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Sunday, JANUARY 11, 2026
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NEW YORK NEWS

The Voice of People

From New York



Photo: Death toll in crackdown on protests in Iran spikes to at least 538, activists say
Image Source: Online

Iran Crackdown Intensifies

Hundreds dead as protests spread

Alexandar Sullivan

A sweeping crackdown on anti-government protests in Iran has killed at least 538 people, according to activists, as authorities escalated warnings to the United States and Israel amid growing international concern. The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists

News Agency said on Sunday that the death toll includes 490 protesters and 48 members of security forces, with more casualties feared as internet shutdowns and phone disruptions limit information. The group also reported more than 10,600 arrests since demonstrations erupted Dec.

28 over the collapse of Iran's currency and deepening economic hardship. The Iranian government has not released official casualty figures. Protesters continued to gather in cities including Tehran, Mashhad, and Kerman, often forming brief, mobile demonstrations to avoid heavy security patrols.

Videos circulating online showed crowds confronting authorities despite surveillance drones and street closures. Tensions escalated further after Mohammad Baagher Qalibaf, Iran's parliamentary speaker, warned that U.S. military forces and Israel would be "legitimate targets" if foreign

powers intervene. Lawmakers echoed the threat with chants of "Death to America." Any military decision would ultimately rest with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 86. U.S. President

HIGHLIGHT

● **Activists say at least 538 people have been killed across Iran**

● **More than 10,600 detained during two weeks of protests**

● **Tehran warned the U.S. and Israel against military action**

Donald Trump voiced support for demonstrators, saying America stood "ready to help," while U.S. officials weighed possible responses. Israel said it was closely monitoring developments. Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian struck a firmer tone, calling for dialogue but condemning what he described as destructive unrest. As funerals for slain security personnel aired on state television, families of protesters continued to mourn amid uncertainty, isolation, and fear, underscoring the human cost of Iran's deepest unrest in years.

Questions After Maduro Trade

Timing fuels insider fears

John Paul

An anonymous trader's \$400,000 payout tied to the capture of former Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro has thrust prediction markets into renewed public scrutiny. The winning bets were placed on Polymarket just hours before President Donald Trump announced a surprise U.S. operation that led to Maduro's arrest, prompting online speculation about possible

HIGHLIGHT

● **Anonymous trader earned \$400,000 betting on Nicolás Maduro's downfall**

● **Wagers placed hours before U.S. raid raised insider trading concerns**

insider trading. Prediction markets allow users to buy and sell "event contracts" tied to future outcomes, ranging from elections to geopolitical events. While proponents argue these platforms can improve forecasting, critics warn that anonymity, limited oversight, and 24/7 access heighten risks of

Mayor Challenges FBI Probe

Calls for state role in ICE shooting case

Lily Anderson

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey on Sunday publicly called for a joint state and federal investigation into the fatal shooting of Renee Nicole Good, citing what he described as a "deep mistrust" of federal agencies in Minnesota. Speaking on NBC's Meet the Press, Frey said confidence in the investigation would improve if the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension were allowed to participate alongside the FBI. He stressed that his concern was not about reaching a specific outcome, but ensuring credibility and fairness. "So many of the things that we are hearing are not true," Frey said. Good, 37, was shot and killed by an Immigration



Photo: Placard honoring Renee Nicole Good displayed at a San Francisco protest after her death in Minneapolis.

Image Source: Santiago Mejia / San Francisco Chronicle via Getty Images

and Customs Enforcement officer in Minneapolis last Wednesday. Federal officials, including President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, claimed Good

attempted to ram officers with her vehicle. Frey and other local leaders disputed that account, saying video evidence shows she was trying to leave the scene and posed no imminent

threat. State officials confirmed they were later blocked from accessing evidence and interviews. Gov. Tim Walz echoed Frey's concerns, saying public

HIGHLIGHT

● **Mayor Jacob Frey questioned the credibility of a federal-only probe**

● **Renee Nicole Good, 37, was fatally shot by an ICE officer**

● **State investigators were denied access to evidence**

● **Community tensions and protests followed the shooting**

statements by federal leaders had undermined confidence in the investigation. The shooting has fueled protests and heightened tensions between residents and federal agents, with city leaders urging transparency to restore public trust.



Photo: Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro
Image Source: AP Photos / Matias

abuse. The controversy has intensified calls for regulation, including a new proposal from Rep. Ritchie Torres to restrict government employees from participating in political event contracts. As prediction markets expand rapidly in the United States, the Maduro bet underscores growing concerns about transparency, fairness, and public trust.

NEW YORK NEWS

Sunday, JANUARY 11, 2026

ISSUE-62

Please send news to

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Published by NYNN

New York News Networks



COMMUNITY NEWS

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Officials respond to Manhattan encounter

NYN Desk :

New information has emerged about Dmitry Zass, the 37-year-old Staten Island man shot and killed by NYPD officers in Manhattan on Thursday night, as state authorities launched an official investigation into the incident. Police said Zass, who lived with his parents in Great Kills, was fatally wounded after a car crash near Bedford Street and Sixth Avenue in the West Village. According



Photo: City officials respond to NYPD shooting death of a Staten Island man. Image Source: Online

to NYPD Assistant Chief James McCarthy, officers approached a BMW involved in a reported collision shortly before 10:53 p.m., when Zass exited the vehicle and allegedly pointed what appeared to be a firearm at them. Officers opened fire, later discovering the weapon was a Sig Sauer air pistol, police said. Zass was transported to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 11:17 p.m. Two officers were treated

for evaluation. Neighbors on Staten Island described Zass as kind and soft-spoken, expressing shock over his death. On Friday, Attorney General Letitia James' Office of Special Investigation confirmed it is reviewing the shooting, as required in all police-involved fatalities. Mayor Zohran Mamdani said the city is awaiting answers, pledging cooperation with Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch to ensure a thorough and swift review.

Vornado Bets on Midtown



Photo: How Vornado Is Expanding in Manhattan While Strengthening Liquidity Image Source: Online

NYN Desk

Vornado Realty Trust has strengthened its Manhattan portfolio while shoring up liquidity, completing a major acquisition and extending key financing in moves that signal confidence in New York City's long-term real estate prospects. The company purchased 3

East 54th Street in the Plaza District for \$141 million, using a previously accrued \$107 million mortgage balance to reduce its upfront cash outlay. The 18,400-square-foot, demolition-ready site sits between Fifth and Madison Avenues, adjacent to the St. Regis Hotel, and is zoned for roughly 232,500 square feet of as-of-right development,

offering significant future optionality. At the same time, Vornado extended maturities on more than \$2 billion in financing, pushing its \$1.105 billion revolving credit facility and an upsized \$850 million unsecured term loan to February 2031, while also extending another \$1 billion revolving facility to April 2029. The moves ease near-term refinancing pressure and preserve flexibility in a still-evolving office market. The strategy aligns with Vornado's focus on high-quality, supply-constrained markets. The company leased 3.7 million square feet in the first nine months of 2025 and expects New York office occupancy to rise into the low-90% range, underscoring cautious optimism for Midtown's recovery.

