively Q&A, where the community passionately engaged with comments and concerns. Additionally, members of the community expressed concerns about their own children being potential targets.

Our goal was to continue to strengthen our communities' defenses against unfair government targeting, harassment, and malicious prosecution.

**COALITION FOR
CIVIL FREEDOMS**

FROM 9/11 TO 10/7:
*Protecting Our Communities Amid
a New Wave of Repression*

Masjid Maryam

- Friday May 10, 2024
- 8:30 PM
- 3650 Savannah Pl Dr
Duluth, GA 30096
- * Dinner served @ 7:45 *

Masjid Jafar

- Saturday May 11, 2024
- 12 PM
- 11005 Jones Bridge Rd Unit 112
Johns Creek, GA 30022
- * refreshments will be served *

Roswell Community Masjid

- Saturday May 11, 2024
- 6:30 PM
- 345 Market Place
Roswell, GA 30075
- * refreshments will be served *

**Leena Al Arian**

Former Executive Director
of CCF
Daughter of former political
prisoner Sami Al-Arian

**Asif Salim**

Khateeb, Huda TV Presenter
Prisoner advocate

**Kathy Manley, Esq.**

CCF Legal Director

**Sarwat Malik-Hassan**

Human Rights Activist;
Director of Political
Advocacy and Community
Outreach

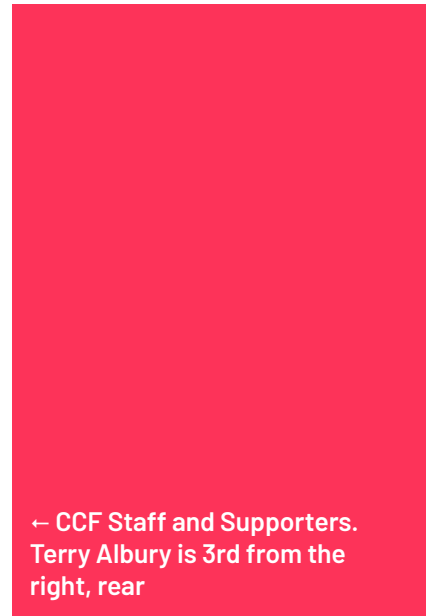
**Terry Albury**

Former FBI Special Agent
turned Whistleblower

For More Information : www.civilfreedoms.org



The two panels held in Tampa on September 13 & 14 were also very well received by the local community. Sarwat Malik-Hassan, Steve Downs and Mel Underbakke of CCF spoke, and again the guest speaker was Terry Albury.



← CCF Staff and Supporters. Terry Albury is 3rd from the right, rear



From the left, Sarwat Malik-Hassan, Mel Underbakke, Ahmed Bedier, Terry Albury, Steve Downs →



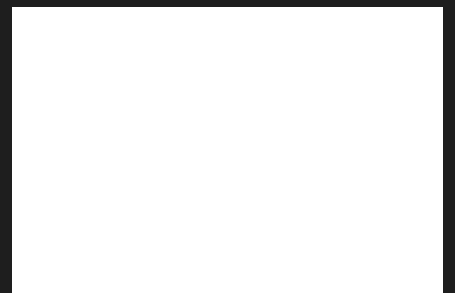
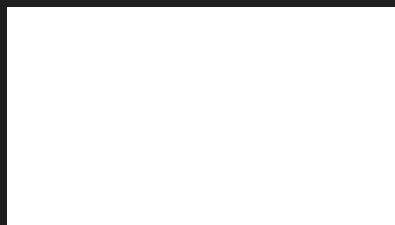


TARIK SHAH: Don't Play Like Them

Kathy Manley was filmed for a documentary along with other Coalition members, Steve Downs, Lynne Jackson and Jeanne Finley. It is about a renowned jazz musician who was entrapped by an FBI informant who pretended to be his friend.

You can watch the trailer to Tarik Shah: Don't Play Like Them here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IKIEHuJoR4>



10th Annual CommUNITY Potluck Gathering

In 2024, this annual event was hosted by the Islamic Community of Tampa. This meaningful event marked the beginning of the New Year with over 100 attendees. Participants from various age groups and diverse backgrounds congregated, making the event a true melting pot of cultures and communities. This gathering is now in its 10th year, and each year, the attendees unite with a shared vision of peace for the upcoming year. The 2024 gathering proved no different, with the call for peace echoing through the crowd, reinforcing the event's purpose and significance.



