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nyn.press

Shaban, 1447
+1646 444 6644
info@nyn.press

NEW YORK NEWS

The Voice of People

From New York

Alexandar Sullivan

Newly released Justice Department documents reveal that Jeffrey Epstein made repeated efforts to cultivate relationships with senior Russian officials, including attempts to reach Vladimir Putin, years before his 2019 arrest. Emails from 2013 to 2018 show Epstein using intermediaries to seek contact with Russia's foreign policy

HIGHLIGHT

- Justice Department releases new Epstein documents
- Emails show outreach to Russian officials, including Putin's circle
- Poland announces inquiry into possible intelligence ties

leadership, including Sergey Lavrov. In one June 2018 message, Epstein suggested that Norwegian politician Thorbjørn Jagland pass word to Putin that Lavrov should speak with him, referencing prior conversations with Russia's late UN ambassador Vitaly Churkin.



Photo: Epstein wanted to connect with Putin

Image Source: Online

Epstein's Russian Overtures

New files detail outreach to Kremlin figures

The disclosures have prompted international concern. Donald Tusk announced this week that Poland will investigate whether Epstein had ties to Russian intelligence, warning the material

could involve kompromat on global leaders. The Kremlin dismissed the allegations, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov calling the theory "not serious." Analysts caution that the records do not prove

intelligence coordination, instead portraying Epstein as attempting to position himself among global power brokers. The documents do not confirm whether Epstein ever met or spoke directly with Putin.

The revelations add a geopolitical dimension to Epstein's already notorious legacy, raising fresh questions about how far his influence—and ambitions—extended beyond finance and crime.

Japan Election Tilts Right

Ruling coalition dominates polls

John Paul

Japan's governing party appears on course for a decisive victory, with exit polls suggesting Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has secured a strong mandate in Sunday's snap election, even as votes continue to be counted. According to NHK, the coalition led by the Liberal Democratic

HIGHLIGHT

- Votes are still being counted nationwide
- Exit polls project a landslide win for the ruling coalition
- Snow and travel disruptions marked voting day

Party is projected to win nearly two-thirds of seats in the House of Representatives, with the LDP alone forecast to regain a majority. The election, called just four months after Takaichi became party leader, was widely seen as a gamble following the party's loss of power in 2024 amid scandals and rising costs. Her personal popularity, with approval ratings above 70%, appears to have steadied the party. Voters across Japan braved heavy snow in the country's first mid-winter election in 36 years, despite widespread transport disruptions. Takaichi's populist spending pledges and nationalist rhetoric have energized supporters, particularly younger voters active on social media. If projections hold, Takaichi would be well positioned to pursue tougher immigration rules, higher defense spending and potentially revisit Japan's pacifist constitution, even as critics warn of economic and diplomatic risks.

Starmmer Aide Steps Down

Chief of staff resigns over Mandelson row

Lily Anderson

Morgan McSweeney, the chief of staff to British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, resigned on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026, taking responsibility for advising Starmer

HIGHLIGHT

- Morgan McSweeney resigns as chief of staff
- Decision tied to Peter Mandelson's US ambassador role
- Adds pressure on Keir Starmer's leadership

to appoint Peter Mandelson as the UK's ambassador to the United States. McSweeney said the appointment, which became controversial following the release

of emails highlighting Mandelson's past links to Jeffrey Epstein, had undermined public trust in Labour and in politics more broadly. "In public life, responsibility must be owned when it matters most," he said, calling his resignation "the only honourable course."

The departure removes one of the most influential figures in modern Labour politics and a key architect of the party's 2024 landslide election victory. McSweeney had been widely seen as Starmer's closest political adviser, often shaping strategy both in opposition and in government. His exit is expected to intensify scrutiny of Starmer's judgment and leadership style. Downing Street confirmed that McSweeney's deputies, Jill Cuthbertson and



Photo: Morgan McSweeney says appointing Peter Mandelson was a mistake that damaged trust in politics.

Image Source: Thomas Krych/Story Picture Agency/Shutterstock

Vidhya Alakeson, will serve as acting chiefs of staff. Labour MPs were divided, with some praising McSweeney's role in transforming the party, while others argued his influence had

become excessive. Starmer thanked McSweeney for his service, saying he "turned our party around" and played a central role in bringing Labour to

power. Despite the resignation, pressure is expected to continue as investigations and parliamentary reviews linked to the Mandelson appointment move forward.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Momentum builds in NC-04 race

NYN Desk

A progressive coalition has formally announced its endorsement of Nida Allam in the race for North Carolina's 4th Congressional District (NC-04), signaling growing momentum behind the longtime organizer and local official.

Allam, a lifelong activist, first gained national recognition as political director for Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential

campaign. She later made history as the first Muslim woman elected to public office in North Carolina, serving on the Durham County Commission, where supporters point to a record of tangible policy achievements.

During her tenure, Allam backed measures to raise wages for county workers, secure economic relief for low-income families, and expand



services for immigrants and refugees. Those efforts, advocates say, reflect a governing style rooted in grassroots organizing rather than corporate influence.

The endorsement also highlights Allam's alignment with national progressive figures, including Sanders, and underscores her campaign's emphasis on movement-driven

leadership. Supporters argue her background uniquely positions her to translate local organizing experience into federal action.

With the endorsement now public, the announcement adds energy to the NC-04 contest and reinforces Allam's profile as a candidate focused on economic justice, immigrant rights, and people-powered politics.

Court Halts Funding Freeze

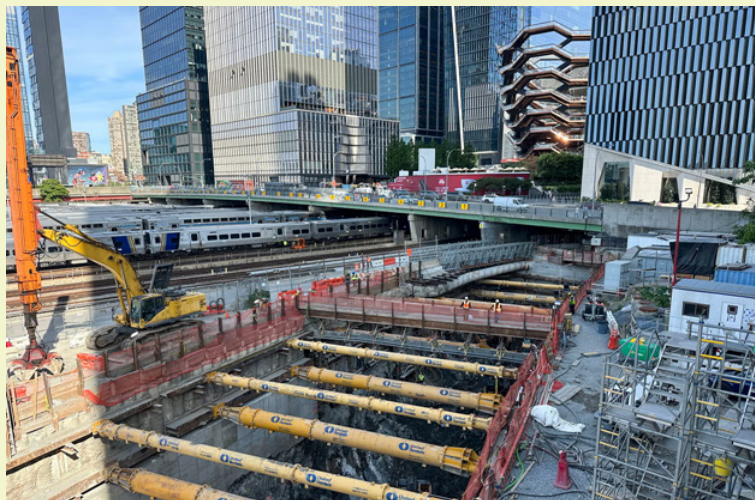


Photo: NYC River Tunnels Funding Image Source : Online

Staff Reporter

A federal judge on Friday ordered the Trump administration to restore funding for the long-delayed Hudson River rail tunnel between New York and New Jersey, halting an imminent shutdown of one

of the nation's most critical infrastructure projects.

U.S. District Judge Jeannette A. Vargas, ruling in Manhattan, granted a temporary restraining order after the administration froze roughly \$16 billion in federal support, a move that had threatened to stop

construction and lay off about 1,000 workers. Vargas said the states demonstrated they would suffer "irreparable harm" and that the public interest would be damaged by delaying a vital transportation link.

The decision followed lawsuits filed this week by New York, New Jersey, and the Gateway Development Commission, which oversees the project. The tunnel is designed to relieve pressure on the existing 110-year-old rail tunnel used by Amtrak and commuter trains, where failures can ripple across the East Coast.

New York Attorney General Letitia James called the ruling "a critical victory for workers and commuters," saying the project is essential to the region's economy and safety. Construction is now expected to continue while the broader legal challenge proceeds.



Photo: Claire Shulman's legacy honored with urban studies scholarship at Queens College Image Source: Ramy Mahmoud/QNS

Education initiative marks Shulman's impact

Community Desk

A new scholarship honoring the late Claire Shulman was unveiled on Feb. 5 during a press conference at Queens College, celebrating the former borough president's enduring legacy of public service and community leadership.

The scholarship will support undergraduate and graduate students in the college's Urban Studies Department and was announced in the presence of current Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr., Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, and Shulman's daughter, astronaut Ellen Baker. Baker described her mother as "very tough, but kind, loving and supportive," noting that

Shulman's leadership was always rooted in service. Shulman, who served as borough president from 1986 to 2001, was remembered as a trailblazer whose work helped shape modern Queens, from economic development to health care and education.

Speakers reflected on her mentorship, political courage, and belief in building partnerships to uplift diverse communities. Queens College faculty said the scholarship reflects Shulman's lifelong commitment to education and civic engagement, ensuring that future urban planners and public servants carry forward her vision of a more equitable and inclusive borough.



Photo : Brooklyn power outage impacts hundreds during NYC's coldest weather in years Image Source: Online

Brooklyn Blackout Strains Residents

Senior Reporter

A Brooklyn power outage left nearly 1,500 customers in Bushwick without electricity on Sunday morning, colliding with New York City's coldest weather in years and an extreme cold warning in effect until 1 p.m. Con Edison said the outage began around 11 p.m. Saturday and crews were working to restore service, with an estimated return time of 3 p.m. The

utility blamed the disruption on snow and road salt mixing and seeping into underground equipment, creating failures in ground-level infrastructure. Streets near Schaefer Street and Central Avenue were blocked off as repairs continued. With frigid temperatures and subzero wind chills heightening risks, the city expanded emergency resources. Mayor Zohran Mamdani said shelter options were broadened through

the weekend, and nearly 65 warming facilities were open, including warming buses. "This weather, frankly, is dangerous and the consequences of being outside could be fatal," Mamdani said.