NYC to activate hundreds of new cameras

Senior Reporter

New York City is moving swiftly to expand its red light camera program, with hundreds of new enforcement devices set to come online across the five boroughs before the end of the year, according to the Department of Transportation (DOT). The agency announced Friday that it will activate 250 new red light cameras over the next six weeks, adding about 50 cameras per week, and reach a total of 600 intersections citywide by the end of 2026. Until recently, state law limited the city to just 150 cameras, but legislation signed in fall 2024 by Gov. Kathy Hochul authorized the addition of 450 more. "Red light running is one of the most dangerous behaviors on our city's streets," said DOT Commissioner Mike Flynn, calling the expansion an immediate step to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. The DOT said it will not disclose camera locations to preserve their deterrent



Photo : New York City is adding red light cameras at 450 more intersections this year. Image Source: Getty Images / AMNY effect. City officials say the technology has a proven safety record, citing data showing a 73% reduction in red-light violations, a 65% drop in T-bone crashes, and a 49% decrease in rear-end collisions at monitored intersections. Violators receive \$50 fines, and most drivers cited do not become repeat offenders. State Sen. Andrew Gounardes, who sponsored the expansion law, said decades of evidence show the cameras "reduce crashes and save lives," reinforcing the city's push for safer streets.



Photo: A 6-year-old boy was struck by a Hatzolah ambulance on a street in Brooklyn Image Source : William Farrington

Child Hit by Ambulance

Staff Reporter

A 6-year-old boy was left in critical condition after being struck by a Hatzolah ambulance on a residential street in Borough Park, Brooklyn, in a harrowing incident Saturday morning, authorities said. The collision occurred around 10:30 a.m. on 52nd Street between 15th and 16th Avenues, where police said the child ran into the roadway mid-block moments before being hit by the emergency vehicle. The impact triggered a swift response from first responders already nearby. Officers from the New York City Police Department and members of the Hatzolah Ambulance converged on the scene as the boy was rushed to a nearby

hospital. Officials said he was "clinging to life" as he was transported for emergency treatment. NYPD Highway Patrol officers cordoned off the area and began an investigation into the crash, examining vehicle positioning and street conditions. No charges were immediately announced, and police did not indicate whether the ambulance was responding to an active emergency at the time. The incident sent shockwaves through the tight-knit neighborhood, with residents expressing concern over pedestrian safety on the busy block as investigators work to determine exactly what happened.

Prayer Time IN New York

FAJR	DHUHR	ASR	MAGHRIB	ISHA
05:58	12:04	02:31	04:50	06:11
05:58	12:05	02:32	04:51	06:12
05:58	12:05	02:33	04:52	06:13
05:57	12:05	02:34	04:53	06:14
05:57	12:06	02:35	04:54	06:15
05:57	12:06	02:36	04:56	06:16
05:56	12:06	02:37	04:57	06:17

OPINION

The Dawn is Closer than You Think

— Imam Shamsi Ali

This is not the first long night, nor the first darkness that seemed like the end of everything. It is the scene of Mecca on the night Prophet Muhammad (SAW) left it in darkness, alone with an unseem conviction. The polytheists (mushrikoon) thought the call to Islam (da'wah) was over, yet it was only the beginning.

So it was at the Battle of Badr, few in number, poorly equipped, but the heavens were full of promise. The scales tipped, and history learned that truth is measured not by quantity but by steadfastness.

Then came the Battle of Uhud, bringing wounds, spilling blood, and shaking some hearts. Some said it was the end. Yet it was only a long lesson in patience and hard training to rise again.

Then came the Battle of the Trench (Khandaq). When all the forces of disbelief gathered and Medina was besieged from every corner, hearts pounded and the believers were shaken. Victory that day was not in their hands but in their hearts, firmness amid hunger, patience amid

fear, and digging a trench in hard ground with soft, trusting hearts. When the hypocrites said, "Allah and His Messenger promise nothing but deceit," the true believers answered, "This is what Allah and His Messenger have promised us." The siege turned into wind; the coalition broke, and Islam stood firm.

All we see today is like a summer cloud, thick in appearance but quick to disappear. Did people think, when the Tatars swept through Muslim lands, that Islam was diminished? Instead, the ruins rose uncompromising fighters, the Tatars fell, and Islam endured. Was not Jerusalem held captive for centuries, with people saying, "It can never be freed"? Saladin then came, not with thunderous speeches but with a long caravan of faith, reclaiming the holy land before its walls were rebuilt. Thus the pattern repeats. Darkness deepens, the clashes intensify, then suddenly... light again. Know, the



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

darkest moments of night are the moments before dawn arrives.

Allah's promise of victory is not a slogan but a recurring law. Every attempt to break it has failed, and every generation that thinks it is the last is merely a link in the chain.

What is required of us is not only to change the course of history, but to stay steadfast with the caravan of Islam, not drifting onto tempting side-paths, and not abandoning the caravan when the burden grows heavy. Walk with the caravan, even when tired, for the essence is not in arriving quickly but in never turning back.

And the dawn is closer than you think! This is the year of reckoning. A tyrant attacks here, then is attacked there. The price of past bloodshed will be paid. So never say a tyrant has mastered those who are less tyrannical. Instead say: this is the year of reckoning, and your Lord never

forget!

As long as there is a tyrant whose evil is certain and a believer whose faith is certain, the state will change, and the earth will change!

For us in Muslims in America, especially those of us in New York City, more particularly those who lived through the tragedy of 9/11 and the wave of Islamophobia that followed, it often feels as if the da'wah movement has been buried. Islam has been interred by the so called "terror attacks," with the faith being blamed as the inspiration for that evil violence. Yet, in just over two decades, New York City is now led by a Muslim.

To many, that seems impossible and bewildering. But is anything impossible when Allah wills it? We are happy and proud that our brother Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as mayor of New York just a week ago. So my friend, be certain, this is the year of reckoning, and the dawn is closer than you think. Keep your heads up, do not despair from the mercy of Allah!

Have a great weekend to all!



"Know, the darkest moments of night are the moments before dawn arrives."



Image Source: Online



"Allah's promise of victory is not a slogan but a recurring law."

Venezuela, the United States, and the Price of Power

— Imam Muhammad Shahidullah

The crisis surrounding Venezuela and U.S. policy toward its presidency is not merely a regional dispute; it is a defining test of how power is exercised in the modern world. For years, Washington has framed its approach to Venezuela as a moral struggle—democracy versus authoritarianism, rule of law versus corruption. Yet the methods employed by the United States raise an uncomfortable question: can democracy truly be defended by undermining the very principles that sustain it?

Venezuela's political collapse did not happen overnight. The country's descent began long before Nicolás Maduro became president, rooted in institutional decay, overreliance on oil revenues, and a political culture that steadily concentrated power. Under Maduro, those weaknesses hardened into authoritarian governance. Elections lost credibility, dissent was suppressed, and economic mismanagement pushed millions of Venezuelans into poverty or exile.

