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NEW YORK NEWS

The Voice of People

From New York

Alexandar Sullivan

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, publicly acknowledged for the first time that thousands of Iranians were killed during weeks of nationwide protests, placing blame squarely on Donald Trump, whom he labeled a "criminal" for backing demonstrators. In a Saturday address broadcast by state media, Khamenei said the unrest,

HIGHLIGHT

●Ayatollah Ali Khamenei admits thousands died during recent protests

●Iranian leader blames President Donald Trump for encouraging unrest

●Human rights groups report more than 3,000 deaths, figures remain disputed

which erupted in late December amid economic hardship and currency collapse, resulted in widespread bloodshed and destruction. He accused the United States and Israel of orchestrating the protests, claiming Trump had "openly encouraged" demonstrators by promising military support. "The U.S. president is responsible both for the casualties



Photo: Khamenei blames Trump for protests



Image Source: Online

Iran Leader Breaks Silence

Khamenei accuses Trump of fueling nationwide unrest

and the damage," Khamenei said. Khamenei did not address allegations of excessive force by Iran's security services. Witnesses and rights organizations have described troops firing on unarmed crowds from rooftops and deploying drones. The Human Rights Activists News Agency

estimates that more than 3,000 people were killed and over 24,000 arrested, figures that remain impossible to independently verify due to a sweeping internet blackout imposed on January 8. Trump responded swiftly, calling Khamenei a "sick man" and accusing Iran's leadership of killing citizens "by the

thousands" to retain power. Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, have disputed the death toll, claiming casualties numbered in the hundreds. Khamenei acknowledged Iran's "truly difficult" economic situation but urged unity in defense of the Islamic system,

declaring the protests extinguished. Meanwhile, fears persist over the fate of detained protesters, as Iranian prosecutors warned some could face the death penalty, deepening anxiety among families and human rights advocates both inside and outside Iran.

DOJ Probes Minnesota Leaders

Immigration clash escalates

John Paul

The U.S. Department of Justice has opened an investigation into Tim Walz and Jacob Frey, examining whether their public statements amounted to a conspiracy to impede federal immigration enforcement in Minneapolis, according to sources familiar with the matter.

HIGHLIGHT

●DOJ is investigating Gov. Tim Walz and Mayor Jacob Frey

●Probe centers on alleged interference with ICE operations

●Nearly 3,000 federal agents deployed to Minneapolis

●State and city leaders deny wrongdoing

●Investigation marks major federal escalation

The inquiry follows the deployment of nearly 3,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol agents, the largest such operation in the agency's history. Officials said subpoenas are likely. The DOJ declined to comment. Frey called the investigation "an attempt to intimidate" local leaders, while Walz accused the administration of "weaponizing the justice system." Federal officials, including Attorney General Pam Bondi, have warned that impeding federal agents could constitute a felony. The probe comes amid ongoing protests and heightened tensions following the fatal shooting of Renee Good, deepening a national debate over immigration enforcement and federal authority.

Minneapolis on Edge

Deployment not ruled out

Lily Anderson

A total of 1,500 U.S. Army soldiers were placed on standby for potential deployment to Minneapolis, as

HIGHLIGHT

●1,500 U.S. Army soldiers were placed on standby for possible deployment to Minneapolis

●The move followed ongoing protests against ICE operations and a fatal shooting

●No decision had been made to deploy active-duty troops

federal and state officials monitored



Photo: Minneapolis tensions grow

Image Source: Reuters/BBC

continued protests against Immigration and Customs Enforcement activity in the city. A U.S. defense official said the troops, stationed in Alaska

with the 11th Airborne Division, were being considered as an option should Donald Trump decide to deploy active-duty forces. No such decision had

been made, the official emphasized. The demonstrations followed the January 7 shooting death of Renee Good, a U.S. citizen who city leaders

said was acting as a legal observer during an ICE operation. Her death sparked protests in Minneapolis and other cities, with demonstrators calling for accountability and justice. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz had already placed the National Guard on alert, while additional law enforcement officers were deployed across the city. Meanwhile, a federal judge issued an order limiting ICE agents' use of crowd-control tactics against peaceful protesters. Officials continued to urge calm, warning that further escalation could heighten tensions in a city already grappling with grief and anger.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Brooklyn Honors Haiti's Legacy

NYN Desk

Brooklyn's deep ties to Haiti were on full display last week as elected officials and community members gathered at Brooklyn Borough Hall to celebrate Haitian Independence Day and honor leaders who embody the community's resilience and cultural pride. The January 8 event, hosted by the office of Antonio Reynoso, was organized by City Council members Rita Joseph, Farah Louis,



Photo: Elected officials honor Haitian New Yorkers
Image Source: Office of Council Member Rita Joseph

Mercedes Narcisse, and Chi Ossé. The program commemorated Haiti's 1804 independence while recognizing the strength of the Haitian diaspora in New York City. Proclamations were presented to nurse and labor leader Nancy Hagans, nonprofit advocate Porez Luxama, actor Atibon Nazaire, and Dr. Henry Paul for their contributions to health care, community service, and the arts. The celebration also featured traditional drumming,

dance, visual art, and a resource fair highlighting Haitian community organizations. Speaking on the revolution's global impact, Marie Lily Cerat said Haiti's history shows that "freedom has never been granted quietly." The standing-room-only gathering closed with rousing applause as Jumaane Williams urged continued advocacy for immigrant rights, drawing cheers from a crowd united by heritage and purpose.

Winter system prompts travel advisory



Photo: NYC Weather update: Winter Weather Emergency Plan activated with Sunday snow expected up to 3 inches
Image Source : REUTERS/Adam Gray

broader system expected to move in early Sunday. Snow showers are forecast to begin around 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. and continue through much of the day before tapering off by evening. Most areas, including Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island, are expected to receive 1 to 3 inches of snow, while eastern Queens and southeast Brooklyn face a lower-probability chance of 2 to 4 inches. City agencies have begun pre-treating streets and bridges with salt and brine, staging tow trucks, and adjusting staffing levels. Officials urged residents to limit travel if possible, warning that Sunday morning and late afternoon could bring slower traffic and delays on roads and highways.

Staff Reporter

New York City officials activated the city's Winter Weather Emergency Plan and issued a Travel Advisory for Sunday, January 18, 2026, as a winter system is expected

to bring snowfall across the region, authorities said Saturday. Forecasters said parts of the city could see light accumulations of up to one inch by Saturday afternoon, serving as a preview of a

Queens Tire Shop Fire Injures Nine

Senior Reporter

A massive early-morning fire tore through a mixed-use building in Ridgewood, Queens, injuring nine people and displacing dozens after flames erupted above a tire repair shop, officials said. The blaze broke out just after 4 a.m. on Flushing Avenue near Metropolitan and Woodward Avenues, according to the New York City Fire Department. Firefighters arriving on scene found heavy flames racing through all three floors of the building, which houses a tire shop on the ground level and apartments above. More than 100 FDNY members responded as burning tires fueled what officials described as a "deep-seated and stubborn" fire. Assistant Chief David Sims said crews initially attempted an interior attack but were



Photo : FDNY battles a multi-hour fire above a tire shop in Ridgewood, Queens, Jan. 17, 2026.
Image Source: CBS News New York

forced to pull back after a partial collapse in the rear of the structure. "When we do get hydrocarbon fires, like rubber fires, we use foam to smother the material and cut off oxygen," Sims explained. Four firefighters and five residents suffered minor injuries, including two children

and a pregnant woman, building manager Jesus Maldonado said. All were expected to recover. The fire was brought under control after more than three hours. The American Red Cross reported assisting about 30 displaced residents, while fire marshals continue investigating the cause.