The Coalition for the Homeless reported 17 New Yorkers have died over the past two weeks amid freezing conditions, underscoring the urgency for residents to seek warmth and assistance.

Prayer Time IN New York

FAJR	DHUHR	ASR	MAGHRIB	ISHA
05:41	12:10	02:59	05:23	06:41
05:39	12:10	03:00	05:25	06:42
05:38	12:10	03:01	05:26	06:44
05:37	12:10	03:02	05:27	06:45
05:36	12:10	03:03	05:28	06:46
05:35	12:10	03:04	05:30	06:47
05:34	12:10	03:05	05:31	06:48

OPINION

Faith, Law, and the Defense of New Yorkers

— NYN Editorial Board

New York City's identity is often tested when fear rises and belonging is questioned. At the first annual Interfaith Breakfast of his administration, Mayor Zohran Mamdani used the moment to make a clear case: the city will uphold its sanctuary laws and protect immigrant New Yorkers from federal overreach. Surrounded by faith and community leaders from across the five boroughs, the mayor announced sweeping steps aimed at strengthening privacy protections, limiting enforcement activity on city property, and preparing city agencies for coordinated response during escalation. The mayor's executive order is designed to do more than restate values. It reinforces restrictions on how city information is handled, demands compliance steps across agencies, and emphasizes that public spaces run by the city exist for city purposes. In an era of heightened anxiety, the policy direction sends a strong signal to immigrant communities that they will not be left isolated or exposed. It also sends a signal to the broader public that trust in government requires limits on

power, transparency in practice, and consistency across institutions. Alongside the executive order, the administration launched a citywide Know Your Rights push, distributing tens of thousands of multilingual materials through faith leaders and institutions. That strategy is practical and timely. People are most likely to trust information delivered by those they already turn to in moments of uncertainty. Making rights guidance accessible in multiple languages recognizes the reality of New York's neighborhoods and the need for clarity during stressful encounters with federal immigration authorities. The mayor framed the issue as one that concerns every New Yorker, not only those directly impacted by immigration enforcement. He warned against cruelty becoming normalized



— NYN Editorial Board

and argued that public duty begins with protecting neighbors. "City Hall will not look away," he said. It was a statement meant to reassure communities who feel vulnerable, but also to challenge the city's moral imagination: whether New York will live up to its identity as a place where diversity is not merely tolerated, but defended. The broader significance of the mayor's message lies in its focus on solidarity. Sanctuary is not only a legal framework. It is also an infrastructure of trust. When residents fear that accessing city services may expose them to harm, the damage spreads beyond immigration status. It affects public health, education, housing stability, and community safety. Protecting privacy and limiting unlawful intrusion is therefore not a narrow political stance; it is a practical

defense of civic life. Faith leaders were positioned as essential partners in this effort, not symbolic participants. In many communities, people seek counsel first from their religious institutions, especially when fear is highest. If New York is serious about protecting residents and preserving trust, it must work with these networks not only during crisis moments, but continuously through education, referrals, and community-based support. In the end, the mayor returned to the question that shapes every generation of the city: who belongs here. His answer, and his administration's posture, reject the narrowing of that definition. New York has always been strengthened by those who arrived from elsewhere and built lives in shared neighborhoods. The city's future depends on whether it chooses courage over silence and solidarity over suspicion. As the mayor put it, "we are stronger when we welcome the stranger."

“

“City Hall will not look away.”



Image Source: Online

“

“We are stronger when we welcome the stranger.”

Preparing for Ramadan: A Path to Spiritual Growth

— Imam Shamsi Ali

As the month of Ramadan approaches, Muslims around the world prepare themselves for a period of fasting, spiritual reflection and growth. The Quran reminds us, "O you who have believed, fasting has been prescribed upon you" (2:183). During the month it is an opportunity to strengthen our faith, seek forgiveness, and cultivate a deeper connection with Allah. Before Ramadan Arrives The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prayed, "O Allah, bless us in Rajab and Sha'ban, and let us reach Ramadan." (Tirmidhi). This hadith is a reminder for us that preparation for Ramadan is crucial. Here are several ways to do in the month of Sha'ban as a part of that preparation:

- Observing recommended fasting. Aisha (RA) reported that the Prophet (PBUH) would fast frequently in Sha'ban, preparing for Ramadan. (Bukhari and Muslim)
- Turn to Allah for Repentance. Purify our hearts (tazkiyah) and seek forgiveness for past sins.

- Start reading Al-Qur'an. Ramadan is the month the Quran was revealed, a time to increase our recitation and understanding.
- Train ourselves to give charity. Condition our hearts to give and help others.
- Strength our Silaturrahim. Strengthen family ties and forgive one another.

The Blessings of Ramadan Ramadan is a month of so many blessings. It is month of barokah (blessings), Rahmah (mercy), Magfirah (forgiveness). The month in which Jannah is Opened, Naar (hell) is Shut, and Shaitan (evils) are chained. More importantly it is month of devotion in worship and intimate connection with Allah. As



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

the Quran mentions in Chapter 2:186. To effectively utilize month of Ramadan here some important preparation to take:

- Mindset preparation. Understand the true purpose of ibadah (worship). "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Quran 51:56). Ibadah encompasses all aspects of life.
- Spiritual Preparation (Tazkiyah an-Nafs). Focus on purifying the heart, the center of our life and ibadah. "Indeed, the actions are by intentions." (Bukhari)
- Knowledge (Al-Ilm) preparation. Learn the rules and principles of fasting and ibadaat. Utilize available resources like ulama, halaqaat, and even online sources (articles,

YouTube, etc.). Goals of Fasting For an effective and successful fasting, keep focus on the main goals of fasting. The two main goals of fasting are:

- Blessings (rewards) and Jannah (Paradise). We observe fasting to get blessings and rewards from Allah, and enter into His Jannah (paradise).
- Transformation of life through Taqwa (piety): Our fast should transform our lives into more pious both vertical and horizontal.

Taqwa as the ultimate goal of fasting (la'allakum tattaqun) includes both vertical and horizontal righteousness of life. It should impact three aspects of our life:

- 1). Iman (Faith) by Strengthening faith.
- 2). Ibadah (Worship) by improving our connection with Allah.
- 3). And akhlaq (moral conduct) by shaping our character. I pray may our fasting be accepted and lead to a transformed life, filled with the blessings.

FAITH AND UNITY

Mayor Mamdani Hosts First Interfaith Breakfast

Leaders Gather at NYC Public Library to Celebrate Unity and Announce Protections for Immigrants



James Anderson

In a resounding display of unity and moral leadership, Mayor Zohran Mamdani hosted the Annual Interfaith Breakfast on February 6, 2026, bringing together nearly 400 faith leaders, community advocates, and civic voices at the New York Public Library. Against the backdrop of national uncertainty around immigration policy, the event served

as both a spiritual gathering and a platform for concrete action. Mayor Mamdani used the occasion to announce Executive Order 13, a sweeping measure reaffirming New York City's commitment as a sanctuary city. The executive order enacts critical protections for immigrants, including stronger restrictions on federal immigration enforcement on city



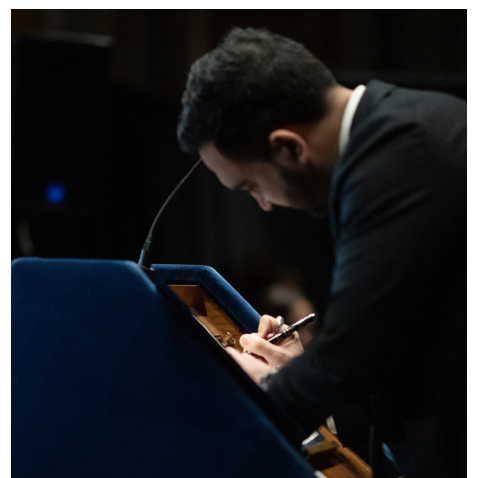
NYC Office of the Mayor

property, mandated agency audits, and the safeguarding of residents' personal data. "This order is a sweeping reaffirmation

of our commitment to our immigrant neighbors," the Mayor said. "To love thy neighbor, to look out for the stranger." Expanding on the need for decisive action, Mamdani added, "ICE is more than a rogue agency — it is a manifestation of the abuse of power. In fact, there is no reforming something so rotten and base." As part of the announcement, the city also launched a major "Know Your Rights" campaign, distributing over 32,000 flyers and booklets in ten languages to congregations across the five boroughs. These resources provide vital legal information, including how to respond to encounters with immigration agents and how to access city services and legal aid. "These materials apply to us all: those who have been here for five generations, those who arrived last year," Mamdani noted. "Because the obligation is upon us all. To love

thy neighbor, to look out for the stranger." The event was rich with interfaith participation and cultural expression. Musical performances included Sangat featuring Qais Essar, Sonny Singh, and Sukhmani, as well as the Christian Cultural Center Choir. Spiritual reflections and prayers were offered by leaders from a broad spectrum of faiths—Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist—emphasizing the city's diversity and shared values. "Each of our faiths asks the same of us," Mamdani said in a deeply personal and moving speech, drawing on sacred texts and lived experience. "Let us love the stranger among us, because we are them, and they are us." He added: "Let us create a new expectation of City Hall, where power is wielded to love, to embrace, to protect. We will stand with the stranger today, tomorrow, and all the days that are still to come."

Community organizations responded with praise. Dr. Debbie Almontaser called the event "especially powerful," noting the energy around the new executive order. The Council of Peoples Organization (CPO) described it as a "proud moment," emphasizing the need for continued advocacy and education. In an era of rising fear and federal overreach, the Mayor's Interfaith Breakfast was more than ceremonial—it was an urgent call to action grounded in shared faith and civic responsibility. As one attendee later reflected, the event showed that "for all of our different faiths, New Yorkers share a common belief: that our city can be restored." With this powerful beginning, the Mamdani administration has signaled that in New York City, moral clarity and government action can—and must—go hand in hand.