These realities are undeniable and have rightly drawn international concern. But acknowledging Venezuela's internal failures does not automatically legitimize external coercion. For decades, U.S. policy toward Venezuela has oscillated between sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and selective engagement. Sanctions were intended to pressure the government while sparing civilians, yet in practice they deepened economic suffering and hardened political positions.

When diplomacy failed to deliver quick

results, Washington's rhetoric shifted—from pressure to punishment, from containment to confrontation. The language of human rights gradually gave way to the language of security and enforcement. That shift matters.

When the United States treats a foreign head of state primarily as a criminal target rather than a political actor, it collapses the distinction between international law and domestic law enforcement. This blurring may feel expedient, but it is dangerous. It implies that powerful nations can unilaterally decide which leaders are legitimate and which are subject to removal by force. That logic does not strengthen the global order—it weakens it.

Supporters of aggressive U.S. action argue that Venezuela is an exceptional case. They point to allegations of corruption, repression, and criminal networks, insisting that traditional diplomacy was exhausted. Perhaps. But history offers sobering lessons about "exceptional" interventions. Once norms are broken, they rarely remain confined to one case. What one administration justifies as necessity, another may use as precedent.

The consequences extend far beyond Venezuela. Latin America, in particular, carries a long memory of foreign intervention. Even governments critical of Maduro



— Imam Muhammad Shahidullah
 Vice President, United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), Queens Chapter

are uneasy when sovereignty appears conditional—respected only when aligned with U.S. interests. For a region striving to move beyond the shadows of past interventions, heavy-handed action revives old fears and undermines trust. It also weakens local democratic forces by allowing authoritarian actors to cloak themselves in nationalist resistance. At home, the implications are just as troubling. U.S. foreign policy gains moral authority not from its power, but from its

restraint. When executive decisions override international institutions and sidestep congressional debate, democracy erodes internally as well. The United States cannot credibly champion the rule of law abroad while stretching or ignoring it at home. There is also the question of responsibility. Removing or neutralizing a leader does not resolve a nation's underlying fractures. Venezuela's crisis is structural: economic collapse, institutional breakdown, social trauma, and deep political polarization. No external power can fix those realities quickly, and none can do so without local legitimacy. If the United States asserts influence without committing to long-term, inclusive reconstruction, it risks owning the chaos that follows. Moreover, global rivals are watching closely. When Washington bypasses multilateral processes, it hands

authoritarian powers an easy argument: that international rules are merely tools of convenience. This weakens U.S. credibility in other global disputes, where respect for sovereignty and international law are essential to maintaining alliances and stability.

None of this absolves Venezuela's leadership of responsibility for its people's suffering. Accountability matters. Human rights matter. Democracy matters. But the path to those goals cannot be paved solely with coercion. Sustainable change requires legitimacy, regional cooperation, and respect for international norms—even when doing so is slower, messier, and politically inconvenient.

The tragedy of Venezuela should have been a call for renewed diplomacy, coordinated regional pressure, humanitarian engagement, and support for genuine democratic processes. Instead, it risks becoming another chapter in the long history of power exercised without patience—and principle sacrificed for speed. The United States still has a choice. It can double down on unilateralism, or it can recalibrate toward leadership that persuades rather than imposes. True strength is not measured by how easily a nation can remove a leader, but by whether it can help a people rebuild without taking ownership of their future. Venezuela does not need a new patron. It needs space, support, and sovereignty to heal itself. And the United States, if it hopes to lead in a fractured world, must remember that power without legitimacy is never permanent—and never free.

MILESTONE

Julie Menin Makes History

First Jewish Speaker of NYC Council takes office with a vision of inclusivity and justice'

James Anderson

In a defining moment for New York City politics, Julie Menin has been elected Speaker of the New York City Council, making history as the first Jewish person to hold the powerful legislative role. The election carries deep personal significance for Menin, the daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, who has long championed issues of inclusion, equity, and justice throughout her public service career. Her election was widely celebrated by civic and community leaders, including the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC-NY), the UJA Federation of NY, and a broad base of local supporters. The



occasion was hailed as not just a personal milestone but a powerful symbol of representation and resilience for the city at large. "I'm deeply humbled that my colleagues have elected me as Speaker of the New York City

Council," Menin said. "I will work tirelessly to be a Speaker for each of them, and for everyone we represent across our great city." Within days of being elected Speaker, Julie Menin joined New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani,

Queens Borough President Donovan Richards and other city leaders to unveil a new initiative aimed at eliminating junk fees — an effort that aligns with Menin's longstanding commitment to economic fairness. "New

York can and will have the strongest consumer and worker protections in the country," she said at the announcement, signaling her administration's early priorities in tackling issues that directly impact everyday New Yorkers. As the new legislative term commenced, Menin congratulated her fellow council members — both new and returning — and emphasized a shared vision for progress. "They make me optimistic about the future of our wonderful city and our ability to solve our most pressing issues," she remarked, expressing both hope and urgency as the Council moves forward. Julie Menin's election as Speaker is more than a historic first; it represents a broader

shift toward inclusive leadership at a time when New Yorkers are calling for transparency, accountability, and justice. Her leadership, shaped by personal history and public service, is poised to steer the Council through some of the most critical challenges facing the city — from economic recovery to housing equity and beyond. As she steps into this influential role, Menin embodies not only the perseverance of those who came before her, but the aspirations of millions of New Yorkers eager to see change. Her speakership marks a powerful chapter in the city's ongoing effort to ensure that all communities feel welcome, safe, and heard.



UNITY

NYPD Muslim Officers Defend Service Amid Online Misinformation

Community Leaders Condemn False Narrative on Flag Salute

Ashley Reed

In response to a wave of misinformation circulating on social media, the NYPD Muslim Officers Society has issued a strong statement categorically denying false claims that Muslim officers had requested exemption from saluting the flag of the United States of America. The allegations, which spread rapidly across various platforms, have been labeled as “entirely false, misleading, and without any factual basis” by the Society’s leadership.

Waheed Akhter, President of the NYPD Muslim Officers Society, issued a formal public letter to clarify the record and defend the integrity of Muslim officers who serve in the department. “No Muslim officer of the New York City Police Department has ever requested an exemption from saluting the American flag,” Akhter said. “This claim is



completely unfounded.” He further emphasized that religious observance, such as the wearing of the hijab by Muslim female officers, is fully protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and is in line with NYPD’s policies. “Bigotry and ignorance have no place in our society; especially when directed at those who serve honorably in uniform,” Akhter added, denouncing the broader



implications of such disinformation. Religious and civic leaders have rallied behind the Society, calling out the dangerous consequences of

spreading such narratives. Imam Muhammad Shahidullah, CEO of SAVE The People USA, Board Chair of Elhaam Academy and a respected voice in New York’s interfaith community, expressed his solidarity with the officers. “We stand in full support of the NYPD Muslim Officers Society and its leadership. The misinformation being circulated is false and irresponsible,” Imam

Shahidullah said. “Muslim officers of the NYPD have always upheld their oath to the Constitution and served this nation with honor, professionalism, and integrity.” He emphasized that religious freedom is a constitutional right, and that Muslim men and women serving in the NYPD remain in full compliance with department policies while continuing to protect communities across the city.