Photo: Crash Arthur Kill Road and Kreischer St.
Image Source: Online

Snowy South Shore Road Sends Two Cars Offway

Community Desk

Two people were injured Saturday afternoon after separate vehicles slid off a snow-covered stretch of Arthur Kill Road on Staten Island's South Shore, authorities said. The incident unfolded around 1 p.m. near Kreischer Street, according to the New York City Police Department Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Public Information. Both vehicles were found off the roadway in a nearby wooded area after losing control on icy pavement. The driver of the first vehicle told Advance/SILive.com that she and her husband initially escaped injury when police and EMS arrived at the scene. However, while the couple waited for a tow truck, a second vehicle

reportedly slid off the same stretch of road and struck the husband as he stood outside. "All of a sudden, the other car came and hit him," the driver said. "It's like a movie. My husband is now under the car." Emergency responders transported one passenger from each vehicle to area hospitals. Police said the nature and severity of the injuries were not immediately known. The incident highlights the hazards posed by winter weather on South Shore roadways, where untreated snow and ice can quickly turn routine travel into a dangerous situation. Authorities urged motorists to drive cautiously during snowy conditions and allow extra stopping distance on slick roads.

Prayer Time IN New York

FAJR	DHUHR	ASR	MAGHRIB	ISHA
05:56	12:07	02:38	04:58	06:18
05:56	12:07	02:39	04:59	06:19
05:55	12:07	02:40	05:00	06:20
05:55	12:08	02:41	05:01	06:21
05:54	12:08	02:42	05:03	06:22
05:54	12:08	02:43	05:04	06:23
05:53	12:08	02:44	05:05	06:24

OPINION

Al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj: Historic & Spiritual Journey of the Prophet (SAW)

— Imam Shamsi Ali

Like other events in the history of Islam, the exact date of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) Isra' Mi'raj cannot be pinpointed with certainty. The 27th of Rajab, however, is widely regarded as the night of this monumental occurrence. It was on this night that Allah bestowed His greatest gift upon His servant ('abdahu) the final prophet, sent as a mercy to all humanity.

"Isra'" denotes the night-time journey, while "Mi'raj" signifies ascent or vertical journey or movement. Together they describe how the Prophet was taken by Allah from the Masjid al-Haram in Makkah to the Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and from there he was ascended to Sidrat al-Muntaha, the highest point in the universe.

The Isra'-Mi'raj is a matter of faith (Iman) that directly tests the believers' faith. In Surah Al-Najm, Allah emphasizes that what Muhammad (SAW) conveyed was not his own words but divine revelation (Al-Najm 3-4). The phrase "Subhana" (Glory be to Allah) underscores the perfection of the One (Allah) who took His servant (Muhammad) on this journey. To question the Isra' Mi'raj is, therefore, to question Allah's power and perfection.

The event was a source of moral strength for the Prophet amid profound hardship and challenges. The boycott of Banu Hashim, the death of his beloved wife Khadijah and his beloved uncle Abu Talib, and the rejection he faced in Ta'if left him deeply sorrowful, hence the designation "Year of Sorrow" (Am al-Huzn) for that year. Revival at the Individual Level The Isra' Mi'raj served as a spiritual boost for the Prophet and stands as a pillar of personal revival. For the Prophet, revival came through direct encounter with the Divine; and for his followers, it comes through prayer, described by the Prophet as "the Mi'raj of the believer."

The Current State of the Ummah Today, the Isra' Mi'raj resonates strongly with the trials facing the Muslim world. From the persecution of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang China, the massacre and displacement of Rohingya in Myanmar, the oppression of Muslims in India and Kashmir, to the Islamophobia experienced by minorities in the West, suffering has reached a peak. The prolonged agony of the Syrian people under the Assad regime, and the heart-wrenching plight of Palestinians in Gaza and Ramallah, continuously endure despite decades of injustice. Yet their steadfastness offers hope.

As we commemorate the Isra' Mi'raj, we are reminded of Allah's promise that "victory is near" and that His word never fails. The real dilemma lies in the first place, not with Islam's enemies, but with those who claim to be Muslims yet have lost their faith and dignity. The ummah suffers from an inferiority complex, feeling powerless despite no external power intimidates.

Theologically, the existence of enemies is a fixed law of Allah (sunnatullah) and natural balance in life. What is alarming is when the ummah loosens its grip on the firm bond with Allah (al-urwat al-wuthqa), leaving it adrift like foam upon the waves.

Academic Dilemma and Its Spiritual

Meaning

The scholarly discussion of Al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj is somewhat dilemmatic. First, because the details of the event are recorded in numerous hadith reports from at least twenty Companions. In Sahih Al-Bukhari alone, six Companions narrate the incident at length, in fact most Meccan-period hadiths refer to it. Second, the narrations differ in their wording, so the scholars advise that when discrepancies arise we seek the most authentic (sahih) report. If two reports are equally reliable, we attempt reconciliation or through an interpretive synthesis. One point of variation concerns, as an example, where the Prophet (SAW) was on the night of the journey. One narration places him at Haatim or the present-day Hijir Ismail, while another says he was at home (of Umm Haani) half-asleep. The scholars reconcile these by saying that he was indeed at home of Umm Haani, nearly asleep, when Gabriel came, lifted him to Al-Masjidil Haram and placed him at Hijir Ismail. Thus the accounts are not contradictory; they merely require interpretive reconciliation. Because Isra' Mi'raj was a personal experience involving only the Prophet and Gabriel, the reports reaching the Companions naturally differed, yet this does not diminish the event's authenticity, which is affirmed by the Qur'an in Surah Al-Isra' and Taaha. Gabriel's Splitting of the Prophet's Chest

The first act Gabriel performed was to split the Prophet's chest, which is actually the second occurrence after the earlier splitting when the Prophet was nursing with Halimah al-Sa'diyah in the Bani Sa'ad camp. According to one narration, Gabriel washed the chest with Zamzam water; another says he placed faith (iman) within it. The scholars combine these, explaining that the heart was first purified with Zamzam and then filled with iman, because faith can only occupy a pure place.

This cleansing carries deep philosophical meaning: that the entire Isra' Mi'raj is a journey of purity, from the sacred Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, to the sacred Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and finally to the highest sanctity (Baetul Ma'mur) to meet the High (Al-'Ala), and All-Holy (Al-Quddus).

Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions The journey also symbolizes the two aspects of human life: the horizontal (Mecca → Jerusalem) and the vertical (Jerusalem → Sidrat al-Muntaha). Both dimensions are accepted only when the heart is pure. The Qur'an states, "Successful indeed are those who purify their souls" (Al-A'la 14). Likewise, a sound heart is essential for any righteous endeavor. We do not undergo literal chest-splitting but we must keep our hearts pure through the means Allah provides, like maintaining sincere daily prayers. As the Prophet said, "The five daily prayers erase sins like a flowing river" (Muslim). A clean heart prevents



— Imam Shamsi Ali
 : Director, Jamaica
 Muslim Center &
 President, Nusantara
 Foundation

futility in life's journey.

In reality, every human path moves from one form of obedience to another, from ritual worship (in mosques) to ethical and social conduct in the wider world (ex. market). But all will only be acceptable as ibadah when rooted in a pure, healthy heart (qalb salim).