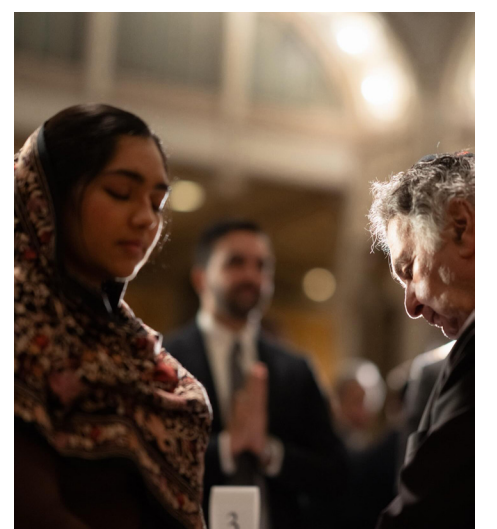
FAITH AND UNITY

Mayor Mamdani Signs Executive Order at Annual Interfaith Breakfast to Shield Immigrant Communities



FAITH AND UNITY

Annual Interfaith Breakfast Highlights Spiritual Leadership and Civic Commitment



Global Dawah Television



Call of Peace Save Humanity

2026 Ramadan

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DAY	RAMADAN	DATE	STOP EATING	FAJR	SUNRISE	ZUHR	ASR	IFTAAR	ISHA
Thu	1	Feb 18	5:26	5:29	6:45	12:10	3:08	5:35	6:51
Fri	2	Feb 19	5:25	5:28	6:44	12:10	3:09	5:36	6:52
Sat	3	Feb 20	5:24	5:27	6:42	12:10	3:10	5:37	6:53
Sun	4	Feb 21	5:22	5:25	6:41	12:10	3:11	5:38	6:54
Mon	5	Feb 22	5:21	5:24	6:40	12:10	3:12	5:39	6:55
Tue	6	Feb 23	5:20	5:23	6:38	12:10	3:13	5:41	6:56
Wed	7	Feb 24	5:19	5:21	6:37	12:09	3:13	5:42	6:57
Thu	8	Feb 25	5:17	5:20	6:35	12:09	3:14	5:43	6:59
Fri	9	Feb 26	5:15	5:18	6:34	12:09	3:15	5:44	7:00
Sat	10	Feb 27	5:14	5:17	6:32	12:09	3:16	5:45	7:01
Sun	11	Feb 28	5:13	5:16	6:31	12:09	3:17	5:46	7:02
Mon	12	Mar 01	5:11	5:14	6:29	12:08	3:17	5:48	7:03
Tue	13	Mar 02	5:10	5:13	6:28	12:08	3:18	5:49	7:04
Wed	14	Mar 03	5:08	5:11	6:26	12:08	3:19	5:50	7:05
Thu	15	Mar 04	5:06	5:09	6:24	12:08	3:20	5:51	7:06
Fri	16	Mar 05	5:05	5:08	6:23	12:08	3:20	5:52	7:07
Sat	17	Mar 06	5:03	5:06	6:21	12:07	3:21	5:53	7:09
Sun	18	Mar 07	5:02	5:05	6:20	12:07	3:22	5:54	7:10
Mon	19	Mar 08	6:02	6:05	7:20	1:07	4:22	6:54	8:10
Tue	20	Mar 09	5:00	6:03	7:18	1:07	4:22	6:55	8:11
Wed	21	Mar 10	5:59	6:02	7:17	1:07	4:23	6:57	8:12
Thu	22	Mar 11	5:57	6:00	7:15	1:06	4:24	6:58	8:13
Fri	23	Mar 12	5:55	5:58	7:13	1:06	4:24	6:59	8:14
Sat	24	Mar 13	5:54	5:57	7:12	1:06	4:25	7:00	8:15
Sun	25	Mar 14	5:52	5:55	7:10	1:06	4:25	7:01	8:16
Mon	26	Mar 15	5:50	5:53	7:08	1:05	4:26	7:02	8:17
Tue	27	Mar 16	5:49	5:52	7:07	1:05	4:27	7:03	8:19
Wed	28	Mar 17	5:47	5:50	7:05	1:05	4:27	7:04	8:20
Thu	29	Mar 18	5:45	5:48	7:03	1:04	4:28	7:05	8:21
Fri	30	Mar 19	5:43	5:46	7:02	1:04	4:28	7:06	8:22

Rahmat : "Mercy of Allah"

Maghfirat : "Forgiveness of Allah"

Nijaat : "Salvation"

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INFLUENCE



Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State Honored

More profiles from America's Muslim Network's list and the work driving real impact

Carlos Stewart

We continue spotlighting individuals recognized in America's Muslim Network's Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State, 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 organizers working at



— AMERICA'S MUSLIM NETWORK —

Courtesy : America's Muslim Network

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.



Dr. Sara Siddiqui

Dr. Sara Siddiqui is a board-certified pediatrician with 25+ years of experience, serving the Huntington community since 2000 and affiliated with NYU Langone Health. A leader in youth mental health, health equity, and pediatric wellness, she received the 2024 Healthcare Hero Award from Suffolk County Legislative District 16. She holds key civic and professional roles, including Secretary of the Suffolk County Medical Society, Treasurer of the American Academy of Pediatrics (NY Chapter 2), and Trustee on the Elwood School District Board of Education. She also serves with the Eid Holiday Coalition, Long Island Cares, the Suffolk County Youth Board, and the Huntington Anti-Bias Task Force, and leads community initiatives such as 100 Women of Huntington and PATH.



Yamina Kezadri

Yamina Kezadri is a public health leader and the Founder and CEO of Halal (Food) Connections, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit advancing equity and food justice through culturally responsive services. With an MPH from SUNY Downstate and 10+ years of experience, she provides fresh produce, halal meats, and hot meals to vulnerable New Yorkers, including the houseless, domestic violence survivors, and people with disabilities, while expanding impact through nutrition workshops, a halal pantry network directory, and farm partnerships. She also works at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (OPER), overseeing administration of the CDC Public Health Infrastructure Grant. Previously, she led Muslims Giving Back, directed Arab American health initiatives, and mentored underrepresented youth.



Sadiqur Rahman

Sadiqur Rahman is the Co-founder and Chief Financial Officer of Exquisite Ventures, a Long Island-based private equity real estate investment firm founded in 2017. Focused on expanding access, he has helped create an ethical, transparent pathway for community members to participate in real estate investing. Exquisite Ventures has worked with hundreds of investors and completed projects across Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island, offering equity participation in development and value-add deals. The firm is vertically integrated through Exquisite Abstract (title) and Exquisite Designs (construction). Beyond business, Sadiqur supports youth and underserved communities through water well projects, education sponsorships, aid for families, and support for local masjid youth programs.



Mohamed Bahi

Mohamed Bahi is a Brooklyn-based humanitarian and community organizer known for building high-impact, Muslim-led service initiatives. He is the founder of Muslims Giving Back (MGB), a grassroots charity recognized for weekly hot-meal distributions, emergency relief, and direct outreach to vulnerable New Yorkers. He also co-founded the Asiyah Women's Center, New York's first Muslim-run domestic-violence and emergency shelter for women and children. Internationally, he launched Mercy Bakery and Freedom Bakery, free-bread programs in crisis zones like Yemen, providing thousands of loaves daily. Rooted in the Muslim Community Center (MCC), he helped transform local mosques into full community hubs for worship and social services.



Wazma Wardak Hassan

Wazma Wardak Hassan is the Founder and CEO of Afghan Americans of New York (AANY), leading efforts to uplift and empower Afghan communities across New York State through advocacy, resource navigation, and stronger civic representation. Through AANY, she has helped families access essential support and build a sense of belonging. She has also worked in government, contributing to efforts on key federal issues affecting local communities. With a background in electrical engineering and deep cultural roots in Afghanistan, she brings both technical skill and community insight to her work. She has served with Nassau County's Office of Asian American Affairs, volunteered with local masjid boards, participated in school PTA leadership, and is a proud mother of five, a role central to her service-driven leadership.



Sadri Altinok

Sadri Altinok is the Founding Member and President of the Turkish Cultural Center New York (TCCNY), known for advancing interfaith and intercultural dialogue for decades. A Mechanical Engineer with a master's from the Naval Postgraduate School, he later became CEO of Signal Telecommunications after a career spanning Silicon Valley and New York. He has led cultural trips to Turkey for 100+ community members, organized international business fairs, and served in leadership roles with LIMFF, LIWINS, and Advocates of Silenced Turkey. Through Embrace Relief, his humanitarian work has supported clean water projects, cataract surgeries in Africa, and Haiti relief. He serves on the Suffolk County Muslim Advisory Board, helped found Abraham's Table Long Island, and is a board member of Brooklyn Amity School.



Shaniyat Turani

Shaniyat Turani is an independent journalist focused on how colonialism, war, and climate change impact indigenous communities worldwide. In 2024, he reported from the West Bank, documenting settler and military violence and publishing on-the-ground coverage in Mondoweiss. His reporting also spans displacement, refugee rights, and border communities in West and South Asia and along the U.S.-Mexico border. His work has been featured by The New York Times and Vice News, and he is a contributor with MintPress News and currently a Senior Editor at The Bengal Gazette. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran (2011-2017), he holds an NYU Master's in International Relations and previously ran for U.S. Congress (NY-5) in 2020.



