

And do you realize what is the steep road?  
It is the freeing of a human being from bondage.  
Qur'an 90: 12-13



# Believers Bail Out

"In the 76th chapter of the Qur'an, God Most High describes the bounteous reward believers will receive in Paradise, a reward based on their fear of the consequences of the Day of Judgement and their sense of responsibility toward their fellow human. Their virtue lies in caring for those around them, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized.

**Among the most disadvantaged and marginalized members of our community are those who have been charged with a crime and incarcerated oftentimes remaining imprisoned while awaiting trial due to their inability to pay the exorbitant fees associated with the bail bond system.**

As the Qur'an describes in Surat al-Insan, verse 8, the believers are characterized by a high level of concern for those who cannot help themselves - the destitute, the child without parents, and the captive: "and who gives food - however great be their own want of it - unto the needy, and the orphan, and the prisoner." This Qur'anic imperative, along with the more detailed verses about those who are eligible to receive zakat, would seem to support for the permissibility of directing zakat funds to incarcerated Muslims. And Allah knows best."

Ustadha Zaynab Ansari

Core Faculty and Women's Scholar-in-Residence

Tayseer Seminary

## Who We Are

Believers Bail Out is a project headed by Sapelo Square in partnership with MPower Change and a group of Muslim scholars and activists seeking to create sustainable change in our society by focusing on three major areas of concern: the prison-industrial complex, anti-Muslim racism, and anti-Blackness.



## **Zakat + Bail = Believers Bail Out**

The United States currently incarcerates more than two million people, predominately Black and Latinx. Almost half a million of these people are being held on pretrial bond (bail). Money bail penalizes poverty and reproduces racism. In 2015, nationwide the median bail was \$10,000, while the median pre-incarceration annual income of people incarcerated was \$15,000. Black people are twice as likely to be held pretrial as white people and Muslims in pretrial detention face an increased risk of victimization, surveillance and denial of religious freedom in the prison system due to anti-Muslim racism (Islamophobia). Those detained before trial have worse outcomes than those who address their charges from outside a cage.

While the criminal legal system proclaims the principle of innocent until proven guilty, the reality is that people who have not been convicted of any crime can be jailed indefinitely because they can't afford bail. People in pretrial incarceration can lose jobs, their children, their homes, and even their lives.

Believers Bail Out is a community-led effort to bail out Muslims in pretrial detention as a form of zakat. Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, is an annual tax on wealth. The Qur'an (9:60) specifies eight uses for zakat, including helping the poor and the needy and for the freeing of slaves or captives. People being held in pretrial detention because they can't afford bail qualify for zakat.

## **Zakat + Bail = Believers Bail Out**

By paying their bond and freeing them to address the charges against them, Believers Bail Out restores the presumption of innocence. It is our duty as Muslims to be a part of ending this unjust bail system that criminalizes poverty and is inherently racist in nature.

Alongside providing bail and support for individuals released on bond in Chicago, which is home to the largest single-site jail in the United States, Believers Bail Out will host fundraising iftars and teach-ins in Chicago and across the country to support legislative efforts to abolish money bail and to raise awareness within Muslim communities on the injustices of the bail bond system and the broader prison-industrial complex.

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## About the Believers Bail Out

Money bail targets poor people of color, takes away their freedom and puts their families, communities and lives in danger. This Ramadan, Believers Bail Out is collecting zakat to bail out believers and help end mass incarceration.

Inspired by and indebted to the National Bail Out collective and other organizers, we're working to bring this conversation into Muslim communities, and to make clear the links between our faith and our actions in the context of oppressive systems and structures. We're committed to educating ourselves and our communities about money bail and mass incarceration through iftars and teach-ins as well as fundraising to bail out Muslims in pretrial detention - people who have not been convicted of a crime but are being held for their inability to pay bail.

# About the Believers Bail Out

## Our Process

Believers Bail Out (BBO) will bail out Muslims in partnership with the Chicago Community Bond Fund (CCBF) and Sirat Chicago (Sirat). BBO will raise zakat-eligible and tax-deductible funds. Family members and supporters of Muslims held in pretrial detention in Cook County, IL will reach out to Believers Bail Out to apply for support. Cases will be reviewed according to our criteria and BBO will partner with CCBF to post bond. Once the individual is released BBO will provide support and connect them to other community resources until the case is resolved. Once the case is resolved the bond funds will return to CCBF to be used to bail out a new individual.