Beginning of the Journey

After the preparation by cleansing and infusing faith into his chest, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was ready to be taken for that holy journey. The narrations tell us that a creature called a "dabbah" (a beast) was brought down from heaven. It was smaller than a horse and larger than a donkey, pure white, beautiful and awe-inspiring. Over time this dabbah entered the imagination of later storytellers, sometimes

depicted as a great horse with the face of a beautiful woman, a portrayal that some use to suggest the Prophet was a womanizer.

In several accounts told that when the Prophet attempted to mount the creature (dabbah) it resisted, like a horse wary of a stranger. Seeing this, Gabriel rebuked it: "Wah! Do you not know that the one who will ride you is Muhammad, the noble Messenger?" The animal calmed, and the Prophet mounted it peacefully.

The journey from Masjid al-Haram then began. Each stride of the "dabbah" covered a distance beyond human sight, moving with a speed that defies ordinary reasoning, especially when considered in the context of the Prophet's time. This creature later became popularly known as Al-Buraq. Some narrations describe Al-Buraq as winged and capable of traversing vast distances in an instant. The word "Al-Buraq" derives from the Arabic "al-barq" meaning "lightning" or "flash", reflecting its extraordinary speed.

The provision of such a vehicle is not without meaning. If Allah had willed, He could have simply commanded "Be, and it is" (kun fa-yakun) to transport His servant. The fact that He chose a vehicle "Al-Buraq" carries a lesson. That the world is entering an era of greater complexity and interconnectedness. In an age of globalization, where humanity needs advanced means of transport, achieved through scientific exploration and technology. From a faith perspective we affirm that Al-Buraq is a creation of Allah, whose true nature only He knows. The Isra' Mi'raj is an event that touches the core of belief, and the texts give us no detailed description of the "dabbah" or Al-Buraq. Nevertheless, we may explore it metaphorically or symbolically.

Below are nine possible interpretations of "Al-Buraq" from philosophical and scientific viewpoints:

1. Speed and efficiency. Buraq symbolizes the ability to cover great distances quickly.
2. Physics concept. It can be linked to ideas of velocity, energy, and momentum.
3. Unique capability. Represents a creature with extraordinary speed and strength.

4. Spiritual journey. Serves as a symbol of the Prophet's ascension.

5. Transcendence. Highlights the crossing of physical and spiritual boundaries.

6. Time-space notion. Suggests the bending of distance and time.

7. Inner strength. Embodies the spiritual power that carried the Prophet.

8. Human potential. Illustrates humanity's capacity to rise above limits.

9. Motivation. Inspires innovation and the pursuit of lofty goals.

All these interpretations are relative; and the absolute truth rests in our belief in Allah's omnipotence. Human reason must ultimately submit to faith and creed in understanding such matters.

Arrival in Jerusalem

With the speed of the vehicle "Al-Buraq," the Prophet reached Jerusalem in an instant. According to the narration, upon arrival he tied the Buraq at a special spot near al-Aqsa before entering the sanctuary. That spot was also used for tying camels or other mounts, prompting some scholars to jokingly saying Imams ought to have a reserved parking place in front of the mosques.

The Prophet then entered the area of al-Aqsa because at that time there was no built mosque. Jerusalem was under Roman Christian rule, which barred Jews from living or worshipping in the holy city, their places of worship were destroyed and turned into rubbish dumps. The Prophet performed two Sunnah prayers, a practice later codified as the Sunnah "tahiyatul masjid" prayer.

This illustrates Islam's continuity with earlier religious traditions. Islam is not a new religion but a continuation and correction of the teachings of all previous prophets, bringing a complete guidance for all worlds.

After the prayer, the Prophet looked back and saw the earlier prophets. He saw Adam, tall and massive; Moses, also tall, sturdy, with a slightly brown complexion; and beside them, Isa and Harun, who resembled the people of Sham (the Semitic peoples). Most striking was Ibrahim, whom the Prophet described as resembling his own grandfather.

The presence of these prophets alongside the Prophet in al-Aqsa, and their meeting during the ascent, underscores that the mission of prophethood is one indivisible chain. Islam affirms the unity of faith in all prophets and scriptures, distinguishing only in rank, not in essence. All were sent to proclaim the same truth: "Worship Allah; there is no god but He." This universal message is what can unite a fragmented humanity; despite outward differences, all people share one spiritual heart.

The Prophet Led all Prophets in Prayer

Later, when the time for prayer arrived, the Prophet led a congregational prayer that included all the prophets present, a clear affirmation that he is the leader of all messengers (sayyid al-mursalin and khatam an-nabiyyin). His leadership strengthens the notion that the Muslim ummah is meant to be a guiding and leading community (imam lin-nas), embodying wasatiyah (the middle path) and khaeriyah (the best). As the "best nation," (khaer ummah) Muslims should model leadership for others, striving toward a just, peaceful, ■■■

OPINION



... and prosperous world.

Milk vs intoxicant Drink

After the Prophet had finished leading the earlier prophets and messengers in prayer, Gabriel (Jibril) approached him with two cups. One contained an alcoholic drink (a kind of wine) and the other held fresh milk. Gabriel invited the Prophet to choose and drink. The Prophet instantly took the milk (laban) and drank it. Gabriel praised this as a "fitrah" (healthy and natural) choice, not merely because milk is pure and healthy, but because it reflected the Prophet's inner disposition and a soul that is naturally pure.

This moment ties back to the earlier cleansing of his chest with Zamzam water and the infusion of faith at the masjidil haram in Makkah. At that time alcohol had not yet been prohibited, and no legal rulings had been given to the Prophet, yet he instinctively avoided the wine and chose milk. It illustrates that a sound heart naturally selects what is wholesome.

Life is About Choice

The episode mirrors the human condition, that life presents us with two options—truth (al-haq) versus falsehood (al-bāṭil), good (tayyib) versus evil (khabīṣ), benefit versus harm. Islam calls us to choose with a pure heart, as the Qur'an says, "Whoever wills may believe, and whoever wills may disbelieve" (Qur'an 18:29). Maintaining that pristine heart is the key to righteous decisions.

Unfortunately, humanity today suffers from a corrupted fitrah, leading to moral decay, environmental ruin, bloodshed, poverty and the erosion of values. The Qur'an warns, "Corruption has appeared on land and sea

because of what people have done" (Qur'an 30:41).

The Prophet reminded us that the heart is a clump of blood: if it is good, the whole body is good; if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted.

Thus, the only way to repair the world is to guard our hearts, for they are the source of both good and evil. Always choose the milk and never the wine.

The Ascension Begins

After the Prophet (SAW) drank the fresh milk, Gabriel informed him that the heavens had opened and that they were to begin the vertical ascent known as the Mi'raj. Although many stories say the Prophet rode Al-Buraq upward, numerous narrations state that he was lifted by Gabriel's hand while the Buraq remained tied where it stood.

The ascent then began. Each heaven is guarded by an angel. When they reached the first heaven the guardian asked, "Who is there?" Angel Gabriel replied, "It is Gabriel." The guardian asked, "Who is with you?" Gabriel answered, "Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah."

This exchange repeats at every heaven, teaching that even the most exalted creation (Gabriel) respects the authority and responsibility of those appointed to guard each level. A lesson learnt in professionalism. His Meeting with Previous Prophets (AS)

At the first heaven the Prophet met Adam, the father of all humanity. Adam sat weary and aged. Gabriel introduced the Prophet, and the Prophet gave the greeting of peace. Adam replied, "Welcome, O Prophet and righteous son."

Adam was seen looking alternately to his right, smiling, and to his left, weeping. When the Prophet asked why, Gabriel explained that Adam smiled at the sight of his descendants destined for Paradise and wept at those destined for Hell. This story reminds parents to desire the salvation of their children and to mourn when they stray.