“Attempts to undermine their service through bigotry or false narratives only harm public trust and social cohesion,” he added. Both Akhter and Imam Shahidullah highlighted the crucial work the NYPD Muslim Officers Society continues to do in fostering mutual respect, community engagement, and religious understanding across New York City. The Society’s swift and unequivocal response not only defends its members but sends a clear message that truth, professionalism, and unity must prevail over misinformation and prejudice. As the city continues to rely on the service of its diverse law enforcement personnel, leaders are urging the public and media to exercise responsibility and accuracy in what they share and report—particularly when it concerns the men and women committed to serving and protecting all New Yorkers.



New U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Sworn In

Brent Christensen brings experience and optimism to his new post in Dhaka

Fran Chilwell

Brent Christensen has officially assumed his role as the United States Ambassador to Bangladesh, marking a return to a country he described as both familiar and significant to his diplomatic career. His appointment was warmly welcomed by the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, which praised the moment as a new chapter in advancing the strong partnership between the United States and Bangladesh. “I am thrilled to return to Bangladesh, a country I know so well,” said Ambassador Christensen following



his swearing-in. “I am excited to lead a great team at Embassy Dhaka, Americans and locally employed staff alike, to enhance U.S.-Bangladesh relations, advance President



Bangladesh

Trump’s agenda, and work hard every day to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.” Christensen brings with him a wealth of diplomatic

experience and a deep understanding of the region. His prior engagements in South and Southeast Asia have equipped him with the perspective needed to navigate the complexities and opportunities within U.S.-Bangladesh relations. His return to Dhaka is not just professional but personal, underscored by his enthusiasm to reconnect with the country and its people. The Ambassador’s arrival comes at a time when both nations continue to deepen cooperation on a range of critical issues—from economic development

and regional stability to counterterrorism, public health, and climate resilience. His leadership is expected to play a key role in expanding mutual initiatives that support democratic values, inclusive growth, and people-to-people exchanges. Under his stewardship, the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka is anticipated to remain a hub of collaboration and engagement, fostering dialogue and trust between the two governments. Ambassador Christensen’s focus on teamwork—both among the American

and Bangladeshi staff at the embassy—reflects a commitment to inclusive diplomacy and a shared vision for a stronger bilateral relationship. As he steps into his new role, Ambassador Christensen carries with him not only the policy priorities of the United States, but also a deep appreciation for Bangladesh’s culture, resilience, and potential. His appointment is seen as a reaffirmation of the United States’ enduring commitment to its partnership with Bangladesh—built on mutual respect, shared interests, and a vision for a more secure and prosperous future.

PHILANTHROPY

Children's Smiles, Warm Hearts

Zakat Foundation Sponsors Winter Aid in New York

William Henry

In an effort to bring warmth and care to the community during the winter season, Zakat Foundation of America sponsored a generous distribution event held at Darul Uloom NY, offering meals, winter clothing, hygiene products, and baked goods to individuals and families in need.

The charitable event, which took place recently, drew the support of dedicated volunteers from Save the People USA (STPUSA). Leading the volunteer effort was Kelly Watts, Executive Director of STPUSA, who helped personally distribute items to attendees. From cozy winter coats and hygiene kits to cookies and hot meals, the initiative provided a moment



of relief and dignity to many community members navigating the challenges of cold weather and economic hardship. "This kind of direct support is what really makes a difference," said one community member in attendance. "You can feel that people



care—and that gives you strength." All of the goods distributed were fully sponsored by Zakat Foundation of America, a U.S.-

based humanitarian organization known for its commitment to serving vulnerable populations across the globe. Their partnership with Darul Uloom NY and collaboration with STPUSA demonstrates a growing commitment to localized efforts that address real-time needs

at the grassroots level. Volunteers and staff ensured the event was smoothly organized, welcoming people from different backgrounds to receive assistance in a respectful and inclusive environment. The distribution effort not only met

immediate needs, but also brought together community leaders and organizations dedicated to uplifting others through service. As the winter continues to pose challenges for many, especially those dealing with housing or income insecurity, such efforts are a lifeline—offering not just material support, but also a sense of solidarity and hope. The successful event at Darul Uloom NY stands as a testament to what can be achieved when compassion, collaboration, and community come together. With organizations like Zakat Foundation of America and STPUSA at the helm, the message is clear: no one should face the cold alone.



PHILANTHROPY

Community event delivers meals, hygiene kits, and clothes to help fight the cold



INFLUENCE



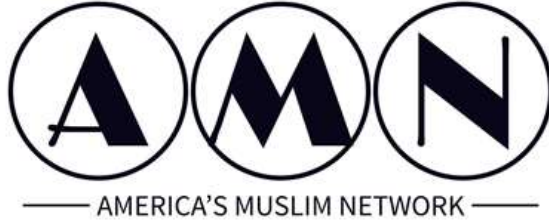
Top 65 Most Influential Muslims in New York State Honored

Continuing the spotlight on America's Muslim Network's honorees and their community impact

Carlos Stewart

This installment continues 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



Courtesy : America's Muslim Network

include community 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.



Kashif Hussain

Kashif Hussain is the Deputy Public Advocate for Infrastructure & Environmental Justice in the Office of NYC Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams, bringing 25+ years of engineering and administrative experience across public and private sectors. He has led major work in environmental remediation, resiliency, mass transit, green infrastructure, flood protection, and renewable energy. In city government, he has authored key reports on congestion pricing, lithium-ion battery safety, and equitable transit access, and helped advance safety measures including Int 0597-2018 and Sammy's Law. He has also pushed for safer streets, transit access, taxi driver debt relief, and stronger micro-mobility protections, while serving as a retired NYPD Auxiliary Sergeant and EMS first responder.



Adeel Rana

Inspector Adeel Rana is a senior leader in the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the highest-ranking Pakistani American in NYPD history. An immigrant from Pakistan, he began his service in 1995 and made history in 2020 as the first Muslim and Pakistani American precinct Commanding Officer, leading Brooklyn's 84th Precinct. Promoted to Deputy Inspector (2021) and Inspector (2024), he now serves as Commanding Officer of the Public Security Section within the NYPD Intelligence Division, overseeing dignitary protection, counter-threat operations, and global liaison programs. A U.S. Army National Guard veteran, Ground Zero responder, and former head of the NYPD Immigrant Outreach Unit, he also founded youth initiatives impacting 5,000+ Muslim youth. In 2022, he was honored by Pakistan's President Arif Alvi for humanitarian service.



