

# MAPS-AMEN REPORT

MAPS-AMEN is the American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN), a new initiative of the Muslim Association of Puget Sound (MAPS), led by Aneelah Afzali

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, *"Great reward comes with great trials. When Allah loves a people, He tests them and whoever accepts it attains His pleasure, whereas whoever shows discontent with it incurs His wrath."* [Tirmidhi]

The past couple years have presented great trials for American Muslims. 2015 was the year of the highest level of reported hate crimes against Muslims in our nation's history. The anti-Muslim hate and bigotry continued into the election year, with Muslim individuals and Muslim organizations across the nation facing growing suspicion, increased bullying and harassment, and continued high levels of hate crimes. Our very own mosque was not spared when our mosque sign was vandalized, not once but twice, late last year. Fear and anxiety among community members reached some of its highest levels in 2016 because of the growing Islamophobia.

In response to these challenges and by the grace of Allah, The Originator (Al-Mubdi), MAPS launched a new initiative, the American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN). Harvard-Law trained attorney Aneelah Afzali was hired as the full-time Executive Director to lead this initiative. In a span of four short months, MAPS-AMEN has given more presentations on Islam and combating Islamophobia, connected with more co-citizens, engaged with more leaders, partnered with more organizations and given more media interviews than MAPS achieved in the past several years. As a result, hundreds of co-citizens have openly and actively supported our community, and even taken action against Islamophobia. Indeed great reward comes with great trials!

## BACKGROUND

In December 2016, Aneelah helped bring over 50 dignitaries to restore the MAPS sign vandalized in an act of hate. Hundreds of community members and leaders braved the snow and cold to witness the dignitaries leave their handprints on the concrete base of the new MAPS sign in a beautiful showing of solidarity and support. It was a celebration of faith over fear, unity over division, and love over hate. It was also the perfect time to announce the launch of MAPS-AMEN, which would continue such community solidarity efforts.

In subsequent press interviews and outreach responses, Aneelah

made clear that such attacks will not deter us or diminish our faith. She further emphasized how such individual acts of hate have been countered with the overwhelming outpouring of community support and will be repelled with continued good as the Quran commands us. (*"And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend."* Quran 41:34)

Later that month, Aneelah joined a lineup of speakers including Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Rep. Suzan DelBene, Governor Jay Inslee, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, and several other elected leaders at a press conference and rally organized by Rep. Jayapal to re-declare Washington a "Hate-Free" state. Aneelah also interviewed with multiple media outlets for that event, and appeared on DESI 1250am's show "Immigration with Tahmina Watson" that same month. In just a couple weeks of its launch, MAPS-AMEN was already making an impact!

MAPS-AMEN continued full speed ahead in 2017, kicking off the first quarter with activity on multiple fronts, as summarized below.

## COALITION-BUILDING AND ADVOCACY

MAPS-AMEN has been strengthening the community's relationships with faith leaders and the interfaith community, and building new bridges and opportunities. Aneelah joined the Governing Board of Faith Action Network (FAN) and the Interfaith Leadership Council to more directly work with faith leaders on effective change. MAPS is now part of the FAN network of over 100 faith communities across Washington State.

MAPS-AMEN has also been collaborating with community leaders and working with advocacy groups such as the ACLU, OneAmerica, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, and many others to build coalitions and advocate on behalf of all marginalized groups. Through these partnerships, Aneelah is raising awareness of Islamophobia and its consequences and relationship to other forms of bigotry and hate, and mobilizing individuals and organizations to concrete action.

Aneelah has participated in, spoken at, and/or organized meet-



## MAPS-AMEN AREAS OF FOCUS

### COALITION-BUILDING

Coalition-building and mobilizing friends, allies, and elected leaders to effective action and positive change to achieve justice for all.

### EDUCATION

Educating our fellow Americans about Islam and Islamophobia, especially as most Americans do not know much about Islam and do not personally know a Muslim

### MEDIA

Leveraging media in a proper way, given the overwhelmingly negative (and even defamatory) mainstream media coverage of Islam and Muslims

### LEADERSHIP

Developing and empowering the next generation of leaders of America.