At second heaven the Prophet encounter was with Isa (Jesus) and another prophet (Yahya AS), both greeting, "Welcome, my brother and righteous prophet".

At third heaven he met Yusuf (AS), described as extraordinarily handsome, as if possessing half the beauty of all humanity.

At Fourth Heaven he met Idris (AS) who offered the same greeting. At Fifth heaven with Harun (AS). At Sixth heaven with Musa (Moses). And at Seventh heaven, the Prophet (SAW) met Ibrahim (AS), who responded like Adam: "Welcome, my son and righteous prophet."

Ibrahim was seen leaning against the wall of the heavenly Ka'ba (Bait al-Makmur), underscoring his role in establishing the qibla. These meetings with Prophets illustrate the unity of prophethood; and that the prophets are not separated but form a single chain, culminating in Muhammad as the final messenger (Khatam an-Nabiyyin). Islam affirms that the accepted religion before Allah is one, Al-Islam.

The various levels of the prophets are not meant to rank them, but each carries its own significance. Ultimately, Allah is best in judgement. Musa (pbuh) Cries

There is a forgotten episode from the previous account. When the Prophet

indescribable beauty, some described metaphorically as elephant ears and fruits like the "hajar al-aswad". Allah's Communication to the Prophet The Prophet then heard the voice of Allah the Almighty. Scholars agree that he did not see Allah's physical form. Aisha (RA) even said that "anyone who claims the Prophet saw God during the Mi'raj is lying".

The voice conveyed three things: Every follower of Muhammad who dies without associating partners with Allah will enter Paradise.

The last two verses of Surah Al-Baqarah were recited. The command to perform the obligatory prayers fifty times a day and night.

Some narrations describe a dialogue resembling the "tashahhud". The Prophet said: "Attahiyatu lillahi...etc" and Allah replied, "Assalamu 'alaikum ayyuhan Nabi...". These stories lack a clear basis in Qur'an or Sunnah and are considered "qiila wa qaala" or unverified statements.

Reduction of the Obligatory Prayers from Fifty to Five

After receiving these instructions, the Prophet descended and met Gabriel again in the seventh heaven where Abraham resides. From there he passed through the sixth heaven, where Moses asked, "What has God commanded you?" The Prophet replied, "Allah has ordered me and my nation to pray fifty times a day and night." Moses urged him to seek a reduction, saying his own people were stronger but could not sustain such a burden.

The Prophet looked to Gabriel, who nodded in agreement. He returned to Sidrat al-Muntahā and asked for a lighter obligation. Allah reduced the

Divine, and the finest way to converse with Him is through prayer.

Thus it is fitting that prayer is called the "mi'raj" (the ascension) for the believers, a ladder that lifts the soul toward the Creator.

May we all preserve our prayers, teach them to our children, and avoid the ruin that comes from neglecting them.

Touring Paradise and Hell

After completing the primary purpose of the Isra' Mi'raj, meeting Allah and receiving the greatest gift of prayer for His beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet returned to earth with Jibril (Gabriel). During the descent he shared several experiences, one of which was a tour of Paradise (Jannah) and Hellfire (Naar).

A question arises: why did the Prophet visit Paradise and Hellfire only after meeting Allah, instead of on his ascent to the highest heavens where he saw Jibril's true form and met the Creator? The answer is simple: the central aim of the journey was to encounter the Creator, the King of all kings. It was therefore appropriate to complete that purpose before engaging in any other activity.

There is a well-known narration recorded by Bukhari, Muslim and Musnad Ahmad in which the Prophet smelled a fragrant scent on his way down to earth. When he asked Jibril about it, Jibril replied that it came from a former slave of Pharaoh and her children, who had been tortured in a pot of boiling water. The story, though brief, teaches that even a seemingly insignificant good deed can produce a fragrance of immense sweetness.

The Prophet then continued his journey, and Jibril showed him

Paradise.

Some scholars say he only saw its surroundings, since no human has inhabited Paradise since Adam (AS). Others hold that he entered it as

“Thus it is fitting that prayer is called the ‘mi’raj’ (the ascension) for the believers, a ladder that lifts the soul toward the Creator.”



“Always choose the milk and never the wine.”

(SAW) met Musa and was about to leave, he saw Moses weeping. He asked Gabriel, "Why is Musa crying?" Gabriel replied, "Musa is sad because your nation (Ummah) will be larger than his, and the inhabitants of Paradise from your ummah will be far greater than those from his."

This shows that the prophets compete in a positive sense to guide as many people as possible toward salvation. Musa's tears stem from this noble jealousy.

Ascension to the Sidratul Muntaha From the seventh heaven, after meeting Abraham, the Prophet was ascended to what is called Sidrat al-Muntahā (the furthest limit). Scholars have offered many interpretations of this station, all describing its overwhelming beauty and the supreme power of Allah. It is the highest point of spiritual ascent. Some mystics equate it with the state of "al-fana" (annihilation) in the presence of Allah.

There is a difference of opinion among scholars about whether Gabriel accompanied the Prophet beyond the seventh heaven. Some narrations use the passive phrase "thumma 'urija" (then he was lifted), suggesting that only the Prophet was taken upward. A few stories even claim that Iblis said to the Prophet: "Go up, Muhammad, I have no authority beyond this." Regardless, the Prophet reached the apex of the journey, where he saw trees with leaves of

number to forty, then, after further requests, to thirty, twenty, and finally five prayers a day.

Moses again suggested him for further reduction, but the Prophet declined, saying: "I am ashamed before my Lord." At that moment a voice declared: "I have fixed the prayer at five times; however, the reward remains fiftyfold."

Why Musa and Not Ibrahim (AS)? A question arises: why did Ibrahim not ask about the command, while Moses did? The answer may lie in their distinct personalities. Ibrahim accepted everything without question; Musa, being highly inquisitive, sought clarification, especially having experienced direct revelation on Mount Sinai. Both prophets, however, always considered the welfare of their communities.

The Gift of Prayer

The central lesson of the Isra' Mi'raj is that prayer is the heart of the journey. It is the key to overcoming hardship, the vertical ascent that brings the believer before God, and the criterion that separates faith from disbelief. Often we feel weighed down by the duty of prayer—five times a day, night after night. Yet, when we look deeper, prayer is not a burden at all; it is a priceless blessing.

In earlier times, people spoke to God through prophets—think of the Children of Israel pleading, "Ud' lana Rabbā" ("Call upon our Lord for us"). Today we can turn directly to the

an exception. In Paradise he beheld beauty beyond any human eye, ear or mind could conceive; tents of pearl, soil scented with musk, and countless blessings. After Paradise, Jibril took him to see Hellfire. The Prophet described its horrors: punishments for usury, slander, fornication and other sins. He also saw the Dajjal (Antichrist), whose eyes resembled rotten grapes. Return back to Makkah The return to Mecca is less documented, but it is known that the Prophet encountered three caravans that later testified to having met him. Upon his arrival, the people of Makkah responded with skepticism and ridicule. Abu Bakr, his closest companion, believed him and earned the title "as-Shiddiq" (the truth-affirmer). When asked whether he believed the Prophet's account, Abu Bakr simply replied, "If he said it, it must be true", reflecting his unwavering faith. I conclude this writing by reminding all that "Al-Isra' wa Al-Mi'raj" event is a test of faith. Any arguments, be it scientific or theological, are meant only to strengthen the faith. For the Prophet, the journey was a source of comfort and strength to continue his mission despite great challenges he (SAW) faced at the time.