Fahd Ahmed

Fahd Ahmed immigrated from Pakistan as an undocumented, working-class youth and joined DRUM – Desis Rising Up & Moving in 2000 after his family faced deportation and War on Drugs targeting. He now serves as Executive Director of DRUM, building the leadership and power of thousands of low-income South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrants across immigrant rights, housing, education, racial justice, gender equity, and workers' rights. Under his leadership, DRUM helped stop Amazon HQ2, secured \$2.1B for the Excluded Workers Fund, and won \$2.4B in pandemic rent relief. DRUM also mobilized major voter engagement, including knocking 19,000 doors and phone-banking 60,000+ community members through DRUM Beats.

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FAITH

Queens Muslim Community Gathers for Shab-e-Barat

Discussion and prayers highlight the night of blessings

William Henry

In an atmosphere filled with spiritual devotion and community warmth, the Shah Nawaz Group organized a discussion meeting and Milad Mahfil on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat on the evening of February 2, 2026, at the Nabanna Party Center in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York.

The event, marking the sacred night observed by Muslims around the world as a time of forgiveness, prayer, and reflection, drew a large turnout from the local Bangladeshi-American Muslim community. Attendees came together to honor the traditions of Shab-e-Barat, a night believed to hold immense spiritual significance in



the Islamic calendar. The program began with a discussion session focusing on the importance of repentance, compassion, and preparing spiritually for the month of Ramadan. Speakers emphasized the values of introspection and

humility that are central to the observance of Shab-e-Barat. Religious scholars and community leaders shared reflections on how the night serves as an opportunity for believers to reconnect with their faith and seek forgiveness. Following the

discussion, a Milad Mahfil (religious gathering with recitations and prayers) was held. Participants engaged in collective dua (supplication) and zikr (remembrance of God), praying for peace, blessings, and well-being for themselves, their families, and the

broader community. One attendee described the evening as “a much-needed moment of unity and remembrance,” noting that such gatherings help preserve cultural and religious heritage among diaspora communities in the United States. The Nabanna Party

Center, located in the heart of Jackson Heights, served as a fitting venue for the event, offering a welcoming space for faith-based and cultural programs that bring the community together. The gathering not only reinforced spiritual values but also highlighted the role of grassroots organizations like Shah Nawaz Group in fostering faith, fellowship, and cultural continuity among immigrant communities. As the evening concluded, attendees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share in collective worship and reflection. The event served as a reminder of the enduring power of faith to unite and uplift, especially during sacred times.



FAITH

Community comes together for prayer, reflection, and unity



PEACE

Strengthening Trust During Ramadan

Ceremony highlights leadership, mentorship, and community trust



Jessica Morgan

With the holy month of Ramadan approaching, Suffolk County reaffirmed its commitment to public safety and interfaith cooperation by hosting its 4th Annual Ramadan Safety Conference, bringing together law

enforcement, county officials, and Muslim community leaders for a timely discussion on security, inclusion, and preparedness. Held under the leadership of Suffolk County Executive Hon. Ed Romaine, the event was organized by the Suffolk County Police



Department, led by Police Commissioner Kevin T. Catalina, along with Deputy Police Commissioners Belinda Alvarez-Groneman and Thomas Galati. The conference was supported by the District Attorney's Office and sponsored by The Bari Group, reflecting a strong public-private commitment to the wellbeing of all residents during Ramadan. The conference aimed to proactively address safety concerns surrounding evening congregational prayers, community events, and high-traffic worship periods at local mosques. By establishing open lines of communication, Suffolk County officials demonstrated a collaborative approach to preventing hate crimes, enhancing

patrols, and ensuring community trust. "Ensuring the safety of all Suffolk County residents—regardless of their background or beliefs—is not just our duty, it is our shared value," said an organizer at the event. "This is about more than just law enforcement; it's about building enduring relationships with the communities we serve." Muslim leaders expressed appreciation for the inclusive initiative, emphasizing the importance of visibility, trust, and cultural understanding. "Our mosques are not just places of worship—they are community hubs, and we're grateful to see that recognized through this level of engagement," said one attendee. Representatives from the District Attorney's Office highlighted

ongoing efforts to investigate and prosecute bias-related incidents, assuring faith communities that Suffolk County remains vigilant and responsive. The involvement of The Bari Group as sponsor added an additional layer of community engagement and support, reflecting the role of civic organizations in bridging gaps between government and residents. As Suffolk County prepares for Ramadan, the annual safety conference stands as a model of mutual respect, transparency, and proactive governance. With shared purpose and unity, local officials and faith leaders sent a clear message: every community deserves to feel safe, valued, and heard.



PEACE

Ramadan Security Conference emphasizes cooperation and inclusivity



REFORM

Justice and Accountability Take Center Stage at NY Ulama Gathering

Faith leaders unite to envision a better Bangladesh

Emily Parker

In a powerful gathering of religious scholars and community members, the New York Ulama Assembly resonated with calls for justice, reform, and accountability in Bangladesh. The event, which brought together voices from across the diaspora, was marked by a compelling keynote from Imam Delowar Hossain, National President of MUNA (Muslim Ummah of North America). Addressing the audience, Imam Hossain called upon Bangladeshi expatriates and global citizens alike to take a principled stand for a corruption-free, justice-based, and humane Bangladesh. He stressed that the future of the nation must be rooted in Islamic ethics, transparency, and compassion for all people—regardless of class, background, or political affiliation. "Our responsibility does not end with prayer or protest," said one



attendee. "As a global community, we must contribute toward building a society where justice and integrity are non-negotiable." The Ulama Assembly also served as a

platform for faith-based reflection and collective responsibility. Discussions centered on how the values of inṣāf (justice), amanah (trustworthiness), and rahmah (compassion)

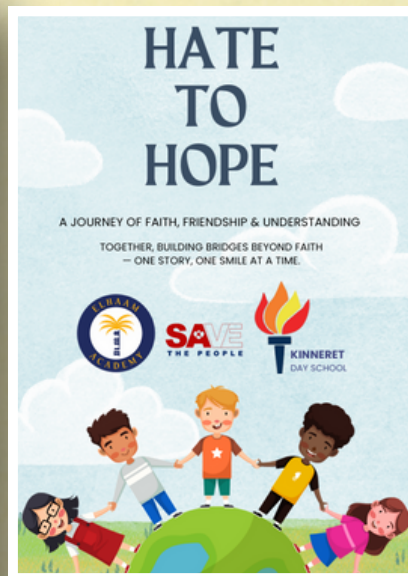
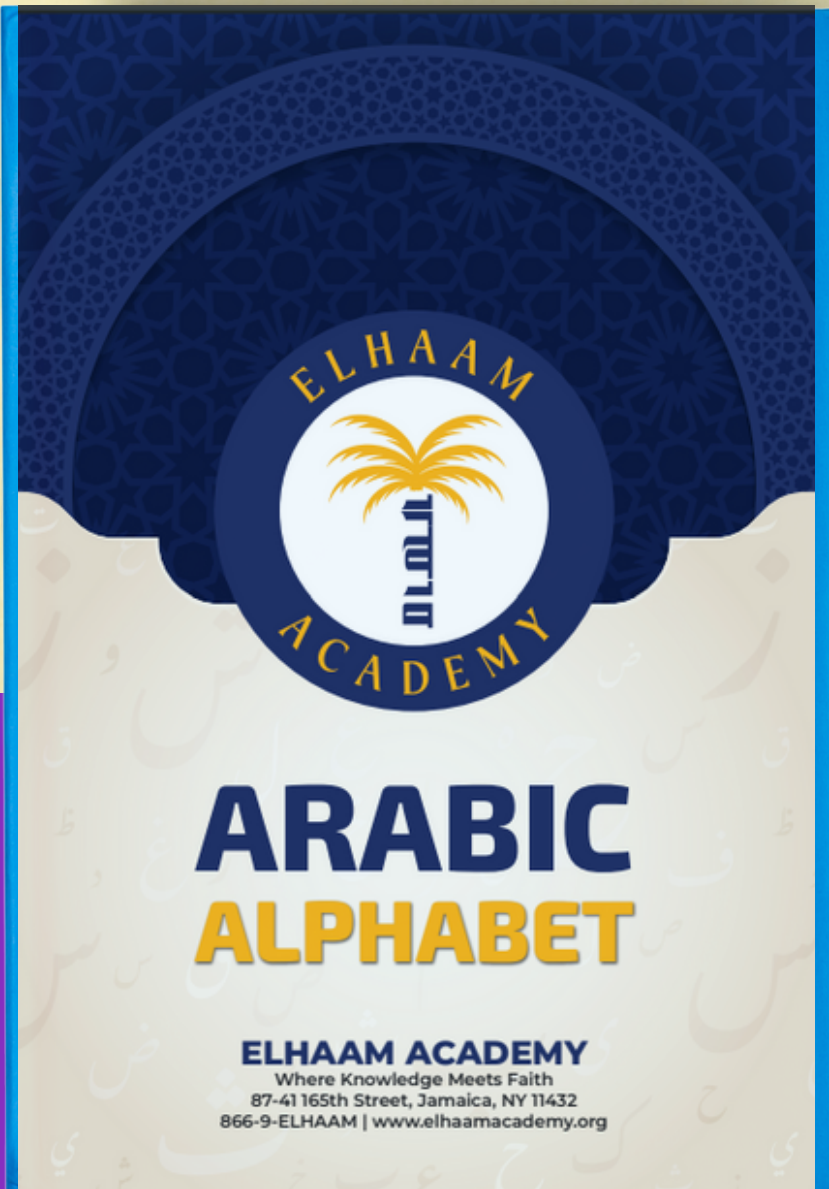
can be translated into actionable civic engagement, especially by the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States. Speakers emphasized that such reform

begins not only with government institutions but also within communities and families, through education, moral development, and transparent leadership.