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## MAPS-AMEN REPORT (CONT.)

ings and other events with elected officials, including Senator Maria Cantwell, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Rep. Suzan DelBene, Rep. Adam Smith, Governor Jay Inslee, Sen. Sharon Nelson, King County Executive Dow Constantine, King County Sheriff John Urquhart, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, Redmond Mayor John Marchione, Redmond Police Chief Kristi Wilson, and several city council members, judges and other leaders.

On February 9, Aneelah joined over 400 other faith leaders across the state for Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia, organized by FAN. She was one of the three interfaith leaders sharing words of inspiration to start the event. That same day, Aneelah joined State Senator Guy Palumbo, State Rep. Derek Stanford, and faith leaders at a press conference on the Capitol steps to support bills introduced by Sen. Palumbo and Rep. Stanford to prevent religious registries. Aneelah spoke at the press conference about the need to address the root of the problem (Islamophobia) and not just its symptoms like proposed religious registries. She met again with Rep. Stanford on March 13 to record a video against hate crimes, and participated in an interview on "Capitol Ideas: The Washington State House Democratic Caucus Podcast."

In a first for our whole community, Rep. Pramila Jayapal invited Aneelah as her guest to the first address by President Donald Trump to the joint session of Congress on February 28. During that trip to Washington, D.C., Aneelah spoke at press conferences with other elected and community leaders, attended a reception by U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, met political leaders Keith Ellison, Elijah Cummings and others, and conducted media interviews before and after listening to the State of the Union-styled speech by President Trump.

### EDUCATION ABOUT ISLAM & ISLAMOPHOBIA

MAPS-AMEN's education focus seeks to teach our fellow Americans about Islam and Muslims and counter Islamophobia with facts over fiction, faith over fear, and love over hate. Aneelah has given many talks on Islam, how Islamophobia is a danger to all, and specific action individuals and leaders can take to combat anti-Muslim bigotry and hate.

Most notably, Aneelah was one of the four speakers on the

main rally stage in the historic Seattle Woman's March on January 21 attended by 175,000 women, men and children. She helped organize an American Muslim contingent at the march, with a sign-making event at MAPS before the march to increase visibility and pride in our Muslim identity.

In February, Aneelah prepared and presented two 1.5-hour workshops on Combating Islamophobia at the UW Bothell's 3rd Annual Equity & Inclusion Conference. These workshops were timely, given the talk by guest speaker Dalia Mogahed earlier that same week on how Islamophobia is a threat to all. The Director of Outreach, Inclusion and Diversity for the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Juan Cotto, who attended the workshop wrote afterwards: "Your presentation on 'Combating Islamophobia' that I attended last month at UW Bothell was simply one of the most thought provoking programs of the year. The Fred Hutch Diversity Council is extremely excited about having you spend some time with us." Aneelah spoke at the Fred Hutch campus on April 20, 2017.