The 2024 event was sponsored by Coalition for Civil Freedoms, Friends of Human Rights, Islamic Community of Tampa, Tampa Friends Meeting (Quakers), First United Church of Tampa, Muslims for Democracy and Fairness, CAIR-FL, WMNF, and St. Pete for Peace.



Legislative Advocacy

With a new administration in Washington, The Coalition for Civil Freedoms plans to revive our lobbying efforts to advocate for the various issues of our prisoners and their families.

One of our priorities will be to push for CCF's proposed law, "The Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act" (EGO Relief Act), that will prevent new cases of preemptive prosecution from occurring, and will provide a basis for bringing old cases back into court for reevaluation and reversal.

A summary of our proposed Bill:

The Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act (EGO Relief Act)

Liberty today is threatened by political encroachment and governmental overreach, in the name of National Security. At present there is no codified defense against entrapment, no check on the arbitrary expansion of security laws to include Constitutionally protected activities, and no prohibition against showing secret evidence to judges (but not the defense) in criminal trials. The government uses these legal loopholes to incarcerate political enemies rather than people who intended to commit crimes.

The EGO Relief Act limits these abuses by:

- A.** Codifying (for the first time) an Entrapment defense to limit prosecutions of targets induced by the FBI to commit crimes created by the government,
- B.** Limiting material support to terrorism prosecutions to cases where there is proof that the target intends to support violence,
- C.** Providing that any classified evidence shown to the judge by the prosecution must also be disclosed to security-cleared defense counsel.

Our bipartisan effort seeks to engage all elected representatives willing to hear our struggle.

Legal Report



2024 By the Numbers

Court cases	2
Reviewed legal papers and advised prisoners or sent them legal material	about 10-15
Legal calls	at least 12
Email correspondence with prisoners	at least 50 prisoners, many with frequent emails
Snail mail	corresponded with about 30 prisoners
Media/film	Kathy did at least 3 interviews, was filmed for 2 documentaries
Events	Kathy spoke at 4 events

This year CCF filed one new compassionate release motion, which is currently pending in court, and started preparations to file seven to nine more in 2025 (seven of the people are codefendants in two different cases). Legal Director Kathy Manley also started a waiting list for compassionate release motions, after creating a list of those we support who still have several years left on their sentences.

Kathy filed a challenge to a disciplinary case where we believe a prisoner was pepper sprayed and then charged with assault in order to justify it. That is pending in court.

We kept using our Case Alert system, which

allows us to learn of upcoming trials, pleas, sentencings, and other court appearances. We let people know about them in our News Digest to try to get supporters to attend.

Kathy continued to maintain and update our extensive database of cases, and our Ramadan List of prisoners we support. This includes evaluating new cases to see if they meet our support criteria. She also created a list of those released; a list of lower sentences in these cases (to use in compassionate release motions); and obtained and compiled information showing there are extremely low recidivism rates in these cases.



Kathy also wrote letters and made phone calls to advocate for prisoners with regard to several issues. She corresponded with and advised many prisoners, and researched their cases. She also arranged to pick up court exhibits for one prisoner before they were destroyed, and had them sent to her office.

In addition, she consulted with several attorneys, monitored and advocated for certain amendments to the federal Sentencing Guidelines, spoke at several events and did media interviews.

Attorney Amith Gupta did an appeal for Dilkhayot Kasimov at the 2nd circuit. He also advocated for another prisoner.



Education and Outreach



2024 By the Numbers

General donations	\$22,564.67
Ramadan Donations	\$30,215.25
Grant	\$25,000

We are very grateful to United Voices, who has covered part of the cost of website development. Donations were down in 2024, so this is appreciated.



What's Ahead for the Coalition for Civil Freedoms



Our Legal team has successfully obtained freedom for six prisoners by filing compassionate release motions. In 2025, Legal Director Kathy Manley will be continuing this important work. Currently one motion is pending in court, and preparations are underway for three other cases. Hopefully we will be able to do these motions more often in the future, but it depends on our resources, and on how many volunteer attorneys are willing to take them on.

Another important focus for 2025 is to expand our reach by utilizing the various social media platforms. Since Ashleigh Crause came on board, our mailing list has increased by over 1000 names, and we plan to continue this growth. We will also continue to hold events and speak at a variety of locations. And Shelley, our Family Support Coordinator, will continue to take CCF on the road as well.