Dr. Sheikh Faiyaz Jaffer

Dr. Sheikh Faiyaz Jaffer is the Executive Director of the Islamic Center and University Chaplain at New York University (NYU). He holds an Ed.D. from NYU focused on Muslim minority identity development and pursued classical Islamic studies at the Seminary of Karbala, Iraq. A respected faith leader and social activist, he lectures internationally and regularly leads prayer services and sermons across North America. In New York, he is active in interfaith dialogue to strengthen understanding among faith communities. In 2019, he co-founded Pillars of Peace, supporting survivors of domestic and gender-based violence. He also teaches at NYU's Wagner School of Public Service and serves as a Visiting Professor at Bayan Graduate School.



Husein Yatabarry

Husein Yatabarry is the Executive Director of the Muslim Community Network (MCN), leading citywide work in advocacy, civic engagement, and community empowerment. Raised in the Bronx as the first American-born child of Gambian Muslim immigrants, he has helped expand MCN's impact on hate crime prevention, immigrant rights, and civic participation, strengthening partnerships across government and community institutions. He is the youngest Executive Director and the first African Muslim to lead MCN, and his commentary has appeared in Daily News and The Washington Post. He has been honored as Amsterdam News' 2025 Black New Yorkers of the Week and Brooklyn Org's 25 Changemakers of 2025, and previously co-founded the South Bronx youth nonprofit Neighborhood United.



Imam Zameer Sattaur

Imam Zameer Sattaur, originally from Guyana, has served New York's Muslim community for more than three decades. He is the founder and CEO of Sara International Travel, a leading Hajj and Umrah agency in North America that has supported 100,000+ pilgrims on their spiritual journeys. Educated at the Islamic University of Madinah and King Saud University, he is also a teacher, counselor, and global speaker active in Islamic education, interfaith work, and humanitarian outreach. He has served as NYPD Police/Clergy Liaison, Muslim Chaplain at MTA NYC Transit, and Head Imam and Khateeb of Masjid Al-Abidin for over 15 years. In 2006, he founded the Imam Ghazali Institute Inc., where he serves as Director, and he continues as a Khateeb across Long Island and a licensed marriage officiant in NY and the tri-state area.



Arshad Jamal

Arshad Jamal is the Northeast Regional Director for ICNA Relief, overseeing operations across the Northeast states. With a multifaceted background spanning electrical engineering, international aviation operations, business, and nonprofit leadership, he brings both technical rigor and operational experience to humanitarian work. Rooted in community service, he leads regional efforts focused on relief, outreach, and social services that support underserved communities, helping expand access to essential resources and long-term assistance across the region.



Ather Tirmizi

Ather Tirmizi is a community leader with 12+ years of experience in civic engagement, political advocacy, and social impact. Since 2018, he has served as Executive Director of the American Pakistani Public Affairs Committee (APPAC), building political infrastructure and advancing legislative strategy for Pakistani and broader Muslim American communities. In 2020, he was National Director of Pakistanis for Biden, mobilizing efforts across 18 states, coordinating 1,100+ volunteers, and reaching 135,000 voters, helping elevate Pakistani Americans as an influential voting bloc. Previously, he served as Chief of Staff to the Deputy Speaker in the New York State Assembly (2013-2018) and began his career managing healthcare programs and budgets supporting people with disabilities.



Hanadi Doleh

Hanadi Doleh is a longtime advocate for New York's Muslim community and other underrepresented groups, with academic training from Brooklyn College, CUNY including a B.A. in Political Science and an M.A. in International Relations. She spent seven years at Park51 in Lower Manhattan and later served seven years as Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships at the Interfaith Center of New York, specializing in bridge-building across communities. She also co-chaired NYC's Faith Sector Community Preparedness Program for over six years and contributed to the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian's Contemporary Muslim Fashions exhibit advisory board. Honored in 2019 by NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer and the Muslim Democratic Club of New York, she later served as the club's Vice President. She is now Deputy Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships at the New York State Attorney General's Office.



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FAITH AND UNITY

Voices of Faith Unite in 297th Interfaith Prayer for Peace

Global leaders call for justice, unity, and compassion at UPF-USA virtual gathering

Jessica Morgan

In a compelling display of spiritual solidarity and moral clarity, religious leaders from multiple faith traditions gathered virtually for the 297th Interfaith Prayer for the Nation and the World, organized by the Universal Peace Federation - USA (UPF-USA) on Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 1:00 PM EST. The long-running interfaith event once again brought together diverse voices committed to peace, unity, and justice, reaffirming the organization's mission to foster global understanding through faith. The event was opened by Rev. Barry Geller, Executive Director of UPF - Subregion Northeast, who highlighted the legacy of over five years of weekly interfaith prayer sessions. Rev. William Stoner served as the emcee, offering reflections on the spiritual and historical roots of the UPF, and honoring its founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, for their dedication to interreligious



harmony and global peacebuilding. Rev. Prescott Butler, former pastor of the Irvington and Orange United Methodist Churches and chaplain to several organizations in New Jersey, delivered a powerful address on the United Methodist social principles on



peace. "Peace is rooted in justice, not merely the absence of war," he said. Drawing from both scripture and contemporary realities, Rev. Butler stressed that true peace is built when human dignity is respected and systemic inequality is addressed. "Peace begins within the heart," he said, echoing

the words of the prophet Micah: "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." Imam Muhammad Shahidullah, Executive Member of the NYC OPHC Interfaith Council and County Liaison for the NYS Office of Faith & Non-Profit Development Services, offered reflections grounded in the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). "God created every single creation with purpose," he said, emphasizing themes of divine mercy, justice, and human accountability. He called on attendees to stand for justice—"even against ourselves"—and urged people of all faiths to approach one another with respect, dialogue, and love. "Peace starts from me," he added, aligning the message with both Islamic teachings and UPF's motto. Rabbi Sara Hadassah, a Jewish spiritual leader and expert in social and political systems, explored the deep meaning of Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace. "Shalom is not just peace; it is wholeness, spiritual light, and

freedom," she explained. She linked this sacred concept to other faith greetings such as Salaam Alaikum, and emphasized that peace is a "pillar that will not die on this planet nor in the cosmos." Her words urged global prayers for all persecuted faith leaders, including Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, whom she described as "a progenitor of peace and a spiritual mother to many." Dr. Michael Jenkins, President of UPF International and UPF North America, closed the program with gratitude and a message of interfaith reflection. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," he quoted from John 14:27, highlighting how both Biblical and Quranic teachings point toward peace as a divine gift and personal responsibility. As the world faces increasing divisions, the 297th Interfaith Prayer gathering stood as a beacon of shared hope. It reminded all in attendance that while faith traditions may differ in form, they converge in the call for love, mercy, and peace—beginning not just in policies, but within the human heart.

Universal Peace Federation (UPF)

Universal Peace Federation (UPF) is an international, interreligious 501(c)(3) NGO with General Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It describes itself as an educational organization that does not engage in political activity.