Many in attendance expressed concern over increasing social and political tensions in Bangladesh, urging constructive involvement, not just criticism from afar. Organizers said that the assembly was not about partisanship but about principle. "Our homeland deserves better—from its leaders and from us," an organizer said. "This is a moral issue, not just a political one." The event concluded with prayers for peace and prosperity in both Bangladesh and the United States, and a renewed commitment to fostering ethical leadership and community empowerment in all spheres of life. For many, the Ulama gathering served not only as a religious forum but as a civic wake-up call—bridging spiritual duty with social action. The message was clear: justice is not optional, and change must begin now.



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CIVICS

Voices of the Future Heard at Rise Up NYC Leadership Summit

Civic leaders and attendees highlight community empowerment



Noah Presley

A powerful message of civic engagement and inclusive leadership resonated at the 3rd Annual Leadership Summit & NYC Candidate Forum, hosted by Rise Up New

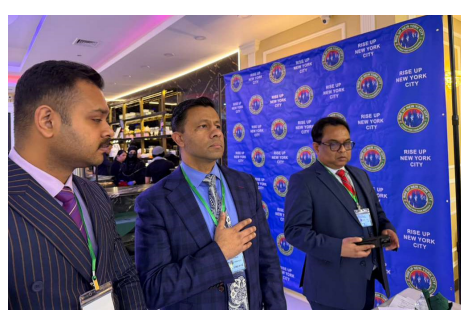
York City on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at Gulshan Terrace in Woodside, Queens. The summit brought together candidates, community leaders, and concerned citizens from across the five boroughs for a dialogue focused



on policy, justice, and representation. Organized by Rise Up New York City—a group committed to building a fairer and more equitable city—the forum served as a platform to highlight the political and civic priorities of New Yorkers, particularly those from underrepresented communities. The atmosphere was one of optimism and momentum, with residents eager to hear directly from candidates and engage in meaningful discussion. One of the most talked-about figures at the event was Shamsul Haque, a trailblazing Bangladeshi-American police officer whose historic promotion within the New York Police Department (NYPD) to

Lieutenant Commander has inspired many within immigrant and South Asian communities. Originally from Sylhet, Bangladesh, Haque co-founded the Bangladeshi American Police Association and has long worked to build bridges between law enforcement and the communities they serve. "Representation matters," said one attendee, referring to the community's hope that Haque might soon seek elected office. "We need leaders who understand the immigrant experience and are grounded in public service." Haque's leadership, both in uniform and in the civic space, has prompted increasing calls for him to run for the New York State

Assembly. His presence at the forum was viewed by many as a signal of what's to come. "He is the real deal," added another community member. "We want to see him represent us not just on the streets, but in the legislature." The summit also featured spirited conversations on housing justice, public safety, language access, and youth empowerment. The event underscored the power of local organizing and the need to nurture leaders who reflect the diversity of New York's neighborhoods. As the 2026 election season gains momentum, events like this one reaffirm that civic participation is not only alive—it's rising.



INSPIRATION

Fashion Meets Faith in the Bronx

World Hijab Day event highlights Muslim women's empowerment

Alex Mason

In a powerful celebration of identity, creativity, and cultural pride, the Office of the Bronx Borough President recently hosted a World Hijab Day fashion show at Borough Hall recently. The event was held in collaboration with Bronx Fashion Week and Style/Esteeem NYC, bringing together designers, models, and community leaders for a showcase of beauty, empowerment, and inclusivity.

The fashion show was part of a broader global observance of World Hijab Day, which aims to foster understanding and respect for Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab. Against the historic backdrop of Bronx Borough Hall, the event spotlighted a range of modest fashion styles that highlighted both tradition and innovation. "This was more than a fashion show—it



was a celebration of culture, confidence, and community," said one attendee. "To see women of all backgrounds modeling hijabs with pride and elegance was incredibly moving." Participants praised the event for creating space for underrepresented



voices in the fashion industry while breaking down stereotypes. The models, many of whom were Bronx residents, proudly wore diverse designs that reflected the borough's dynamic multiculturalism. Organizers noted that fashion can be a powerful vehicle for

social change. "Hijab is not just a piece of clothing—it is an expression of faith, identity, and resilience," said one organizer. "This event helps challenge misconceptions while uplifting the beauty and strength of Muslim women." The partnership with

Style/Esteeem NYC, known for its advocacy in modest fashion, and Bronx Fashion Week, a platform dedicated to celebrating local talent, brought a professional and artistic edge to the event. Borough Hall transformed into a vibrant runway that bridged tradition with contemporary style. Supporters from across the city attended, underscoring the event's message of unity and representation. Many expressed gratitude for the Bronx's ongoing efforts to host inclusive events that reflect the borough's rich diversity. The success of the World Hijab Day fashion show marks another meaningful step in uplifting communities through visibility and celebration. As the applause echoed through Borough Hall, the message was clear: in the Bronx, diversity is not just accepted—it's celebrated.



IDENTITY

Celebrating Identity: COPO Hosts Reflective World Hijab Day Event

A space for education, dialogue, and cultural empowerment

Daniel Matthew

The Council of Peoples Organization (COPO) recently hosted a deeply impactful event in observance of World Hijab Day, drawing strong community participation and fostering meaningful conversations around identity, inclusion, and empowerment. The gathering brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds for an evening of discussion, reflection, and solidarity. Held in recognition of World Hijab Day, which is marked globally each year to honor Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab, the event served as both a celebration and a platform for education. Attendees explored the cultural, religious, and personal significance of the hijab through thoughtful dialogue and shared experiences. One attendee noted, "It was powerful to be in a space where people could ask honest questions, share their



perspectives, and feel heard. Events like this are crucial in building understanding across communities." COPO's World Hijab Day observance was designed not only to showcase the diversity within Muslim identity, but also to challenge stereotypes and misinformation surrounding modest dress. Organizers highlighted the importance of creating

safe, inclusive



environments where women feel respected and empowered in their choices. "From participation to discussion, the engagement in the room was incredible," COPO

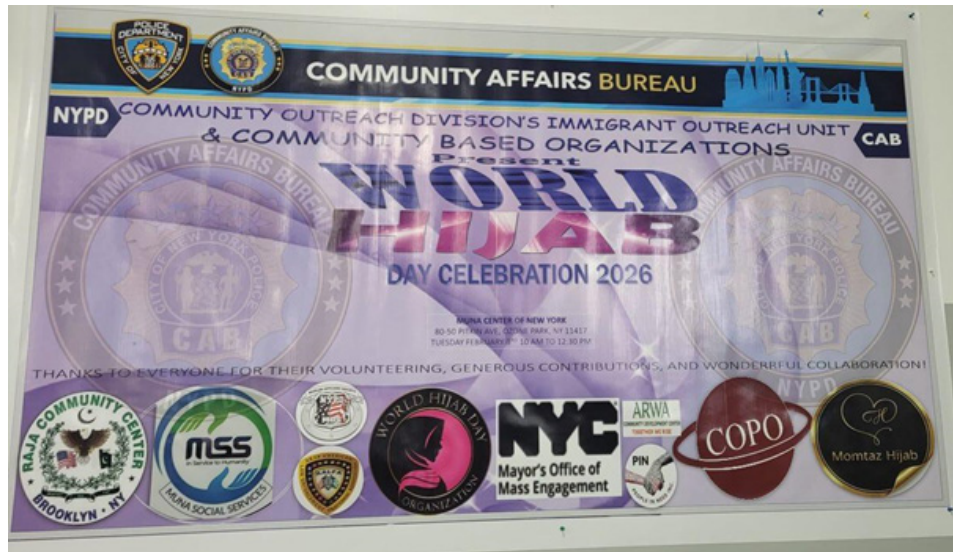


stated in a post-event reflection. "Thank you to everyone who showed up and helped make it a success." In addition to



personal testimonies and discussions, the event provided educational resources to help attendees better understand the

experiences of Muslim women who wear the hijab. Community leaders emphasized that visibility and support are key in pushing back against discrimination and fostering a culture of respect. The event is part of COPO's broader mission to promote civic engagement, equity, and advocacy across New York's diverse communities. Known for its commitment to empowering immigrant and minority populations, COPO continues to host events that bring people together around shared values of dignity, justice, and inclusion. As the evening concluded, the atmosphere remained one of reflection and unity—a reminder of the power of dialogue in bridging differences and building stronger communities. In the words of one participant, "It wasn't just about the hijab—it was about identity, freedom, and the right to be seen."



HERITAGE

Winter Warmth and Tradition at the 'Thikana Pitha Utsab'

New York's Bangladeshi community unites through food, art, and heritage

Issac Andrew

In the heart of Jackson Heights, the aroma of traditional Bengali sweets and the hum of cultural celebration filled the air as the Thikana Pitha Utsab brought together hundreds of community members on Saturday, February 7, 2026. The day-long festival, organized by the renowned Thikana Group, transformed the Thikana Community Hub into a vibrant space of connection, nostalgia, and festivity. Running from 12:00 PM to 9:00 PM on the fourth floor of Bari Tower, the event showcased a colorful array of traditional pithas—sweet and savory rice cakes synonymous with Bangladeshi winter. With stalls offering everything from patishapta and bhapa pitha to savory delights, attendees enjoyed not just the flavors of home, but



also the warmth of shared memories and community ties. Mushrat Shaheen Anubha, Vice Chair and COO of Thikana Group, reflected on the importance of the festival: "Winter means pitha. It means

ঠিকানা

memories of village courtyards, the taste of our mothers' cooking, and the steam rising from a cup of tea. We wanted to bring that feeling to our community

here in New York." More than just a culinary event, the festival also served as a cultural gathering, featuring poetry, music, and casual adda—conversations that echoed the essence of Bengali hospitality and

joy. In her invitation to the community, Anubha emphasized that the Thikana Community Hub is "not just a venue, but a cultural home for our diaspora." The event's chief coordinator, Abir Alamgir, noted that

interest in the festival had grown significantly, with enthusiastic participation from both stall vendors and visitors. The vibrant turnout highlighted the deep-rooted connection Bangladeshis maintain with their heritage, even thousands of miles from home. By fostering such intergenerational and intercultural moments, the Pitha Utsab succeeded not only in delighting the senses but in reaffirming identity. One attendee remarked, "This isn't just about food—it's about remembering who we are." As winter slowly fades in New York, the warmth of the Thikana Pitha Utsab remains a reminder of how shared traditions continue to strengthen and uplift immigrant communities across the city.