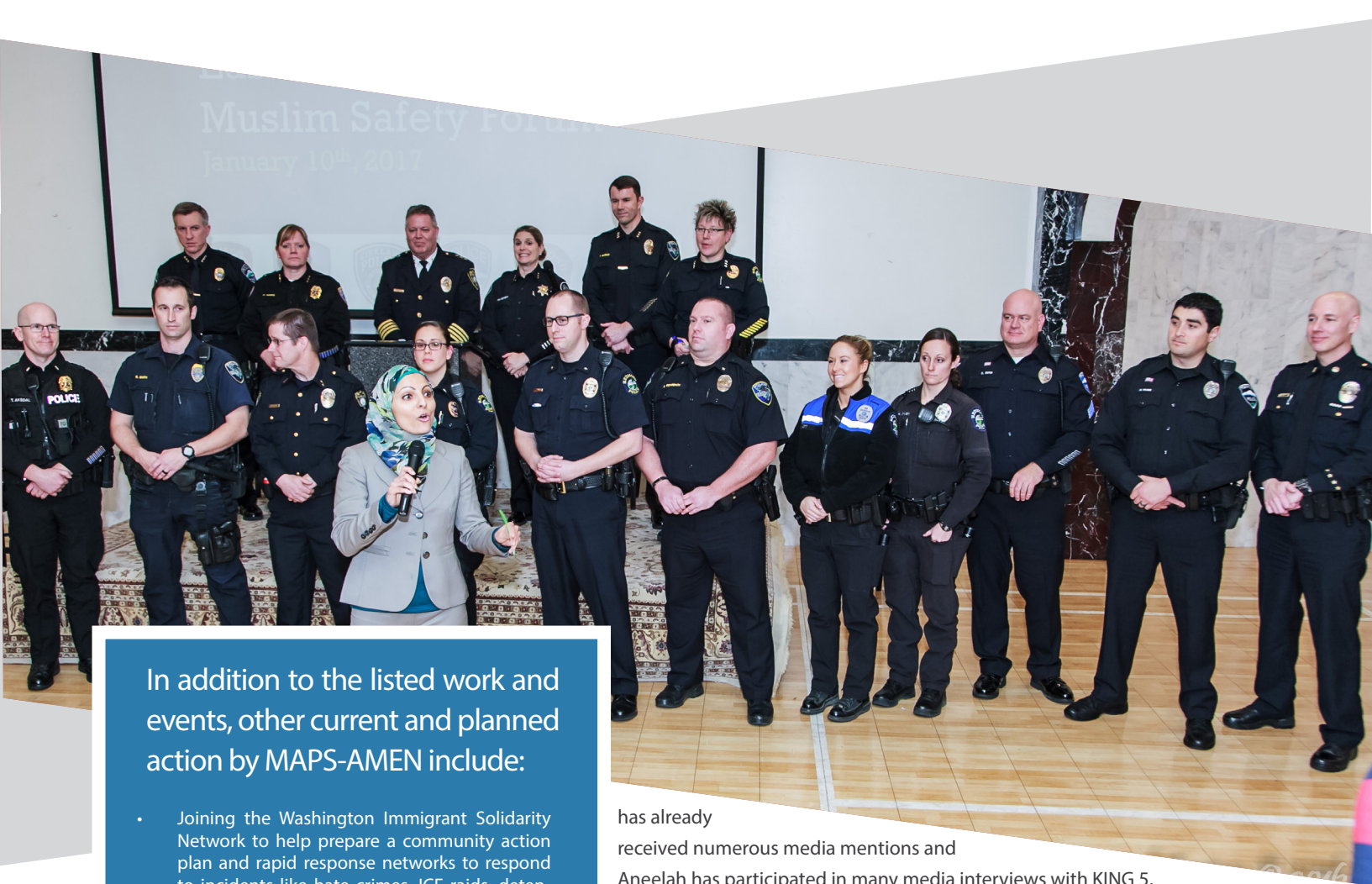
MAPS-AMEN further collaborated with the Greater Seattle Neighborhood Action Coalitions (NAC) to organize a mosque visit and open house at MAPS on March 11. About 200 people from the Greater Seattle area attended the presentation on Islam, engaged in Q&A, had a mosque tour, observed prayer, and enjoyed dinner – before some attended the interfaith movie showing "The Sultan and the Saint." This mosque visit inspired further action, with the NACs organizing a solidarity event in downtown Seattle entitled "Embrace Our Neighbors: Pray In & Speak Out Against Islamophobia" on March 16, with speakers from MAPS-AMEN, CAIR-WA, ACLU-WA, OneAmerica, and others.

Aneelah also spoke to lawyers and judges at the Washington Leadership Institute (WLI) on March 24. After that talk on combating Islamophobia, the WLI fellows reached out to Aneelah to discuss a service project to help counter anti-Muslim bigotry and hate crimes. The education efforts by MAPS-AMEN are having visible impact in the community, and mobilizing individuals to positive action.

### MEDIA AND PRESS CONFERENCES

By the Grace of Allah, The Merciful (Ar-Rahim), MAPS-AMEN





## In addition to the listed work and events, other current and planned action by MAPS-AMEN include:

- Joining the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network to help prepare a community action plan and rapid response networks to respond to incidents like hate crimes, ICE raids, detention, etc.
- Working with grassroots groups like the Neighborhood Action Coalitions, Seattle Indivisible, Seattle Action Alliance, and Hate-Free Delridge on raising awareness and combating Islamophobia.
- Collaborating with multiple governmental entities to raise awareness about Islamophobia and other forms of hate and bigotry.
- Working with judges and the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission to raise awareness of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim implicit bias in the justice system.
- Working with faith leaders and organizations like Faith Action Network, Church Council of Greater Seattle, and Neighbors in Faith to help teach about Islam and combat Islamophobia.
- Working with Jewish Voice for Peace on anti-Islamophobia training.
- Working with CAIR-WA and other advocacy groups to prepare training material and resources on combating Islamophobia and other forms of hate and bigotry, for schools, businesses, law enforcement, etc.

has already

received numerous media mentions and

Aneelah has participated in many media interviews with KING 5, KIRO 7, KOMO 4, Q13, NPR/KUOW, KCTS, Seattle Times, The Stranger, Redmond Reporter, and more. MAPS-AMEN has also helped organize, emcee and/or participate in several press conferences in addition to those previously discussed.