UPF's mission is to build a peaceful world where people can live in freedom, harmony, cooperation, and prosperity. It focuses on "track two" (people-to-people) peacebuilding to complement government efforts, addressing global challenges like poverty, climate change, conflict, and inequality.



Its work includes interfaith peacebuilding, peace education and leadership development, strengthening marriage and family, supporting UN-related peace initiatives, and creating partnerships through service and experiential learning programs. UPF's core values emphasize one human family under God, moral and spiritual development, family as a foundation for peace, living for the sake of others, and cooperation beyond ethnic, religious, and national boundaries.





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JUSTICE

The Death of Renee Good: Questions Mount After ICE Shooting

Legal experts, family, and community members demand answers following deadly encounter

Emily Parker

The death of Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, has ignited national controversy and mourning after she was shot and killed by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in Minneapolis on Wednesday, January 10. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) quickly described the incident as an act of "domestic terrorism," a characterization that has been widely challenged by state officials, legal experts, and community members.

According to DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, Good "weaponized her vehicle" and attempted to run over federal agents, justifying the deadly force. However, videos reviewed by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and CNN show Good attempting to drive away



from ICE officers, not toward them, before an agent opened fire. At least three shots were fired—two reportedly from the side of the vehicle—as Good turned her car to flee. "This is an abuse of the term 'domestic terrorism,'" said Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison,

denouncing the DHS's rapid labeling of the incident without a full investigation. Legal scholars echoed his concerns, warning that the Trump administration's broadening use of the "domestic terrorism" label—especially against immigration-related activities—threatens

constitutional rights and freedom of speech. Good, a U.S. citizen with no criminal record, had just dropped off her 6-year-old son at school when the incident unfolded. Described by loved ones as a kind and creative soul, Good was a poet, a devoted Christian, and an Old Dominion University

graduate, who had recently relocated to Minneapolis. "She was one of the kindest people I've ever known," her mother Donna Ganger told the Star Tribune. "She was loving, forgiving, and affectionate."

Community members quickly organized a vigil near the site of the shooting, surrounding a memorial of candles and flowers. "Say her name," they chanted. "Say it twice. We will not put up with ICE."

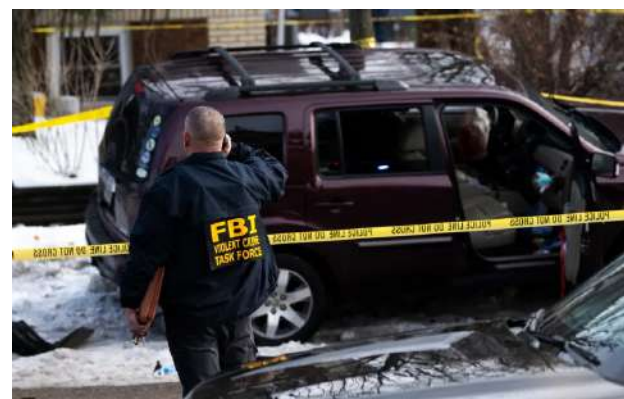
Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz condemned the shooting. "This was an agent recklessly using power that resulted in somebody dying," said Frey, demanding ICE "get the f*** out of Minneapolis." Walz vowed the state would pursue "accountability and justice."

As videos of the shooting continue to circulate, public scrutiny

has intensified. Former DOJ officials and civil rights attorneys warn that Noem's hasty use of the terrorism label politicizes a tragedy and weakens the term's legal integrity. "This is not just about one shooting," said Shirin Sinnar, a law professor at Stanford University. "It's about how language and law are being twisted to justify state violence."

Meanwhile, Good's widow, Becca Good, released a statement: "Renee leaves behind three extraordinary children. I am now left to raise our son and to continue teaching him, as Renee believed, that there are people building a better world for him."

The nation watches as Minneapolis—still scarred by the killing of George Floyd in 2020—faces another flashpoint in the struggle over justice, power, and accountability in law enforcement.



SOLIDARITY

Faith Leaders Unite Against ICE Actions in NYC

Hands Off NYC coalition mobilizes communities through vigils, training, and public witness

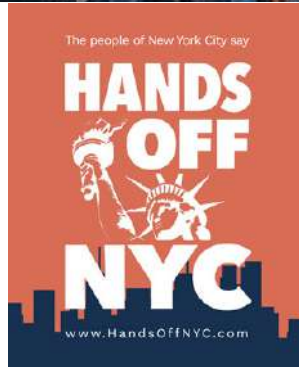
Noah Presley

As federal immigration enforcement intensifies in cities across the country, faith leaders in New York City are organizing to resist. Hands Off NYC, a growing coalition of religious, labor, and community organizations, convened on January 8, 2026, at the United Federation of Teachers headquarters to coordinate their next steps in building a city-wide infrastructure of care, protest, and rapid response to ICE activity. Launched on October 9, the initiative emerged in response to what organizers describe as a “growing threat of state violence, militarization, and civil rights violations.” At the core of its mission is ensuring that New York’s diverse communities—particularly immigrants and those most vulnerable to enforcement actions—remain safe, supported, and connected to networks of solidarity. At the January 8 meeting, members of the Hands Off NYC



the trauma of loved ones being detained or disappearing without notice. Looking ahead, members voiced a desire to meet biweekly, increase interfaith participation, and enhance communication through shared calendars and coordinated advocacy. While Hands Off NYC does not take formal legislative positions, attendees discussed the importance of tracking bills like Senate Bill 4121, which would protect sensitive locations from ICE enforcement. “We had whistles. They had guns,” said Becca Good, widow of Renee Good, in a recent statement—an expression that continues to galvanize many within the movement. For those gathered on January 8, the message was clear: faith communities are not bystanders in this moment. They are first responders, called to protect, bear witness, and build a city grounded in justice and compassion.

Faith Table outlined expanded efforts to engage congregations in direct action and preparedness. Upcoming rapid response trainings will introduce faith communities to ICE monitoring, community patrols, and neighborhood signaling systems, with a session scheduled for January 13 at 10 AM. These trainings aim to empower houses of



worship to serve as local hubs during potential escalations. Participants also

emphasized the power of consistent, visible public witness. Weekly Multifaith Monday Vigils at Columbus Circle, hosted from 5:30–6:00 PM, continue to honor the life of Renee Good, the Minneapolis mother and poet killed by ICE agents. Additional neighborhood-based Beacon Vigils, involving 5–10 congregations per area, and weekly gatherings outside the Metropolitan Detention

Center led by Pastor Juan Carlos, serve as spiritual anchors and moments of collective mourning and resistance. Beyond public action, the coalition is addressing the deeper spiritual and emotional toll of detention and deportation. Faith leaders expressed a need for shared pastoral care resources, particularly as congregants face



KINDNESS

Sweet Moments, Shared Smiles

Cookies and Toys Bring Joy to Children at Hollis Muslim Center



Kelly Watts, Executive Director of STPUSA, was present at the event and personally helped distribute toys to the children. Her involvement underscored the organization's ongoing commitment to direct community engagement. With a focus on ensuring that every child felt seen and celebrated, the distribution reflected STPUSA's mission to uplift underserved communities through tangible acts of kindness. All toys and treats were made possible through the support of Light the World, a global initiative that empowers charitable giving and local outreach. Their sponsorship enabled the event to provide high-quality toys and fresh baked goods to dozens of families, turning a simple gesture into a deeply meaningful experience. "Watching the kids open their toys and enjoy the

cookies—it's a reminder of what community is all about," said one volunteer. "These moments of happiness matter." More than just a distribution drive, the event served as a symbol of unity and generosity, bringing together people of different backgrounds in shared celebration. In a time when many families are facing economic pressures and social uncertainty, such efforts offer both practical support and emotional connection. The success of the event at Hollis Muslim Center stands as an example of what's possible when grassroots organizations and compassionate individuals come together. Through the combined efforts of STPUSA, Light the World, and the local community, joy was not only shared—it was multiplied.

