



# Press Release

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## **America's Muslim Convention Draws Thousands to Dialogue, Justice & Compassion**

***U.S. lawmakers and leaders laud Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's track record of defending justice & peace for all***

Diverse civic, political and thought leaders gathered to laud the efforts of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA during its 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention yesterday in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Nearly 10,000 convention attendees, including 500 guests, attended America's oldest and longest running Muslim convention to discuss how to solve modern day conflicts through compassion and justice.

Kurt J. Werthmuller, Policy Analyst at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), extended USCIRF's "appreciation to His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad for his leadership as Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in advancing the cause of peace, pluralism, and religious freedom for all." Speaking on USCIRF's work advocating for religious freedom, Mr. Werthmuller commented specifically on the persecution face by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in different countries and the recent release of Abdul Shukoor from 3 years of imprisonment in Pakistan. "We were proud to adopt his case last year and advocate on his behalf as part of our Religious Prisoners of Conscience project."

"I express gratitude to the exemplary leadership of His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad, who has been a leader of compassion and a tireless advocate for peace," remarked Representative Andrew Lewis, Member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. "It is your work that has made the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community such an important part of the commonwealth, the nation, and the world."

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA presented its annual Humanitarian Award to two awardees this year. First was Blake Strayhorn, President & Executive Director for Habitat for Humanity of Durham, for his efforts to significantly increase Habitat for Humanity's impact through housing for those who need it most. Sue Henderson, National VP of U.S. Operations for Habitat for Humanity, first introduced the organization to the convention attendees and expressed their positive experience partnering with other faith groups to give people a decent place to live. She remarked, "Although we are a Christian organization, Habitat realized many years ago that other faith groups, including the Muslim faith share the central theological call to care for those in need."

Accepting his Humanitarian Award, Mr. Strayhorn said “Your community [Ahmadiyya Muslim Community] does so much to help others. So I am very much humbled by this award, and I am honored... I believe stereotypes and labels are a huge problem...A mentor of mine once told me: ideas divide and projects unite.”

The second recipient of this year’s Humanitarian Award was U.S. Congresswoman Norma Torres of California for her unyielding commitment to protect the rights of immigrant communities, especially those fleeing from violence and persecution. Accepting the award, the Congresswoman stated, “I am so pleased to be among a community that is so dedicated to these values - Love for All, Hatred for None. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been steadfast in their support for charity, for justice, generosity, and for understanding. These are values we need today more than ever. You have stood up for refugees, for immigrants, for children, for the hungry and the homeless, and you have spent your free time and your resources caring for those in need.”

The Honorable Neftaly Aldana Herrera, Judge of the Constitutional Court of Guatemala, traveled to the U.S. to speak at the Convention. Addressing the convention’s theme of Compassion, he said: “To all of you, I express my sincere and profound respect. I especially want to express my gratitude and admiration to this community for its commitment to serve humanity, to bring compassion to action, and its efforts to create bonds based on love, peace and harmony.”

The Honorable Siddique Abou Bakr Wai, Ambassador of Sierra Leone to the United States, also addressed the Convention, stating “Everyone talks about Ahmadiyya’s generosity. I stand here representing a country, the Republic of Sierra Leone, who has been and continues to be the recipient of the human generosity of the Ahmadiyya Community...I also bring greetings to you from The Excellency President Julius Maada Bio, including the 7.5 Million Sierra Leonians, who are so grateful and thankful for your human generosity of bringing people together to work together for the good of mankind.”

Rushan Abbas, Founder and Executive Director of Campaign for Uyghurs, joined the convention as a special guest representing the deeply persecuted Uyghur Muslim community. More than two dozen members of the Uyghur community attended this year’s Annual Convention. She passionately spoke to all in attendance about the plight of Uyghur Muslims facing bitter and unthinkable persecution at the hands of the Chinese government. Reflecting on the relationship between Uyghurs and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, she remarked, “With the passion for brotherly love and eagerness to help the weak and the deprived, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has adopted our cause while Uyghur Muslims are facing the most unprecedented and horrendous atrocity of our time... The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community showed compassion and responsibility by helping us and giving us the most precious gift of all - the light of hope.”

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA also received special video messages from the Governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Wolf, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (Pennsylvania) and Mayor of Harrisburg, Eric Papenfuse, along with official greetings from over a dozen members of U.S. Congress.

**More Information:**

<http://convention.ahmadiyya.us/>

<http://www.TrueIslam.com>

**About the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community:**

*The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a dynamic, reformist and fast-growing international movement within Islam. Founded in 1889, the Community spans 207 countries with tens of millions of members. Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, established in 1920, is among the first American-Muslim organizations.*

*The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the only Islamic organization to believe that the long-awaited messiah has come in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) of Qadian, India. Ahmad claimed to be the metaphorical second coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine guide, whose advent was foretold by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The Community believes that God sent Ahmad, like Jesus, to end religious wars, condemn bloodshed and reinstitute morality, justice and peace. Ahmad's advent has brought about an unprecedented era of Islamic revival and moderation. He divested Muslims of fanatical beliefs and practices by vigorously championing Islam's true and essential teachings.*

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