HERITAGE

Pitha Festival uplifts tradition and togetherness in Jackson Heights



EMPOWERMENT

Immigration Guidance Shared in Jackson Heights

Panel Discussion Helps Bangladeshi Community Navigate Complex Policies

Marcos Alonso

In the heart of Jackson Heights, a neighborhood known for its vibrant immigrant population, the Queens Bangladesh Society hosted a vital Immigration Awareness Panel Discussion on February 7, 2026, at Chef's Mahal Restaurant. The event brought together immigration attorneys, community leaders, and concerned residents for an evening of education, empowerment, and solidarity. With shifting federal policies and increasing uncertainty surrounding immigration enforcement, the event provided timely and essential information for members of the Bangladeshi community and beyond. Panelists



included experienced immigration lawyers and advocates who addressed a range of issues—from visa processes and green card applications to asylum rights and deportation defense. “Many of us have questions, but not

everyone has access to the right resources,” said one attendee. “This kind of event gives people clarity and the confidence to move forward.” The discussion highlighted the need for accurate information and legal support,

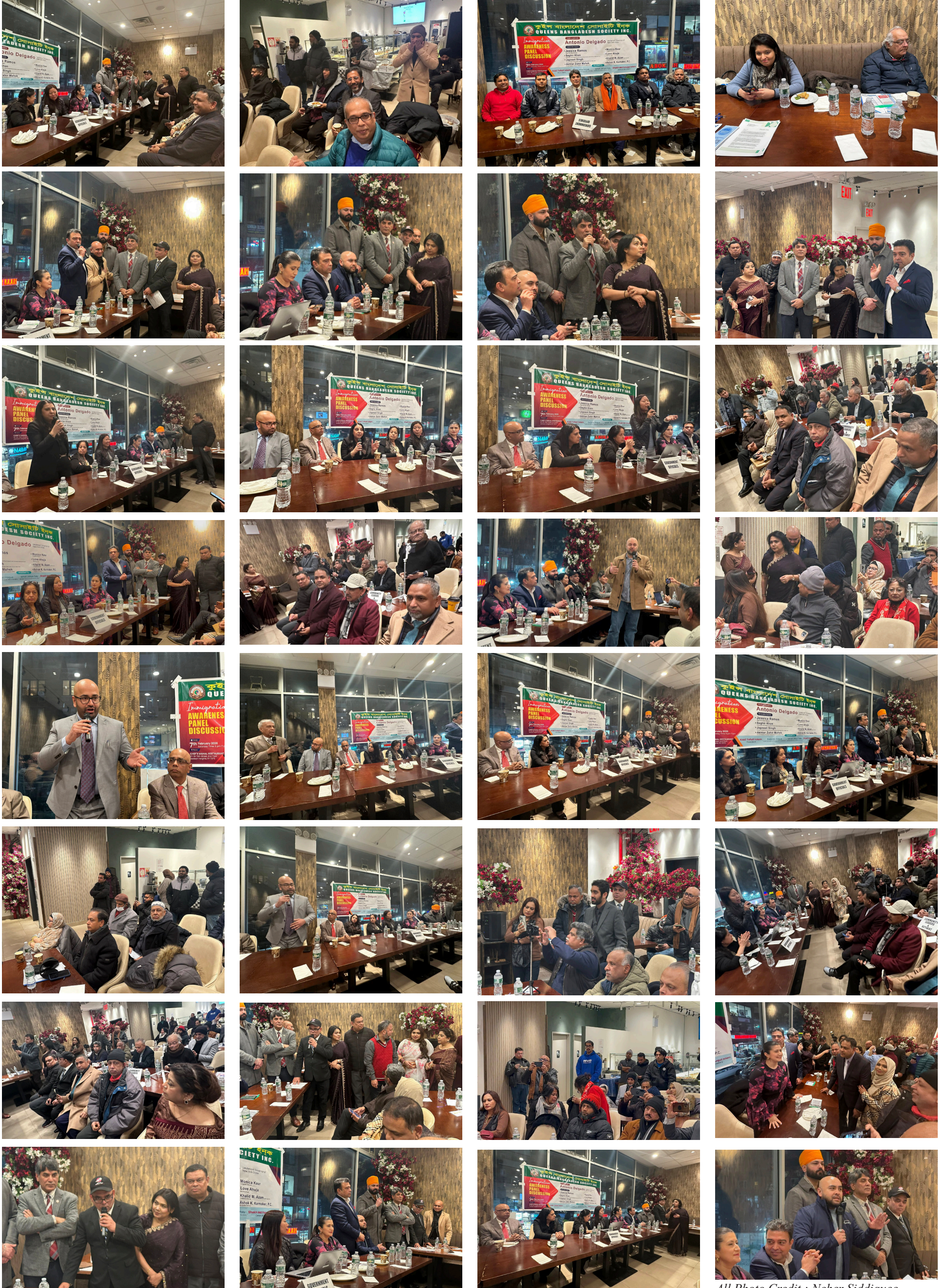
especially for those facing urgent situations. Panelists encouraged attendees to seek proper legal guidance, avoid misinformation, and understand their rights under city and federal law. Attendees were also provided with multilingual resource guides and referral contacts for legal aid services. Organizers emphasized that beyond legal information, the event was about building trust and strengthening community ties. “When we come together to share knowledge, we protect each other,” said one organizer. “Our community is strongest when it’s informed.” The Queens Bangladesh Society, a respected local organization dedicated

to civic engagement and community welfare, has a long history of hosting similar initiatives aimed at supporting the needs of Bangladeshi and immigrant families across the borough. By the end of the evening, attendees expressed appreciation for the initiative and called for more frequent programs to address the evolving landscape of immigration. As one participant put it, “Events like this remind us that we’re not alone—and that knowledge is power.” In a city built by immigrants, gatherings like these continue to play a crucial role in ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of status, have the tools they need to thrive and contribute to their communities.



EMPOWERMENT

Queens Bangladesh Society Hosts Educational Panel on Immigration



All Photo Credit : Neher Siddiquee

INSTITUTION

Broadcast to Classroom: ITV and Elhaam Mark a Milestone Night in Jamaica

A joint celebration honored media legacy, student learning, and community support.

Ashley Reed

Under the banner of Celebration of Knowledge and Faith, ITV and Elhaam Academy brought community members together on Friday, February 6, 2026, for a joint program in Jamaica, NY, underscoring a shared mission captured in a simple idea: Broadcast to Classroom. Held at 87-41 165th St, Jamaica, NY 11432, the evening blended remembrance and forward-looking investment, marking ITV's 10th anniversary and Elhaam's 2nd anniversary in one unified event. The program moved through reflections, tributes, and educational moments that tied ITV's media legacy to Elhaam's growing role in shaping students through faith-centered learning. The night included Qur'an



recitation, remarks from community leaders, and reflections by Imam Dr. Shamsi Ali, reinforcing how community institutions can evolve while staying rooted in service. A major portion of the evening was devoted to recognizing people and institutions whose efforts strengthened that pipeline of impact. Recognition awards



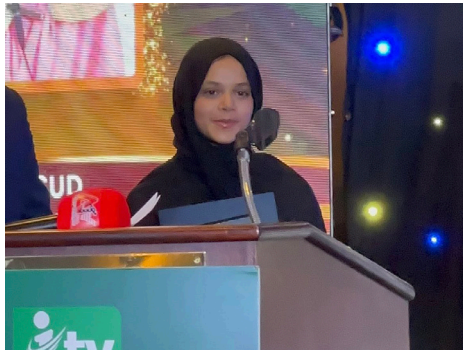
went to community figures including Dr. Hamud Al-Silwi, Imam Al Amin Abdul Latif,



Dr. Mufti Mohammad Farhan, Imam Dr. Sheikh Hasan Abunar, Dr. Zakir Ahmed, Sheikh Qari Nazrul Islam, Dr. Debbie Almontaser, Maryam Masud, Fatima Masud, and Dr. Houria

Abdelrehem, among others. Organizers also highlighted partner organizations that supported the mission, including UMR, BASMAH, MUNA Social Services, ICNA Relief, Al-Falah Foundation New York, Bangladesh Society, Jamaica Muslim Center, Darul Uloom New York, and Noor Graphic Design Inc. Student performances

formed the heart of the night's "classroom" message, with age-based presentations that connected Islamic values to learning and character-building. The program culminated with a keynote by Imam Siraj Wahhaj, followed by fundraising and a closing dua led by Dr. Hamud Al-Silwi, emphasizing shared responsibility for the community's educational future. By the end of the evening, the takeaway was clear: celebrating a legacy is not only about looking back, but also about strengthening what comes next. In bringing ITV and Elhaam Academy together in one program, the event affirmed a continuing commitment to educate, uplift, and invest in students so the impact of knowledge and faith can move from one generation to the next.