Allahu Akbar was lillahi al-hamdu!
— Imam Shamsi Ali : Director,
Jamaica Muslim Center &
President, Nusantara Foundation



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PHILANTHROPY

Warm Meals, Warmer Hearts

STPUSA and Local Leaders Serve Over 100 in Community Food Drive

James Anderson

In a heartfelt demonstration of community resilience, Save the People USA (STPUSA) recently hosted a food distribution event that provided essential groceries to more than 100 individuals and families in Jamaica, Queens. The event came at a critical time, as winter temperatures dipped and food insecurity remained a persistent issue for many households. The program was coordinated and organized by Fatima Niass, Office Manager of STPUSA, whose attention to logistics ensured that operations ran smoothly and that families were served with care. Volunteers, braving the cold, played a crucial role in the day's success—distributing food, engaging warmly with recipients, and



canned peaches, watermelon, sweet potatoes, elbow pasta, white rice, kidney beans, eggs, lowfat milk, split peas, and lentils. These groceries offered not only sustenance but also dignity to those served. Fakhru Islam Delwar, a respected community member, also attended to show his support, emphasizing solidarity and encouraging further community engagement. "This kind of effort is what real community looks like," said one volunteer. "It's not just about handing out food. It's about making sure people know they are not alone." With inflation and economic strain affecting countless New Yorkers, STPUSA's grassroots approach to humanitarian aid continues to fill vital gaps. Events like this not only meet urgent material needs but also foster human connection and hope.

offering a sense of community support. Among other volunteers was Michael Gordon, who made a long commute from the Bronx. "I travel from



about the long commute. It's about showing up for families, seeing the need firsthand, and hearing their stories," he said, reflecting the spirit that powered the event.

Food items distributed included a wide variety of staples and nutritious options: Gatorade, protein bars, sliced beets, tomato sauce, mixed vegetables,



PHILANTHROPY

Food Distribution Effort Reaches Dozens with Support from Save the People USA



INFLUENCE



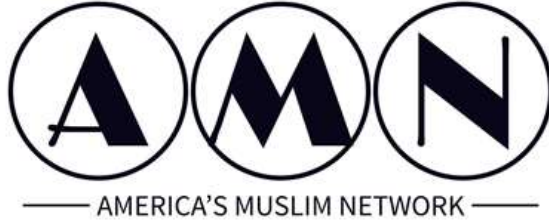
Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State Honored

America's Muslim Network continues highlighting New Yorkers driving change through service

Carlos Stewart

We continue our coverage of America's Muslim Network's Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State, highlighting additional individuals whose leadership and service are shaping communities across the state. America's Muslim Network has officially unveiled its Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State, a recognition rooted in impact, service, and

meaningful contribution rather than popularity or titles. This list honors individuals whose work continues to shape, strengthen, and uplift Muslim communities across the state through leadership, advocacy, faith, entrepreneurship, education, and civic engagement. New York is home to one of the most diverse Muslim populations in the country, and the individuals recognized reflect that diversity in every sense. They include community



Courtesy : America's Muslim Network

organizers working at the grassroots level, religious leaders guiding congregations, professionals influencing public policy, educators shaping young minds, and

entrepreneurs building institutions that serve far beyond the Muslim community. What unites them is a consistent commitment to showing up for others and translating values into

action. According to America's Muslim Network, this recognition is not a ranking. Each person on the list is acknowledged equally for their unique role and the tangible difference they have made in their respective spaces. The goal is not only to celebrate achievement, but to tell stories that are often overlooked and to amplify voices that inspire progress, unity, and resilience. In this ongoing series, we will highlight a

selection of individuals from this list and explore the work that led to their recognition. By learning more about their journeys, initiatives, and leadership, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the breadth of influence Muslim New Yorkers have across social, civic, and cultural life. Together, these honorees represent a powerful snapshot of a community that continues to contribute, lead, and build for the future.



Salman Rizwan

Salman Rizwan is a financial professional with 15+ years of experience in private banking and financial advising, specializing in retirement planning, investing, lending, and wealth management. A finance graduate of the University of Central Florida, he served clients ranging from first-time investors to high-net-worth individuals at major financial institutions. Seeking to align his work with his values, he transitioned into the Islamic finance industry and now serves as an Area Manager for an Islamic finance company based out of New York, holding licensure in multiple states. He is committed to advancing ethical, Shariah-compliant finance, educating the community, and promoting solutions grounded in integrity and fairness.



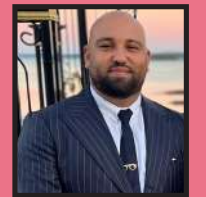
Adama Bah

Adama Bah is the Founder and Executive Director of Afrikana, a Black-led Harlem-based organization serving newly arrived immigrants, especially from Africa and the Caribbean. A Black Muslim woman and former undocumented youth, her lived experience informs her advocacy for immigrant justice and dignity. Founded in 2022, Afrikana provides daily, holistic support including case management, mental health care, translation services, legal referrals, and food distribution, with a focus on communities often overlooked, including Black and Muslim newcomers. Adama also pushes for policy reforms such as language access and halal food in shelters, testifying before the NYC Council and working with city agencies. Afrikana received the 2023 Compassionate Communities Award from the Coalition for the Homeless.



Toufique Harun

Toufique is a founding organizer of Muslims For Progress (MFP), a grassroots civic engagement group that has mobilized Muslim New Yorkers since 2016 to vote in local elections, advocate on key issues, and increase turnout through candidate guides and Get-Out-The-Vote efforts across NYC and Long Island. Focused on coalition building, he helped advance New York State resolutions condemning Islamophobia after the New Zealand mosque attacks and served on the Nassau County Police Diversity Committee following George Floyd's death. Professionally, he leads an AI healthtech company improving access to care. He holds a BSE and MSE in Electrical Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania.



Omar Jamal

Omar M. Jamal, Esq. is the Founder and Principal Attorney of Jamal Law PLLC, a business and personal injury law firm with offices in New York City and Westchester. He is known for values-driven legal advocacy, serving clients with integrity while mentoring and empowering the community. Omar also serves on the Board of Directors of CAIR-NY (Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York Chapter), supporting efforts to protect civil rights and advance equity for Muslim Americans. His work reflects a commitment to inclusion, bridge-building, and developing the next generation of professionals.



Saadia Z. Yunus

Saadia Z. Yunus is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and EMDR-Certified trauma specialist, and the founder of True Mind Wellness, a mental health practice serving individuals, couples, and families. With 12+ years of experience and training in EMDR, Internal Family Systems, Gottman Method, Somatic Therapy, and more, she provides personalized, evidence-based care focused on healing and long-term growth. Since launching her practice in 2015, she has expanded her impact through leadership roles on boards including Northwell Health, Huntington Hospital, and the Institute of Muslim Mental Health. She is also a sought-after speaker and workshop facilitator on trauma, emotional wellness, communication, and spiritual resilience, offering therapy across NY, Florida, and Michigan.



Mahir S. Nisar

Mahir S. Nisar is the Principal Attorney at Nisar Law Group, P.C., representing employees in workplace discrimination, harassment, and retaliation cases. A Hofstra Law graduate and civil rights litigator, he was named a New York Metro Super Lawyers Rising Star (2014–2020) and was elected to the Executive Board of the National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA) for 2025–2028, while remaining active with NELA-NY. Licensed in New York and New Jersey, he is also a Board Certified Coach, combining legal advocacy with empowerment coaching for clients facing workplace trauma. He educates workers on their rights through social media, including @discriminationlawyer (TikTok) and @nisarlaw (Instagram).