 Believers Bail Out <b>OUR PROCESS</b> BELIEVERSBAILOUT.ORG	<b>1. FUNDRAISE</b>  BBO raises zakat-eligible funds during Ramadan.	<b>2. APPLY</b>  Families and supporters of incarcerated Muslims apply for support.
<b>3. POST BOND</b>  Case is reviewed. If the applicant meets criteria, BBO partners with Chicago Community Bond Fund to post bond.	<b>4. SUPPORT</b>  BBO and partners will support and connect released individual to community resources until case is resolved.	<b>5. FREE 'EM ALL</b>  Once the case is resolved, the funds will be returned to CCBF to work to bail out another individual behind bars.

## About the Believers Bail Out

### Our Criteria

BBO wants to "free 'em all" but we are currently unable to assist everyone who needs help paying bond. BBO, in coordination with CCBF, will use the following interactive factors to evaluate whether we will assist someone who applies for our help paying bond:

- Incarcerated person identifies as Muslim;
- Inability to pay bond required, including lack of access to sufficient family or community resources;
- Amount of bond to be paid;
- Existing support system, such as a family member, friend, or case manager who has committed to providing assistance making court dates and/or other forms of support;
- Risk of victimization in the jail, including but not limited to: race, religion, gender identity and expression, people with disabilities, and youth or elder status;
- Special health needs such as pregnancy, chronic medical conditions, or ongoing mental health treatment;
- Is a primary caregiver; has dependents or other family members who may be harmed by applicant's detention, including risk of custody loss or Department of Children and Family Services (DFCS) involvement;

## About the Believers Bail Out

- Immigration status and potential immigration consequences of a criminal conviction;
- Referral through or connection to established partner organization;
- Anticipated impact of detention on applicant's employment, housing, educational attainment, and/or custodial rights;
- Position in relation to structural violence, community disinvestment, systemic racism, survival, and resistance; and
- Willingness to assist with raising money to cover any anticipated court costs, fines, or fees that will not be refunded to the bond fund.

Because we presume innocence and recognize the harm caused by incarceration BBO will not use the criminal charge as a criterion. One reason BBO is focusing on Muslims in pretrial detention is that anti-Muslim racism exposes Muslims to increased risk of victimization and denial of religious freedom in the prison system.

## Zakat

Zakat, the practice of purifying charity, is one of the five pillars of Islam. It's an annual levy of 2.5% on wealth due from Muslims who possess, for one full lunar year, a certain amount over and above their housing, debts, and immediate needs. (Zakat calculators are widely available online.)

The Qur'an specifies eight uses for zakat, including relief to the poor and the needy, giving to those with burdensome debts, and freeing slaves or captives. (Q. 9:60). Scholars suggest that any Muslim who does not have enough wealth to owe zakat is eligible to receive zakat - so this category would apply to those held in detention for lack of resources to pay bail. Another argument for using zakat to pay bail is that pretrial incarceration is essentially a form of bondage or captivity for those who haven't been convicted of any crime. In other cases, predatory policing and courts - as in Saint Louis County, MO - create a kind of debtor's prison: writing tickets, charging exorbitant fees and fines, and arresting and detaining those unable to pay.

Muslims using their money to free other Muslims from bondage has a long history, and carries spiritual rewards. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the emancipation of the enslaved, freeing those in bondage, was always considered a noble act. An example of this was when the Prophet

## Zakat

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, actively participated in securing the freedom from bondage of his companion Salman Al-Farisi, Allah be pleased with him. Allah beautifully says in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:281), "If the debtor is in difficulty, then delay things until matters become easier for him; still, if you were to write it off as an act of charity, that would be better for you, if you only knew." God is reminding us that we have an obligation to help others in need while at the same time striving to improve our own spiritual state in front of God. Through giving, we aim to remove diseases of the heart - stinginess and love of money.

As a point of reflection, the life-transaction itself, the "deen," is related to the word for debt, "dayn." All of humanity owes a debt to Allah, one that cannot be paid and one that everyone hopes for Allah to pardon. God shows mercy to those who show mercy, and God will pardon those who pardon, so pardoning debts is one way we hope to engender Allah's pardoning of everyone's debt. Also, when someone is freed from worldly debt, they are freed from one of this worldly life's tightest grips upon them. As a result, it allows that person to refocus on their transaction with Allah. If someone relieves stress and anxiety of the debtor, in turn, Allah has promised the same for the reliever.

## Zakat

Helping others achieve their freedom is not only part of the Muslim tradition but also something enslaved Africans in the Western hemisphere did, sacrificing to free each other. Muslims being held on bails they cannot afford by a system that systematically discriminates based on race can be freed with zakat. They can address the charges against them while going about their lives, caring for their families, and being part of their communities.