We plan to continue and expand our **TRUTH, JUSTICE and FREEDOM through the ARTS program**, as well as increase family involvement with CCF.

In addition, we will be returning to Washington, DC, to lobby our representatives to work for our causes. We will look for sponsors of our bill, the **Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act (EGO Relief Act)**. This is an important bill that provides a defense against entrapment. We will continue to meet with congressional representatives in search of sponsors for the EGO Relief Act and to further our cause of justice for everyone.

Onward together to justice! 



The CCF Team. From the left: Kathy Manley, Steve Down, Shelley MacInnes, Mel Underbakke, Sarwat Malik-Hassan. Rear: Fred Bryant and Jesse McGraw

Meet the Coalition

The CCF Team



Mel Underbakke, PhD
Executive Director
melva@civilfreedoms.org



Kathy Manley, Esq.
Legal Director
kathy@civilfreedoms.org



Sarwat Malik
Political Advocacy and
Outreach Director
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Hatem Fariz
Development Director
hatem@civilfreedoms.org



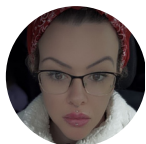
Amith Gupta
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amith@civilfreedoms.org



Shelley MacInnes
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Jesse McGraw
Prisoner Support
Coordinator
jesse@civilfreedoms.org



Ashleigh Crause
Social Media Associate
ashleigh@civilfreedoms.org

Board of Directors

Hatem Fariz
Treasurer & Former
Political Prisoner

Fahd Ahmed
Desis Rising Up and Moving

Ghassan Ballut
Al-Nahda and Former
Political Prisoner

Zahra Billoo
CAIR-SF

Jonathan A.C. Brown, PhD
Georgetown University

Zahid Bukhari, PhD
ICNA for Social Justice

Sara Flounders
International Action Center

Lynne Jackson
Project SALAM

Mauri' Saalakhani
The Aafia Foundation

Sonali Sadequee
Holistic Health Coach and
Impacted Family Member

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

Daniel McGowan
Former Political Prisoner

Huma Yasin
Attorney and Activist

2024 Financials

Current Assets

As of December 31, 2024

PayPal Balance	\$26,175.26
Regions Bank Checking	\$17,003.96
Regions Bank Saving	\$5,020.09
Total	\$48,199.31

Income

Income	
General Donations	\$22,564.27
Ramadan Donations	\$30,215.25
Legal Department	\$200.00
Prisoner Sponsorship Program	\$177.54
Grants from other nonprofits	\$25,000.00
Total Income	\$78,157.46
Cost of goods Sold	
PayPal fees	\$104.18
Gross Profit	\$78,053.28

Expenses

Graphic Design	\$970.00
Charitable Contributions	\$2,645.00
Communications	\$6,265.82

Contractor & Professional

Accounting Fees	\$1,520.00
Legal Director	\$6,341.20
Advocacy and outreach	\$16,001.50
Executive Director	\$24,000.00
Prisoner Support Coordinator	\$4,070.00
Family Support Coordinator	\$1,586.43
Social Media Associate	\$2,694.92
Corporation Fees	\$101.00
Honorariums	\$1,000.00
Miscellaneous Legal Services	\$689.30
Total Contract & Professional Fees	\$58,004.35

Office

Bank Fees & Service Charges	\$866.82
Office Supplies	\$26.20
Printing & Photocopying	\$1,352.10
Shipping & Postage	\$522.33
Total Office Expenses	\$2,767.45

Travel

Airfare	\$4,951.94
Hotels	\$2,006.01
Miscellaneous travel expenses	\$626.46
Total Travel Expenses	\$7,584.41

Uncategorized Expense

Family Travel	\$44.99
Prisoner Post-Release Grants	\$500.00
Prisoner Sponsorship Program	\$9,900.00
Prisoner/Family Emergency Funds	\$857.41
Ramadan Gifts to Prisoners	\$21,010.43
Rental of Event Space	\$500.00
Total Uncategorized Expense	\$32,812.83

Total Expenses	\$111,049.77
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Net Operating Income	\$-32,996.49
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Net Income	\$-32,996.49
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COALITION FOR
CIVIL FREEDOMS