Qārī Nazrul Islām

Qārī Nazrul Islām is the Executive Director of Shelter Rock Islamic Center and the Muslim Chaplain at Hofstra University, where he mentors students in spiritual and personal growth. Trained in South Africa, he completed the 'Ālimiyyah program, specialized in 'Asharah Qirā'āt (ten canonical recitations), completed Hifz al-Qur'ān, and earned Iftā, qualifying as a Mufti. He later served as Head of Qirā'āt at Dār al-'Ilm Birmingham (UK). He is also Co-founder/Vice President of Dārun Nusrah, Tajwīd Academy, and the Cityline Ozone Park Civilian Patrol, advancing education, mentorship, youth development, and community service.



Nadia M. Pervez Bilal

Nadia M. Pervez Bilal is a civil rights and employment law attorney at Pervez & Rehman, P.C., focusing on discrimination, whistleblower and First Amendment claims, unlawful termination, and wage-and-hour matters. A former high school Social Studies teacher and former instructor at Teachers College, Columbia University, she remains deeply committed to education and equity. She serves as a Trustee of the Half Hollow Hills Board of Education (appointed August 2023, re-elected May 2024 and May 2025) and has over 15 years of PTA leadership experience. Nadia is active in pro bono legal work, serves as a mediator on the EDNY and SDNY panels, promotes interfaith dialogue through Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, and is a board member of the Islamic Center of Long Island, supporting long-running education and outreach programs.



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HEALTH

Health at Risk in Winter's Grip

Icy Storms and Frigid Temps Challenge Vulnerable Populations

Jessica Morgan

As much of the Eastern United States faces a relentless stretch of snow, ice, and bitter cold, health experts are urging residents to take the risks of extreme winter weather seriously. Over the weekend of January 13–14, 2026, two powerful storm systems moved through the region, blanketing cities along the I-95 corridor with snow and wintry mix, while a dangerous arctic blast is now gripping the East and Central U.S. with subfreezing temperatures. The National Weather Service placed more than 18 million people under cold weather



alerts, with forecasts warning of wind chills in the single digits in New England and near-zero

in parts of New York and Washington, D.C. In the Midwest, blizzard-like conditions were

reported with wind gusts exceeding 40 mph, and in Florida, temperatures plummeted so low that

frozen iguanas were spotted falling from trees in Homestead. Health officials are particularly concerned about the vulnerable: the elderly, children, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Prolonged exposure to extreme cold can lead to hypothermia, frostbite, and exacerbation of chronic health issues. In colder regions, road accidents have also spiked, including a 30-car pileup near Erie, Pennsylvania, further straining emergency services. With temperatures expected to drop further into early next week and record lows possible from Florida to the Mid-Atlantic, residents are

advised to limit outdoor exposure, layer clothing, check on neighbors, and keep emergency supplies on hand. The storms have also disrupted travel and access to healthcare facilities in some areas. Public health agencies stress the importance of preparedness, especially for households reliant on medical devices or prescription medications. As climate patterns grow more erratic, events like this highlight the growing intersection between weather emergencies and community health. For now, officials say, staying informed and cautious is critical as the region braces for more cold in the days ahead.



Cold Air, Tight Chests

Why Asthma Gets Worse in Winter — and What to Do About It

Fran Chilwell

As temperatures drop, those living with asthma face more than just frosty mornings — they confront a season filled with invisible triggers that can make breathing harder and more dangerous. With over 22 million adults in the United States living with asthma, the arrival of winter brings real concern for respiratory health. “The foundation for a healthy winter season is establishing a routine asthma plan to ensure you know what to do with whatever Mother Nature has in store,” said Dr. Stephen Canfield, allergist and immunologist at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center. According to Dr. Canfield, respiratory infections, such as



COVID-19, flu, RSV, and the common cold, tend to spike during winter

months and often lead to lung inflammation that worsens asthma



symptoms. Cold, dry air, especially when inhaled through the

mouth, can irritate and constrict airways, while indoor allergens like

dust mites, mold, and pet dander become more concentrated when windows are shut tight. Experts recommend creating a personalized asthma action plan with a healthcare provider. Simple measures such as wearing a scarf or mask over the mouth and nose outdoors, vaccinating against seasonal viruses, and limiting indoor allergens can significantly reduce the risk of flare-ups. Dr. Canfield also urges caution during outdoor physical activities. “Use your albuterol inhaler 15 minutes before exertion in the cold,” he advised. And if symptoms escalate, it’s crucial to seek medical attention promptly. With proper precautions and planning, asthma doesn’t have to make winter unbearable — just a little more mindful.



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JUSTICE

Judge Restricts ICE Tactics in Minneapolis

Federal Court Sides with Protesters After Fatal Shooting of Renee Good

Emily Parker

A federal judge in Minnesota has imposed strict limits on how Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents can respond to peaceful protests, following weeks of public unrest and the fatal shooting of Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, by an ICE officer earlier this month. The January 12 injunction, issued by U.S. District Judge Kate Menendez, bars federal agents from arresting or using crowd-control weapons — including pepper spray and tear gas — against demonstrators who are peacefully protesting or observing immigration operations in Minneapolis. The ruling, stemming from a lawsuit filed in December, directly



challenges federal tactics amid the Trump administration's deployment of nearly 3,000 ICE agents to the region. The order also prohibits ICE from

stopping or detaining vehicles without reasonable suspicion of criminal interference, specifically noting that following agents at a safe distance does not

justify a stop. The court's action comes just days before a wave of anti-ICE demonstrations and a planned counter-protest by a right-wing

influencer. Tensions have escalated since Good's death on January 7, which sparked widespread outrage and renewed scrutiny of

federal immigration enforcement. In response to the ruling, DHS said it was taking "appropriate and constitutional measures" to ensure safety. However, White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson dismissed the order as "absurd," claiming it aligns with a "dishonest, left-wing narrative." Meanwhile, the Minnesota National Guard and federal troops have been placed on standby, as fears grow of further clashes in a city still reeling from the fallout of high-profile law enforcement incidents in recent years. The decision represents a rare judicial check on ICE's operations and is seen by activists as a significant victory for civil liberties and protest rights.



ICE Agents Accused of Excessive Force in Latest Immigration Raids

U.S. Citizen Dragged from Car, Church Deacon Detained Without Warning

Benjamin Norris

Tensions continue to mount over federal immigration enforcement actions, as two high-profile detentions — one in Brooklyn and another in Minneapolis — draw condemnation from local leaders and civil rights advocates. On January 18, Sebastian Ordonez, a 58-year-old deacon and long-time Brooklyn resident originally from Guatemala, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers outside his apartment. Though his attorney acknowledged Ordonez lacks legal immigration status,



Photo : NYC church leader detained by ICE Source: Online

supporters argue he poses no public safety threat and deserves due process. "We have to stand up against this nonsense," said Councilmember Susan Zhuang, who joined clergy and community members demanding Ordonez's release. "Everyone deserves due

process, regardless of legal status." Meanwhile, in Minneapolis, video surfaced of Aliya Rahman, a disabled U.S. citizen, being forcibly dragged from her car by masked ICE agents while reportedly en route to a medical appointment. In the



Photo : ICE arrests a Bensonhurst church leader, according to Council Member Susan Zhuang. Source: Online

footage, Rahman pleads with agents, saying, "I'm disabled, I'm trying to go to the doctor." She was taken into custody and later claimed she lost consciousness after being denied medical care. Rahman's attorney, Alexa Van Brunt, said her client was "caught

in a terrible and confusing position," and that agents used excessive force. ICE alleges Rahman and others were obstructing an ongoing arrest operation. The Department of Homeland Security has not clarified whether Rahman was charged.