INSTITUTION

With Gratitude: Recognition Awards

Recognition awards were a central part of the evening, underscoring the event's theme of Broadcast to Classroom by honoring individuals whose service has strengthened faith, education, and community life. Organizers recognized religious leaders, educators, and community advocates for their continued guidance and contributions, offering a public expression of gratitude tied to the shared mission of ITV and Elhaam Academy.

Among those receiving Recognition Awards were Dr. Hamud Al-Silwi, Imam Al Amin Abdul Latif, Imam Dr. Shamsi Ali, Dr. Mufti Mohammad Farhan, Imam Dr. Sheikh Hasan Abunar, Dr. Zakir Ahmed, Sheikh Qari Nazrul Islam, Saiful Azam Al Azhary, Sheikh Mustafa Abdelrehem, Cheikh Ibrahima Ahmed Niass, Iqbal HJ, Mohammad Wahedur Rahman, Ammad Sheikh, Rezu Mohammed, Jakir Zahid, Dr. Debbie Almontaser, Maryam Masud, Fatima Masud, and Dr. Houria Abdelrehem. Their recognition highlighted the many forms of leadership behind community progress, from scholarship and spiritual guidance to education and civic engagement.



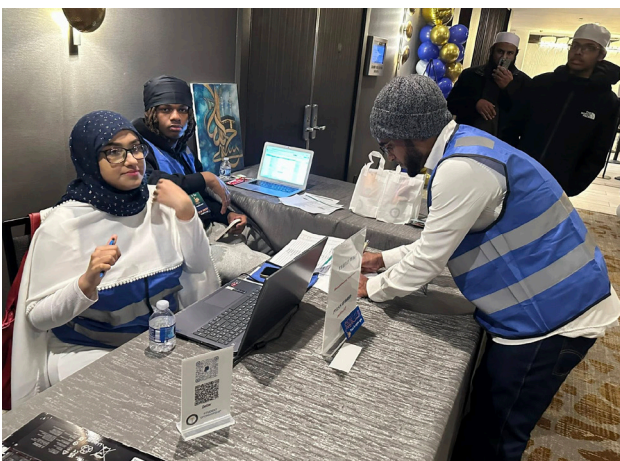
INSTITUTION

Performances That Brought the Message to Life



Performances were a key highlight of the evening, bringing the event's Broadcast to Classroom theme to life through voices, creativity, and student spirit. Elhaam Academy students presented age-based segments that connected learning with Islamic values, including short Qur'anic reflections, a Seerah-themed presentation, and a nasheed by the youngest grades.

The program also featured performances by Iqbal HJ and Maryam Masud, adding to the night's uplifting tone and reinforcing the message of faith, education, and community investment.



INSTITUTION

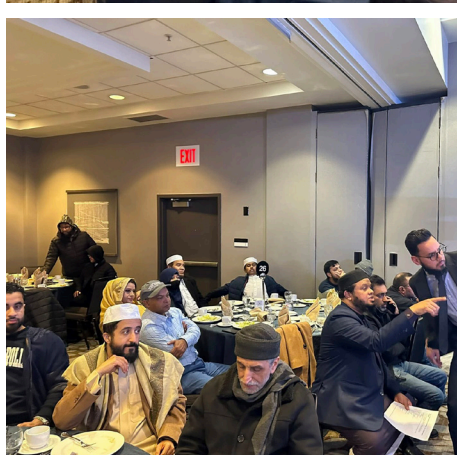
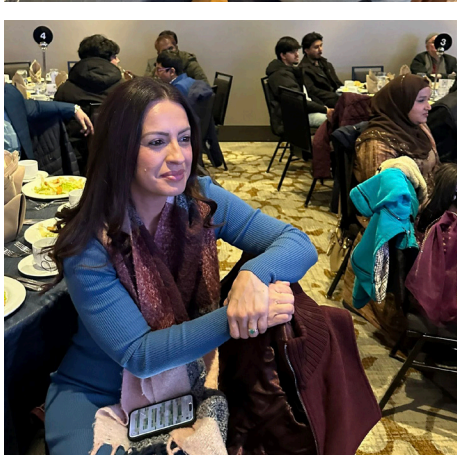


Community Support and Closing Moments



As the program moved toward its conclusion, the focus widened beyond the stage to recognize the people who helped bring the evening together and the guests who filled the venue with warmth and purpose. Volunteers from Save The People USA joined community members and supporters to assist with coordination and logistics, helping the event run smoothly from beginning to end.

The gathering closed with a shared sense of gratitude and renewal, reflecting the night's central message of Broadcast to Classroom. Marking ITV's 10th anniversary and Elhaam Academy's 2nd anniversary, the celebration honored a legacy of service while reaffirming a commitment to the next generation—strengthening community ties and supporting the educational future of its students.



All photos credit: Neher Siddiquee & usanewsonline.com

LEADERSHIP

Queens Celebrates Leadership and Community

Donovan Richards Hosts Second-Term Inauguration with Faith, Culture, and Civic Voices

Phillip D'Costa

In a ceremony filled with pride, culture, and community, Donovan Richards Jr. was ceremonially sworn in for his second term as Queens Borough President on Sunday, February 8, 2026, at the Goldstein Theater on the campus of Queens College. The event, which drew elected officials, faith leaders, performers, and hundreds of local residents, served as both a celebration and a call to continued service. The evening's program reflected both the vibrancy and diversity of Queens. Music set the tone, with DJ Tam Jams opening the event before Rachelle Antoine welcomed guests. The Frank Sinatra School of the Arts Chorus gave

stirring performances of The Star-Spangled Banner and Lift Every Voice and Sing, blending patriotism with cultural pride. Queens College President Dr. Frank Wu then offered thoughtful opening remarks. The ceremony also featured an interfaith invocation, representing the borough's rich religious landscape. Among the spiritual leaders, Imam Muhammad Shahidullah offered a powerful prayer in Arabic and English, invoking the values of justice and compassion. "O Allah, grant him wisdom in leadership, integrity in action, and humility in success," he prayed, referencing Richards' new term. "Make his leadership a source of justice, unity, and compassion."



Adding to the evening's cultural depth were performances from the Edge School of the Arts and Joe's Academy of Music, showcasing the talents of local youth.

Between segments, elected officials shared their reflections, including New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, New York City Comptroller

Mark Levine, Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, and New York State Attorney General Letitia James, who also administered the oath of office. The highlight of the evening came when Mrs. Tameeka Richards introduced her husband for the official swearing-in. Following the oath,



Borough President Richards delivered a passionate inaugural address outlining his priorities for the next four years—emphasizing equity,

affordable housing, youth investment, and infrastructure development across Queens' diverse neighborhoods. To conclude, the Elite Marching Band of Queens led a jubilant procession to a community reception held at the Aaron Copland School of Music, capping off an evening that embodied unity, hope, and determination. As Queens embarks on this new chapter, Borough President Richards' inauguration set the tone for a term rooted in inclusion, accountability, and progress. The event was not only a personal milestone, but a borough-wide reaffirmation of shared purpose and forward momentum.



ORGANIZATION

Faith, Service, and Resilience on Display

ICNA Relief's New York Banquet Brings Together Over 300 Attendees



Tulip Armstrong

Braving one of the coldest nights of the year, over 350 community members and families gathered at the Long Island Marriott

on Saturday, February 7, 2026, for the ICNA Relief New York Annual Banquet, a powerful evening of reflection, unity, and commitment to service. With temperatures



plummeting to a bone-chilling -28 degrees Fahrenheit, organizers were initially unsure if

attendance would be possible. However, the turnout surpassed expectations, filling the ballroom to capacity and overwhelming the hotel's parking lot. Themed "Be the Door of Opportunity," the event showcased ICNA Relief's ongoing humanitarian efforts, which include food assistance, refugee resettlement, disaster relief, and healthcare access. The banquet also aimed to deepen community partnerships and raise support for future initiatives. Attendees were welcomed by a series of speakers, including a university professor, a motivational speaker, and a legal

expert involved in civic engagement and advocacy. Their remarks emphasized the importance of staying rooted in compassion, civic responsibility, and uplifting those in need. One speaker reminded the audience, "Every act of service opens a door—not just for those we help, but for the entire community." Despite the bitter cold, the energy inside the banquet hall was warm and lively. Families from across New York and New Jersey, including some traveling from remote towns, made the effort to attend. Guests were treated to dinner, heartfelt speeches, and a shared sense of purpose that extended

well beyond the scheduled end time of 9 PM, with the program continuing until 10 PM. Event organizers expressed heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming support. "This gathering affirmed the strength of the bond between ICNA Relief and the community," one organizer noted. "It was a night of honor and pride, and we're deeply thankful to everyone who stood with us—especially in this weather." The banquet not only celebrated the work of the past year but set the tone for continued action rooted in faith, resilience, and hope.