Alex Mason

In a heartwarming gesture that brought smiles to many young faces, the Hollis Muslim Center recently hosted a joyful toy and cookie distribution event, organized in collaboration with

Save the People USA (STPUSA) and supported by Light the World. The event offered families a moment of warmth, joy, and celebration during the holiday season. Held in the heart of Hollis, Queens, the gathering welcomed

children and families from across the neighborhood. Tables lined with freshly baked cookies, colorful toys, and cheerful volunteers created a festive atmosphere that lit up the community space with excitement and gratitude.



FAITH

Leaders of Faith, United in Purpose

Ummah NY Hosts Landmark Gathering of Masjid Leaders Across the City

Daniel Matthew

In a powerful display of unity and purpose, Ummah NY hosted the Masjid Leaders Assembly on Saturday, January 10th, bringing together key figures from the Muslim community across the city for an evening of reflection, planning, and collective action. Held exclusively for Imams, Board Members, Youth Directors, and other community position holders, the event marked a significant moment for Muslim leadership in New York, home to over 1 million Muslims and more than 400 masjids. The gathering served as a space for leadership across boroughs to connect, exchange ideas, and reaffirm a shared commitment



to building a stronger, more unified community. At a time when many faith communities face challenges related to social justice, civic engagement, and youth development, the assembly emphasized the importance of strategic coordination



among masjid leadership. The event was hosted by Ummah NY, a local organizing platform that

seeks to unify the voices and efforts of Muslim institutions. Leaders in attendance discussed the urgent need for better collaboration among religious centers, community organizations, and advocacy groups—underscoring that

sustainable progress must be driven from within the community, by those entrusted with guiding it. “We have the numbers, the talent, and the passion,” said one attendee. “What we need now is alignment—and this assembly is a crucial step toward that.” A central feature of the evening was the spirit of camaraderie and mutual respect. Over a warm dinner, participants had the opportunity to build relationships beyond the walls of their own institutions. Many described the event as a rare and valuable chance to learn from one another, explore partnerships, and begin building a shared vision for the future of New York’s diverse Muslim community. The assembly

was organized in collaboration with MusCare, a community health and service initiative, further reinforcing the importance of holistic approaches to serving Muslim New Yorkers—not just spiritually, but socially and emotionally as well. As the event concluded, there was a clear consensus among attendees: this must be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue. With leaders from every corner of the city coming together, the Masjid Leaders Assembly served not just as a meeting—but as a call to action. A united front of faith, leadership, and vision is now in motion, determined to uplift and empower the next generation of Muslims across New York City.



FAITH

Imams, Directors, and Community Leaders Join Forces at Masjid Assembly



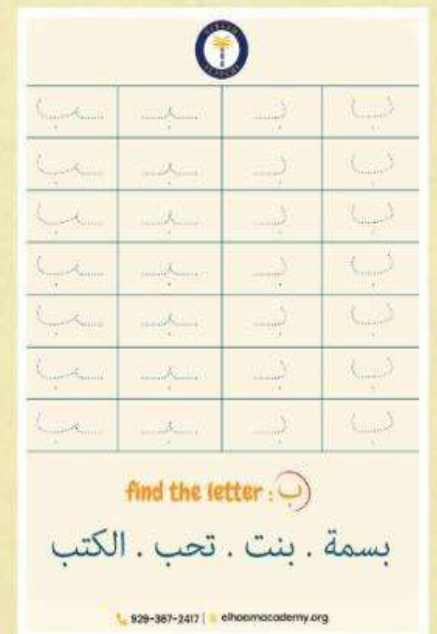
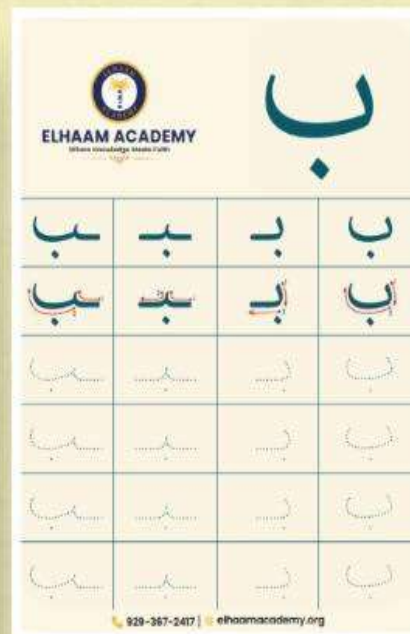
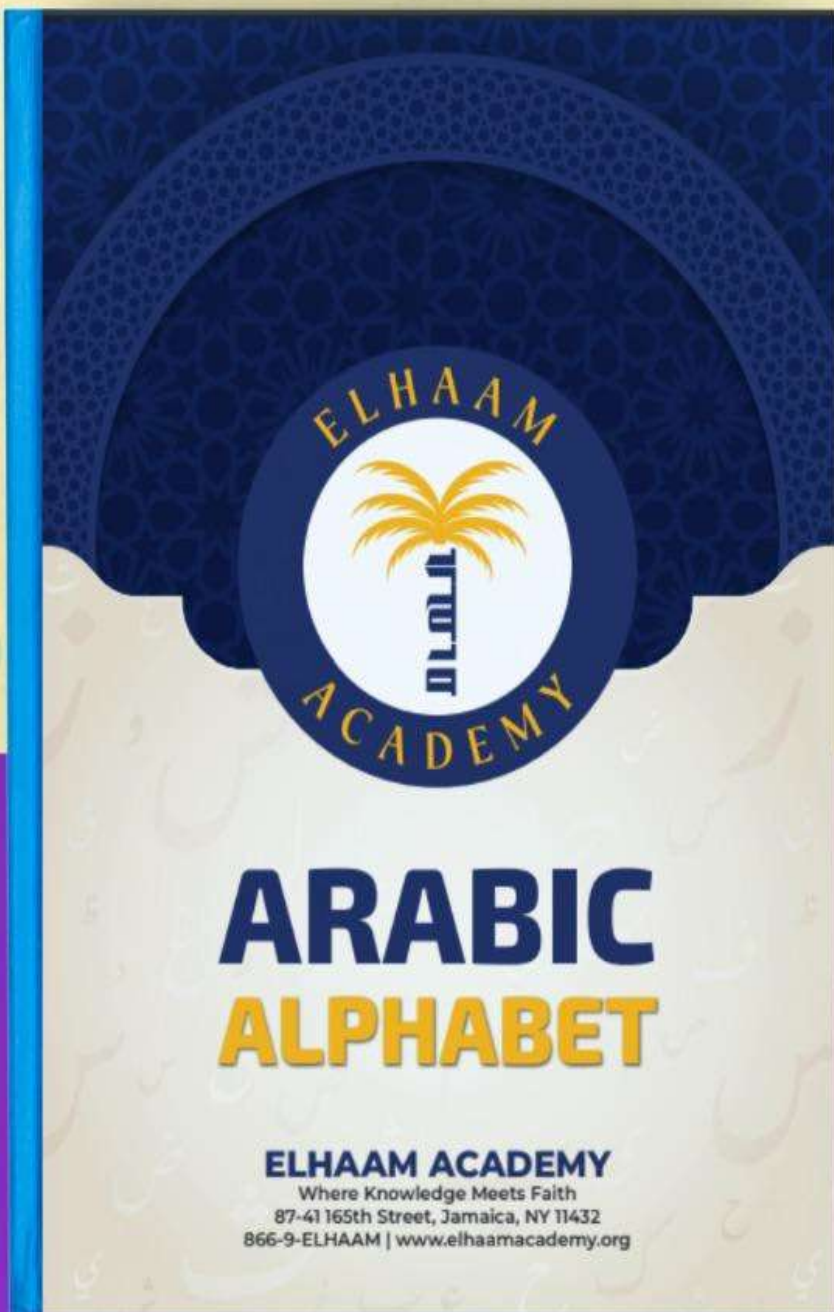
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Relief on the Way