These incidents come amid an intensifying immigration crackdown that has already resulted in over 2,000 arrests in Minnesota, and follows the fatal ICE shooting of Renee Nicole Good earlier this month. Community outrage is growing, with advocates accusing ICE of racial profiling, use of excessive force, and civil rights violations. As videos continue to surface, calls for oversight and restraint are becoming louder — with faith leaders, lawmakers, and residents urging action before more lives are upended.



LEADERSHIP

Mayor Mamdani Appoints Tricia Shimamura as Parks Commissioner

Former Manhattan borough head brings social work and policy experience



Noah Presley

In a move signaling continuity and renewed commitment to

community-centered public spaces, Mayor Zohran Mamdani on Saturday, January 20, 2026, appointed Tricia

Shimamura as the new New York City Parks Commissioner during a press event held at High Bridge Park in The

Bronx. Shimamura, a native New Yorker and most recently the Manhattan borough commissioner for NYC Parks, steps into the role with deep experience in public service, infrastructure, and community engagement. Her previous roles include serving as deputy chief of staff to Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, director of government relations at Columbia University, and a social worker in Brooklyn. "I'm excited to be announcing the appointment of a Parks Commissioner who has spent her career

showing up and listening to communities across our city," said Mayor Mamdani. "Under the leadership of Tricia Shimamura, our Parks Department will strive to make this a city that every New Yorker can afford to not just live in but enjoy." Shimamura has led efforts to reopen East River Park, respond to environmental crises such as the Inwood Hill Park fires, and advocate for funding and equity in public programs. Accepting the position, she reflected on her career origins: "Early in my career as a social worker, I saw firsthand how

government fell short for working families... As Parks Commissioner, I will ensure our parks are not only free, but welcoming, vibrant spaces that every New Yorker can be proud of." She succeeds Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, who retired in June 2025 after 47 years of service, becoming the first Latina commissioner of the department. With more than 12,000 acres of parkland across Staten Island alone, and countless others citywide, Shimamura's leadership will shape how millions interact with the city's green spaces in the years ahead.



Mayor Mamdani Announces Major Housing Settlement in Queens

\$2.1 million agreement targets 4,000+ violations in A&E buildings

Adam Smith

The city has reached a \$2.1 million settlement with A&E Real Estate, one of the largest landlords in New York City, over thousands of housing code violations across 14 rent-stabilized buildings, officials announced on Friday, January 19, 2026. Speaking from 35-64 84th St. in Jackson Heights, a building plagued by fire hazards, bed bugs, and a broken elevator, Mayor Zohran Mamdani called the settlement a step toward accountability. "For years, A&E has operated with callous disregard for those residing in its properties, racking up over 140,000 total violations,"



Mamdani said. "This is not just a failure to serve those to whom it holds an obligation, it is a cruelty to tens of thousands of New Yorkers." The agreement requires

A&E to correct over 4,000 open violations, stop harassing tenants, and improve living conditions for nearly 750 residents across the city. But tenants say the issues go much deeper.

Diana de la Pava, a longtime tenant, recounted how the building's elevator was broken for 12 of the past 18 months, leaving vulnerable residents

stranded. One elderly neighbor, 84-year-old Alberto Quintero, died during a heatwave while trapped in his fourth-floor apartment. "This is not about broken machinery," de la Pava

said. "It is about neglect, indifference, and lives treated as disposable." Tenant unions, like the one at La Mesa Verde, have filed lawsuits alleging mold, infestations, and structural decay. Attorney Christos Bell from Communities Resist called A&E's pattern "a systemic issue" of tenant harassment disguised as deferred maintenance. While A&E claims to invest heavily in building improvements, over 200 violations remain open at the Jackson Heights location alone. For tenants and advocates, the fight continues well beyond Friday's settlement.





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FAITH AND UNITY

Celebrating Culture and Faith

Proclamation Highlights Muslim Contributions to New York's Diversity



Ashley Reed

In recognition of the vital role Muslim Americans play in shaping the cultural and civic fabric of New York, Governor Kathy Hochul has officially proclaimed January 2026 as Muslim

American Heritage Month across the state. As part of the broader observance, the Governor's Office sent Mamadou Siré Bah, Director of Muslim American Affairs in the New York State Executive Chamber, to

personally deliver the proclamation at two notable institutions: Darul Uloom New York and Elhaam Academy. These events brought students, faculty, and community members together to celebrate the proclamation's



significance. At each stop, the ceremonial presentation served as a powerful moment of affirmation, highlighting the contributions of Muslim Americans in fields ranging from education and public service to business and the arts. The official proclamation notes that Muslims are the second-largest religious group globally, with over 1 million Muslims residing in

New York State and more than 3.45 million across the United States. It emphasizes the significant and ongoing contributions of Muslim Americans to the cultural, civic, and economic fabric of the state. The proclamation further highlights the importance of using this month-long observance to promote understanding, appreciation, and inclusion, underscoring how deeply interwoven Muslim communities are in the story of New York. At Darul Uloom NY and Elhaam Academy, school leaders expressed appreciation for the visit and the state-level recognition, calling it a meaningful step in promoting visibility and inclusion for Muslim youth in public discourse. The proclamation further emphasizes New York State's commitment to equity,

denouncing bigotry and celebrating pluralism. It also acknowledges the growing representation of Muslims in public service and their integral role in building a just and inclusive state. The presence of Bah across these educational institutions reinforced the state's message of solidarity with Muslim communities, particularly at a time when national conversations around civil rights, identity, and representation remain highly relevant. As students and staff welcomed the proclamation with enthusiasm, the events became more than just ceremonial—they were opportunities for reflection, pride, and unity. With this formal recognition, New York continues to affirm its values of diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect, starting with its youngest citizens.



WELLNESS

Mindful Living, One Plate at a Time

Community Workshop Teaches Nutritional Habits for Long-Term Wellbeing

William Henry

A four-week wellness series is currently bringing healthy habits and empowering education to the heart of South Ozone Park. The “Mindful Eating & Healthy Choices” program—hosted by The Friends of Phil Rizzuto Smokey Park NY Inc.—offers free, accessible health workshops to community members eager to take charge of their well-being. Launched on January 10, 2026, the sessions are continuing weekly, offering residents a chance to explore the connection between nutrition, mental health, and physical wellness. Open to the public and entirely free of charge, the program is designed to help participants understand how to use food as medicine—incorporating practical strategies for long-term health and disease prevention. Each Saturday from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM at The Figure Studio (111-49 Lefferts Blvd),



attendees engage in a variety of activities including interactive food demonstrations, light fitness exercises like yoga and Zumba, as well as informative discussions about managing chronic illnesses, portion control, and emotional well-being. In one of the program's standout moments so far, an intern-led

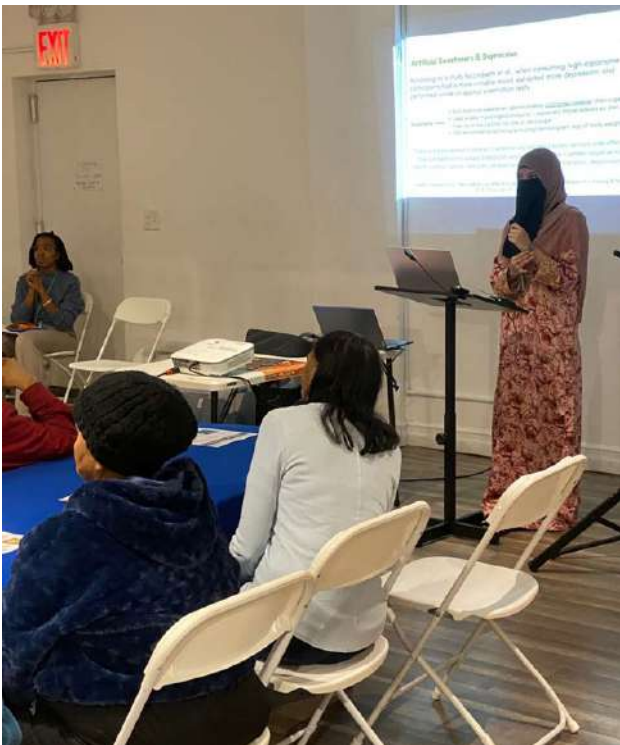


presentation on mental health and nutrition helped bridge the gap between food choices and emotional resilience, furthering the program's mission to empower people with practical knowledge for everyday life.