On January 25, Aneelah joined Mayor Ed Murray as he held a press conference in response to the executive orders from the administration, re-affirming the commitment of Seattle as a safe and welcoming city for all. Afterwards, Aneelah joined other community leaders in a private discussion with Mayor Murray, the Deputy Mayor, and the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs about action the City of Seattle can take to respond to the orders by the administration and to ensure a safe and welcoming city for all.

On January 27, Aneelah helped organize a press conference with Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network, OneAmerica, International Rescue Committee, Colectiva Legal del Pueblo, Progress 21, and other advocacy organizations. She served as emcee for the press conference, which featured Rep. Pramila Jayapal and Rep. Adam Smith, along with immigrants and refugees who shared personal stories of impact by the administration's executive orders.

On February 15, Aneelah joined King County Executive Dow Constantine and community and faith leaders at a press conference announcing King County's grant of \$750,000 to respond to hate crimes and support immigrants, refugees and other communities adversely impacted by the administration's executive orders and actions. Aneelah emphasized the need for all community members and leaders to take action and address the roots of the problems, such as Islamophobia, xenophobia and racism, and not just the symptoms, like the executive orders.

## MAPS-AMEN Speaking Engagements in 2017

**January 2:** "Earth2Trump" national roadshow by the Center for Biological Diversity that launched in Seattle, with 16 other stops across the country (the Seattle kickoff was a standing-room only event, with over 300 attendees packing Washington Hall).

**January 7:** "Torah Study" at Kol Haneshamah to talk about the Quran and Islam to the Jewish congregation.

**January 7:** Greater Seattle Neighborhood Action Coalition general meeting to mobilize activists to take action against Islamophobia.

**January 10:** MC of community safety forum at MAPS featuring police chiefs of six East-side cities, sponsored by Muslim Community & Neighborhood Association.

**January 15:** Youth Advocacy Workshop presentation on combating Islamophobia through personal narratives in the media (MAPS-AMEN inaugural event).

**January 16:** Opening invocation at the annual MLK Day Rally and March at Garfield High School with over 1,000 attendees.

**January 20:** Post-inauguration interfaith event at Temple de Hirsch Sinai entitled "Shabbat of Dreams: The Hard Won and Yet To Be," with over 500 attendees.

**January 21:** One of four main stage speakers at historic Seattle Womxn's March with over 175,000 attendees.

**January 27:** MC of press conference featuring Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Rep. Adam Smith, and immigrants and refugees affected by the executive orders.

**February 3:** MC of community forum by CAIR-WA at MAPS to answer questions about the Executive Order banning travel from Muslim-majority countries.

**February 8:** 34th District Democrats panel with other community leaders before an unprecedented crowd of over 700 live attendees and thousands of online viewers.

**February 9:** Opening words at FAN's Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia, attended by over 400 faith leaders.

**February 9:** Press conference on Capitol steps with State Sen. Guy Palumbo, State Rep. Derek Stanford, and faith leaders across the state.

**February 15:** Press conference with King County Executive Dow Constantine and other community leaders.

**February 15:** University of Washington class taught by Rep. Velma Veloria and Prof. Third Anderson on community organizing.

**February 16:** Plymouth Church to Downtown Clergy Group on combating Islamophobia.

**February 16:** Horizon House community gathering on combating Islamophobia.

**February 21:** Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) Community Conversation entitled "Immigrant Life In Uncertain Times," moderated by KCTS' Enrique Cerna.

**February 24:** Two workshops on Combating Islamophobia at UW Bothell's 3rd Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference, which attracted hundreds of students, faculty and community members.

**February 28:** Press conference with U.S. Democrats and guests they brought to the President's first address to a joint session of Congress.