Mamdani backs public restrooms



Photo: Mayor Mamdani to invest \$4M to expand public bathrooms across NYC
Image Source: Anna Watts / New York Times

Amkel Nourush

New York City is moving to address one of its most persistent quality-of-life complaints: the lack of public bathrooms. On Saturday, Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani announced a \$4 million investment to

expand access to public restrooms across the city, unveiling the plan at a press conference near Riverside Park in West Harlem. The initiative will introduce high-quality modular public restrooms that are fully accessible, self-

cleaning, and equipped with features such as water bottle fillers. The first new unit is expected to be installed later this year near 12th Avenue and St. Clair Place, with additional locations to follow. "In a city that has everything, the one

thing that is often impossible to find is a public bathroom," Mamdani said, arguing that basic dignity should not require a purchase. Unlike many existing facilities, which are largely confined to parks, the new restrooms will also be placed in public plazas and other high-traffic areas. City officials emphasized that the program supports seniors, parents with young children, delivery workers, and people with disabilities. DOT Commissioner Mike Flynn said public bathrooms "improve the quality of life for everyone," while City Council Speaker Julie Menin called the rollout a key step toward doubling the city's restroom count by 2035.

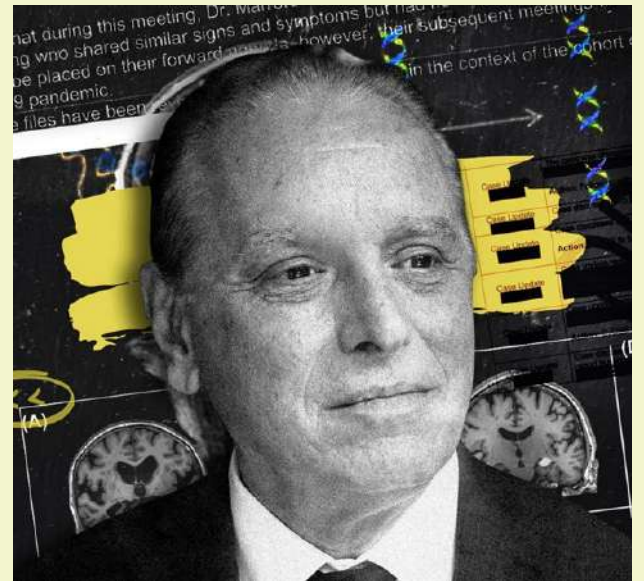


Photo: Questions linger after 500 Canadians diagnosed with a disputed mystery brain disease.
Image Source: BBC

Canada's Brain Disease Dispute

Patients reject findings that condition never existed

Adrian Smith

A long-running medical mystery in New Brunswick has deepened after researchers concluded that a suspected neurological disease affecting hundreds of patients never existed, a finding fiercely rejected by those diagnosed with the condition. The controversy began in 2019, when neurologist Dr. Alier Marrero identified patients with unexplained, rapidly progressing neurological symptoms resembling Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. Over five years, the number of cases grew to nearly 500, prompting federal attention and fears of an environmental toxin. Last year, a study published in JAMA found

that patients suffered from known conditions such as dementia, cancer, or functional neurological disorder, concluding the "New Brunswick Neurological Syndrome of Unknown Cause" was the result of misdiagnosis rather than a new disease. Patients and advocates strongly dispute that conclusion, arguing the study ignored their lived experience and warning that dismissing the cluster leaves them without treatment or accountability. Some believe industrial toxins are to blame, while others say the lack of answers has caused profound harm. At least one patient has died through medical assistance in dying, underscoring the human stakes of a debate that remains unresolved.



'No Kings' Draws Thousands

Thousands of protesters flooded Manhattan on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026, rallying under the banner of "No Kings" to oppose U.S. actions abroad and immigration enforcement at home.

The demonstration began at 1 p.m. near Central Park at East 60th Street and Fifth Avenue, drawing crowds angered by the U.S. military raid that led to the detention of ousted

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and by recent ICE operations, including the fatal shooting of Renee Good in Minneapolis. Organizers called on Democratic leaders

to block funding for ICE and the war, while speakers warned that unchecked executive power harms communities locally and internationally.

Swiss Authorities Detain Bar Owner

Investigation deepens after deadly New Year's blaze

Charles Lewis:

Swiss prosecutors said Friday they ordered Jacques Moretti, one of the French owners of Le Constellation bar in Crans-Montana, detained due to a flight risk, as investigators pursue a case tied to a New Year's Day fire that killed 40 people and injured 116, many seriously. The owners are under investigation in the Canton of Valais on suspicion including homicide by negligence, as victims' families

file complaints and demand accountability. Witnesses and prosecutors have said sparkling candles may have ignited foam soundproofing on the ceiling. Switzerland marked Friday as a national day of mourning, with ceremonies attended by Swiss leaders and international dignitaries, including Swiss President Guy Parmelin, who said those responsible should be brought to account "without delay or leniency."