Save the People USA (STPUSA) is honored to support this initiative, joining a network of community organizations invested in holistic health education. The program also receives backing from EMU Health, The

Figure Studio, and other local partners, all working together to make wellness more accessible and sustainable. Key topics being addressed include managing diabetes and high blood pressure, cancer detection and prevention, mental wellness, and weight loss—all with an emphasis on simple,

culturally responsive approaches that resonate with the diverse South Ozone Park community. With sessions continuing through February 7, 2026, the program serves not only as a platform for learning but also as a safe, welcoming space where neighbors connect, share stories, and support one another on the journey toward better health. Spaces are limited to 20 participants, and registration is required to attend all four sessions. The demand and early response underscore the community's strong interest in programs that prioritize both health equity and preventive care. As each session unfolds, “Mindful Eating & Healthy Choices” stands as a powerful reminder that small, informed steps can lead to lifelong change—one plate, one breath, and one community gathering at a time.





Tariffs Over Greenland

Transatlantic rift widens

Amkel Nourush

President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened sweeping new tariffs on several European allies unless the United States reaches a deal to acquire Greenland, sharply escalating tensions with Denmark and the European Union. Trump said a 10% tariff on goods from countries including Denmark, Germany, France, the UK, and Sweden would begin February 1, rising to 25% by June 1, and remain in place until an agreement is reached. European leaders reacted swiftly. French



Photo: Trump tariff threat over Greenland 'unacceptable', European leaders say

Image Source: Online

President Emmanuel Macron called the threat "unacceptable," while UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said imposing tariffs on NATO allies was "completely wrong." The European

Union announced an emergency meeting in Brussels, as officials warned the move could derail transatlantic trade relations. The dispute sparked protests across

Denmark and Greenland, where thousands rallied in cities including Copenhagen and Nuuk, chanting slogans such as "Greenland is not for sale." Greenland's leaders reaffirmed the territory's right to self-determination, as polls show strong local opposition to U.S. control. Trump has argued Greenland is vital to U.S. security, but critics say the tariff threat risks deepening divisions among Western allies and destabilizing NATO unity.



Photo: Crowds gather at San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza to celebrate the life of Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir. Image Source: Miikka Skaffari/Getty Images/CNN

Farewell to Bob Weir

Deadheads honor a legend

Adrian Smith

Thousands of fans gathered on Saturday at San Francisco's Civic Center to celebrate the life of Bob Weir, the legendary guitarist and founding member of the Grateful Dead, who died on Jan. 10 at age 78. The public memorial unfolded outside the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, opening with prayers from four Buddhist monks. Musicians Joan Baez and John Mayer addressed the crowd as fans laid roses and handwritten notes at an altar of candles and photographs. Many asked Weir to greet late bandmates Jerry Garcia

and Phil Lesh. Attendees spanned generations, from longtime Deadheads in tie-dye to young families introducing children to the music. "Celebrating him and helping him go home," said one fan, reflecting the communal spirit that defined the band's following. Weir joined the group in 1965 at just 17, helping shape a sound rooted in improvisation and American musical traditions. Though his death was sudden, his daughter Monet Weir said he always believed the music would outlast him. As fans echoed that sentiment, the message was clear: the legacy lives on.

NASA Preps Crewed Moonflyer

First since Apollo era



Photos: NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman appears with Artemis II crew members Jeremy Hansen, Christina Koch, Victor Glover, and Commander Reid Wiseman at a press conference. Image Source: Mauricio Paiz/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

drawing cheers from thousands of workers and family members who gathered to witness the milestone. The 98-meter rocket, carrying the Orion crew capsule, marks the first

HIGHLIGHT

• NASA's Space Launch System moved to the launch pad

• First crewed lunar mission in over 50 years

• Launch targeted for February pending final tests

• Four astronauts, including one Canadian, assigned

time astronauts are preparing to fly around the Moon since 1972. "It

is awe-inspiring," said mission commander Reid Wiseman, who will be joined by Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen on the roughly 10-day flight. NASA officials emphasized the significance of the moment, noting that previous heat shield issues delayed the mission following an uncrewed test flight in November 2022. The astronauts will not land on the Moon, but the mission is a critical step toward future lunar landings under the Artemis program. NASA plans to conduct a fueling test in early February before confirming a launch date, with a narrow launch window extending into early March.

Nassr Al Shams

NASA has taken a major step toward returning humans to the Moon, as its massive Space Launch System (SLS) rocket rolled out

to the launch pad at Kennedy Space Center ahead of a historic crewed mission planned for February. The slow, four-mile journey began at daybreak and concluded by nightfall,

Fourth Amendment Fight

Phones, privacy and policing

Charles Lewis

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to decide whether police can use sweeping cellphone location warrants, known as geofence warrants, to identify suspects near crime scenes, a move that could significantly affect digital privacy rights.

The case centers on a 2019 bank robbery in Virginia, where police identified suspect Okello Chatrie after obtaining anonymized location data from Google for all devices near the bank during a one-hour window. Investigators later narrowed the



Photo: Supreme Court police secure the plaza outside the court in Washington, Jan. 12. Image Source: Jonathan Ernst / Reuters / CNN

data to Chatrie, who was convicted and sentenced to more than 11 years in prison. Critics argue the method amounts to a modern-

day general warrant, sweeping up data from countless innocent people and violating the Fourth Amendment.

Lower courts have split on the issue, prompting the justices to step in. Federal prosecutors contend the warrants are constitutional because users opt in to location tracking and that recent changes to Google's data storage policies make such warrants less common. Still, the court's decision is expected to clarify how far law enforcement can go in using digital location data, setting a precedent with wide-reaching implications for privacy, policing and technology companies alike.

Tracing Leonardo's DNA

Scientists look to art for genetic clues

Julian Alvez

Scientists searching for Leonardo da Vinci's DNA turned to an unusual source: the papers and artwork

HIGHLIGHT

• Scientists are searching for Leonardo da Vinci's DNA in artworks and documents

• Researchers identified a possible shared Y chromosome sequence

• Findings were released Jan. 6 in a non-peer-reviewed study

he may have handled, after confirmed remains proved elusive more

than 500 years after his death in 1519. In a Jan. 6 preprint, researchers with the Leonardo da Vinci Project said dry swabs from a disputed drawing, "Holy Child," and a family-linked letter captured extensive environmental DNA and a matching male Y chromosome sequence. The team stopped short of claiming the DNA is Leonardo's, but said repeated matches across more artifacts or living paternal relatives could build a genetic baseline. Outside experts urged caution, citing contamination risks and questions about attribution.