**March 4:** Associated Ministries First Interfaith Women's Conference in the Tacoma area, which attracted over 500 women.

**March 9:** "Hate-Free Delridge" meeting in West Seattle.

**March 10:** Sermon at Congregation Kol Ami in Woodinville.

**March 11:** Presentation on Islam at MAPS as part of mosque visit for Greater Seattle Neighborhood Action Coalition members and community.

**March 16:** Greater Seattle Neighborhood Action Coalition's "Embrace Our Neighbors: Pray In & Speak Out Against Islamophobia" event.

**March 20:** Overlake High School for "Daughters of Abraham" event with Rev. Meredith Dodd and Rabbi Yohanna Kinberg.

MAPS-AMEN has generated plenty of other coverage in local and even national and international media. For instance, the Reuters photo of Aneelah in an American-flag-themed hijab at the President's address to the joint session of Congress made it into national media sources and was viewed internationally. Likewise, clips from the "Embrace Our Neighbors: Pray In & Speak Out Against Islamophobia" event were viewed internationally, even making it on Al Jazeera Arab news. And Rev. Carol Jensen, Co-Chair of FAN, talked about the anti-Islamophobia work by MAPS-AMEN along with FAN, CAIR-WA, and other groups at the Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. People here and abroad are learning about American Muslims through the work MAPS-AMEN is doing.

### YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MAPS-AMEN's own inaugural event was on January 15, 2017. It was a Youth Advocacy Workshop to combat Islamophobia, organized with Kids4Peace and co-sponsored by a broad coalition of almost 100 other groups and organizations. The event was the ideal kick-off event for MAPS-AMEN because it brought together all four areas of focus (coalition building and advocacy, education, media, and youth empowerment/leadership development), as it taught youth to combat Islamophobia through the media using personal narratives. Over 120 youth registered and attended the event, and dozens shared the personal stories they wrote with an audience of over 150 people. Multiple news outlets also covered the event, and several youth have

felt empowered to take action and make a difference since the workshop.

MAPS-AMEN is also working on launching a "Media Matters" project with MAPS Youth to address the strong anti-Muslim bias and commentary in mainstream media and social media. MAPS-AMEN aims to work with youth to develop the next generation of young leaders, trained to speak publicly with pride in their religious and American identities and to advocate for justice for all, as the Quran mandates. (*"Oh you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both."* Quran 4:135.)

### OTHER ACTIONS

As part of the annual MAPS Seerah Conference and in honor of Black History Month, MAPS-AMEN held a workshop on February 11 to discuss racism within the Muslim community. This was an important discussion and hopefully the first in a series of difficult conversations intended to address issues within the Muslim community in order to make us stronger together. Afterwards, MAPS-AMEN hosted a showing for the entire community of the documentary "13th," followed by an interfaith discussion of racism (and Islamophobia) in our country.

MAPS-AMEN also collaborated with the American Muslim Research





## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY WITH MAPS-AMEN

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Find us on Facebook and join the efforts of MAPS-AMEN

Facebook Page: MAPS AMEN



Institute (AMRI) to host a private lunch gathering with guest speaker Dalia Mogahed, before her talk at UW Bothell on Islamophobia. Aneelah served as author host for Zarqa Nawaz (creator of the TV show “Little Mosque on the Prairie”) at the 9th Annual “Search for Meaning” Festival by Seattle University. She worked with the Attorney General’s Office to find stories and declarants to challenge the administration’s Muslim travel bans. And Aneelah is launching a column entitled “Daughters of Abraham” with Rev. Meredith Dodd and Rabbi Yohanna Kinberg in the *Real Change* newsletter.



MAPS-AMEN was launched only a few months ago and already has made great strides in placing the American Muslim community in a leadership role advocating for justice for all. None of this work, however, would have been possible without the support of our magnanimous community. As we take this initial success to much greater heights, we ask all of you for prayers and supplications. We also ask for your volunteer time (follow the MAPS AMEN FB page and learn about upcoming opportunities) and your financial support. Indeed there is no better investment than to invest in improving the future of our community and of our country. (*“The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah, is as the likeness of a grain (of corn); it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases. And Allah is All-Sufficient, All-Knower.”* Quran 2:261)