SANCTUARY

Masjid Omar Ben Abdel Aziz Reopens Its Doors

Community gathers to celebrate the re-grand opening of a beloved spiritual home

Abdul Azim

In a heartfelt celebration of renewal and unity, Masjid Omar Ben Abdel Aziz held its long-awaited re-grand opening this past weekend, drawing worshippers, local leaders, and community members for a day of spiritual reflection and joyful reunion. Located in a vibrant and diverse neighborhood, the mosque has long served as a cornerstone of religious life and social support. After undergoing significant renovations, the re-grand opening offered not only a chance to showcase the refreshed space, but also to



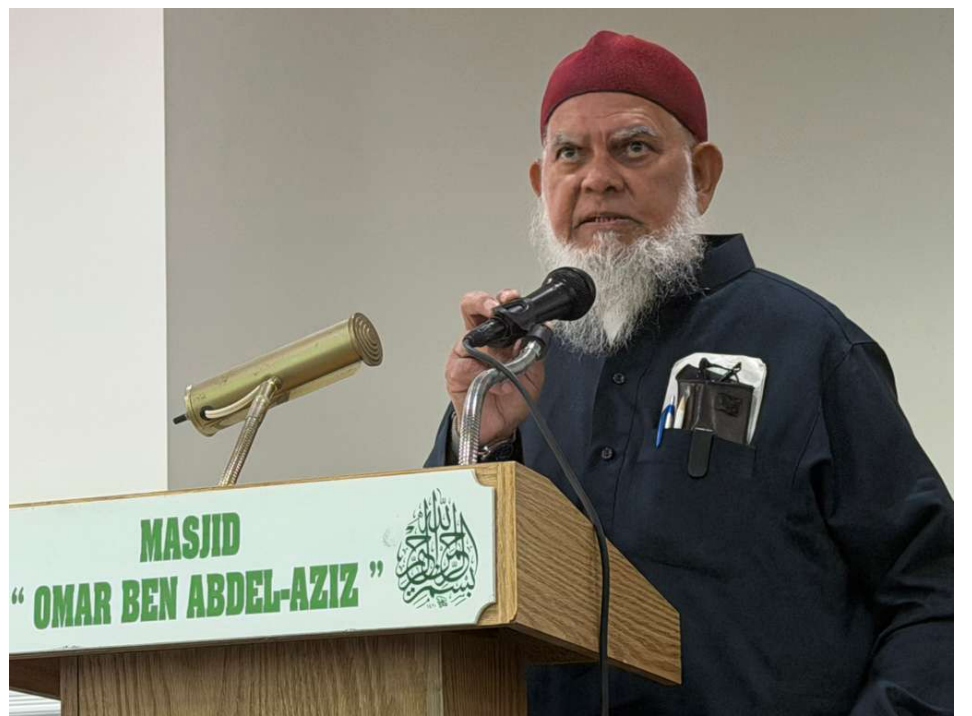
recommit to its mission of service, education, and community engagement. The event began with recitation of the Qur'an, followed by remarks from mosque leadership

and invited community members. Several speakers reflected on the mosque's historical role as a hub for faith, family, and youth development. "This masjid has seen

generations grow, learn, and come together," said one attendee. "Its reopening means our roots are deeper, and our future is stronger." Imams and scholars spoke on the importance

of maintaining the mosque as a sanctuary for prayer, reflection, and charitable work, especially in challenging times. The new facilities include enhanced prayer spaces, improved accessibility, and updated classrooms—ensuring that the mosque can better serve both elders and youth in the years ahead. Guests toured the renovated space and shared memories of past events held within its walls—from Eid prayers to educational seminars. "The mosque isn't just a building," said another community member. "It's where hearts connect and values are passed on." The reopening

was punctuated by a communal du'a (supplication), thanking Allah for the opportunity to gather once more in this sacred space. The sense of gratitude was palpable, as attendees expressed appreciation for the volunteers, donors, and organizers who made the renovations possible. As the call to prayer echoed once again through the newly restored halls of Masjid Omar Ben Abdel Aziz, it was clear that the mosque's re-grand opening was more than a physical transformation—it was a spiritual recommitment to faith, community, and shared purpose.





Mamdani Confronts Deep Freeze

First 100 days shaped by winter crisis

Amkel Nourush

As New York City endured its coldest temperatures of the winter, Mayor Zohran Mamdani spent the weekend intensifying citywide efforts to protect residents from life-threatening conditions, marking a defining moment early in his administration. During Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 7-8, temperatures plunged into the low single digits across the five boroughs, prompting an extreme cold warning from the National Weather Service. Mamdani visited firefighters and EMS workers on Staten Island, thanking them



Photo: Mayor Zohran Mamdani addresses extreme cold from City Hall rooftop as Brad Hoylman-Sigal looks on, Feb. 2, 2026.

Image Source : Lloyd Mitchell/AMNY

for their work and urging New Yorkers to take the danger seriously. "Being outdoors for even a brief period of time can be lethal," the mayor warned, calling on residents to check on neighbors and dial 311 for anyone in need. City agencies expanded emergency measures,

opening additional warming centers, deploying more than 150 outreach workers, and increasing shelter placements. The city reported over 1,300 shelter placements since mid-January as the cold snap persisted. With at least 17 deaths linked to the recent freezing weather, Mamdani said the administration would review emergency response protocols once conditions improve. The weekend response underscored how swiftly the new mayor has been tested by a public safety crisis, as his administration moved aggressively to keep vulnerable New Yorkers warm and alive.



Photo: Will Lewis stepped down days after overseeing mass lay-offs at the US newspaper Image Source: Getty Images/BBC

Leadership Shake-Up at Post

Layoffs precede executive departure

Julian Alvez

The Washington Post announced that its chief executive, William Lewis, has stepped down, days after overseeing sweeping layoffs that eliminated about one-third of the paper's workforce. In a message to staff, Lewis said it was the "right time" to leave, acknowledging that "difficult decisions" had been made to secure the newspaper's future. The cuts, announced earlier in the week, sharply reduced coverage of sports and international news, including the elimination of the Post's entire Middle East team and its Kyiv-based Ukraine correspondent. The decision triggered widespread backlash inside and outside the newsroom. Hundreds of people protested outside the paper's headquarters in Washington, DC, while

former executive editor Marty Baron called the layoffs "among the darkest days" in the organization's history. Current executive editor Matt Murray defended the move, saying it was necessary to restore financial stability. Lewis, who joined the Post in 2023 after leading Dow Jones and the Wall Street Journal, had faced growing criticism as he sought to reverse mounting losses. Jeff D'Onofrio, the paper's chief financial officer, will serve as acting publisher and CEO. The resignation adds to ongoing turmoil at the Post, which has faced subscriber losses and internal dissent since owner Jeff Bezos halted presidential endorsements and reshaped the opinion section, reshuffling the paper's identity during a turbulent period for American journalism.

ICE Cooperation Deepens Divide

Red and blue states split sharply on immigration enforcement

Nassr Al Shams

Cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) emerged as a defining political divide between red and blue states as President Donald Trump's administration intensified its push for mass deportations. Republican-led states such as Texas, Florida, and Georgia passed laws requiring local law enforcement to partner with ICE through the

federal 287(g) program, dramatically expanding cooperation. In contrast, Democratic-led states including California, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Maryland moved to prohibit or roll back such agreements, citing concerns over civil liberties and community trust. Federal pressure escalated as Trump repeatedly threatened to withhold funding from jurisdictions that limited cooperation, though courts blocked

several attempts. Meanwhile, backlash followed heavily militarized enforcement actions in cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis, prompting more Democratic governors to resist participation. Experts noted that ICE traditionally relied on local law enforcement transfers for most arrests, making state cooperation critical to Trump's goal of deporting more than one million people annually.

But growing public unease complicated that strategy. "State and local law enforcement is the key to mass deportation," said Ahilan Arulanantham of UCLA, adding that political tolerance for aggressive tactics may now be the administration's biggest constraint. As partisan lines hardened, immigration enforcement increasingly looked different depending on whether a community sat in a red or blue state.



Photo: Lindsey Vonn crashes during the women's downhill final in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Feb. 8. Image Source: IOC/Handout/Getty Images/CNN

Vonn Injured in Final

Olympic crash ends comeback bid

Adrian Smith

Lindsey Vonn was reported in stable condition after undergoing surgery on her left leg following a frightening crash in the

Olympic downhill final on Sunday, an accident that ended her bid for one last Olympic moment. According to the Associated Press, Vonn was treated at Ca' Foncello hospital in

Treviso, where doctors stabilized a fracture in the same leg that suffered a complete ACL rupture during a January 30 crash in Crans-Montana, Switzerland. The 41-year-old

American had been racing just 13 seconds when she clipped a gate with her arm and was sent tumbling violently down the course. A hush fell over the Tofane Alpine Skiing Centre in Cortina d'Ampezzo as medics rushed to her side. Vonn was later airlifted off the slope, drawing a standing ovation from the crowd. "Lindsey Vonn sustained an injury, but is in stable condition and in good hands," the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Team said in a statement. Team officials acknowledged the risk she took returning so soon from injury, calling alpine skiing "a brutal sport." After a lengthy delay, the race resumed, with teammate Breezy Johnson winning Team USA's first gold of the Games—while the Olympic community reflected on the cost of pushing limits at the sport's highest level.

Iran Sentences Nobel Laureate

Narges Mohammadi given additional prison term

Charles Lewis

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi has been handed an additional seven-and-a-half years in prison, her lawyer said Sunday, marking the latest escalation in Tehran's crackdown on prominent dissenting voices.

HIGHLIGHT

●Narges Mohammadi receives 7.5 years in new sentences

●Lawyer and family condemn court process

According to attorney Mostafa Nili, a court in Mashhad sentenced Mohammadi to six years for "gathering and collusion" and 18 months for "propaganda activities." She was also given a two-year

travel ban and two years of internal exile to the eastern Khusf region. Mohammadi was arrested in December after making what authorities called "provocative remarks" at a memorial service. Her family says the 53-year-old activist was beaten during her arrest and later hospitalized. The Narges Foundation described the hearing as a "sham" and said Mohammadi began a hunger strike on Feb. 2 due to deteriorating conditions. Mohammadi's husband, Taghi Rahmani, said she refused to defend herself, calling the proceedings illegitimate. The new ruling brings her total prison sentence to 44 years, according to supporters, underscoring growing concern over her health and safety as international pressure on Iran mounts.