The Qur'an calls on Muslims to call out oppression and act to remedy it. The current U.S. system of policing and prisons, including money bail, is deeply unjust and massively harmful to people, families, and communities, especially Black people and families and communities. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, reminds us through a hadith about the prayers of the downtrodden: "Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, even if he is an unbeliever, for there is no barrier between it and Allah." Building alternatives to incarceration is a long-term project. In the meantime, the Believers Bail Out is a tactic to free people, while educating ourselves and our communities about bail, policing, and mass incarceration.

## Money Bail

### What is Money Bail?

There is a gap between when someone is arrested and charged with a crime and when they are given a trial for that crime. Bail, also known as bond, is money charged by the state to release a person charged with a crime from custody while their case proceeds. Some people are released on their own recognizance (set free for free). That means they are trusted to come back for their trial. Others deemed too big of a danger or a flight risk are held without bail. In many other cases, the judge sets bail. In Illinois people charged with crimes are required to pay 10% of the bond amount set by a judge as a “deposit.” For example, someone given a \$1,000 bond has to pay \$100 cash in order to be released from police or county custody. In other jurisdictions, judges set cash bail. If they set a \$500 bail, the person must pay \$500. The logic is that having paid (cash bail) or borrowed the money (bail bonds), they will return in order to get their money back. Bail is justified as a way to guarantee that people show up to court.

**But bail isn't necessary.** Washington D.C.'s Pretrial Services Agency doesn't use money bail. They release 85% of all defendants, the vast majority of whom (88% of released defendants) attend all their court dates and are not rearrested while their cases are ongoing. In New York, 96% of the Bronx Freedom Fund's clients attended every one of their court dates—a rate higher than that of people who paid their own bond!

## Money Bail

Programs to provide defendants with phone call reminders, transit vouchers, and child care for court hearings can be as effective as punitive money bail.

**Bail is essentially unfair and unjust.** It is part of a racist system: Black people are twice as likely to be held pretrial as white people. Bail discriminates against the poor: in 2015 the median bail set nationwide was \$10,000, while the median pre-incarceration annual income of people incarcerated was \$15,000. Money bail does not keep us safe. Someone who poses no threat to others should be released regardless of their access to money; likewise, someone who is truly a threat should not be released simply because they can pay bond. Our current system makes wealth, not safety, the primary determinant of whether someone is released while awaiting trial.

**Why is making bond so important?** The simple inability to pay bond often hurts the very things that help someone charged with a crime succeed: employment, stable housing, and strong family and community connections. For many people a bail amount of \$100 or \$500 (plus fees) means they will stay in jail for days, weeks, or months until their trial. People who haven't been convicted of any crime can be jailed indefinitely. They can lose their jobs, their kids, their homes, and even their lives.

## Money Bail

People often plead guilty or plea bargain simply so they can get out and go home. These convictions, in turn, mean that if the person is re-arrested (and remember that Black people, other people of color, and Native Americans are arrested at far higher rates than white people even when the rate of offenses is similar), their criminal record can mean more serious charges and harsher punishment. If the plea is to a felony, they can also lose their right to vote, to hold some jobs, and to live in certain housing. With the stakes so high, BBO hopes to alleviate the harm for as many people as possible. People need care not cages.

Sometimes, people who cannot scrape together cash bail or whose court sets a high bond may borrow from a bail bonds company. This industry, which has boomed, has few protections for borrowers against predatory bond lenders.

Money bail and bail bonds companies are part of the prison-industrial complex, a mutually reinforcing web of relationships, between and not limited to, prisons, the probation service, the police, the courts, government officials and all the companies that profit from transporting, feeding and exploiting prisoners. This web results in the far and wide ranging use of surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems.

# HOW DOES MONEY BAIL WORK?

People need care, not cages. Our current system punishes people for being poor by incarcerating them before trial, while they are legally presumed innocent.



## AN ARREST HAPPENS

If there is probable cause that you allegedly committed a crime, you are arrested and then taken to jail.

Black people are 2.5 times more likely to be arrested than white people

Black people are twice as likely to be held pretrial.

## BOOKING

Following the arrest, processing begins which is known as booking. During this time, fingerprints are taken. Some people are released without having to pay money bail; for all others money bail is set.



## CAN PAY BAIL

The person accused is eventually able to return home once the bail is posted. From a position of freedom, the person accused is able to receive legal counsel to defend themselves against the alleged charges and return to their life.

## CAN'T PAY BAIL

If the accused person or their family is unable to come up with the money either personally or through a commercial bail bondsman, they will be incarcerated until the case is resolved.

## POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF REMAINING IN JAIL



Psychological Trauma



Eviction



Loss of Job



Losing Children



Inability to Practice Religion

or Possibly  
Death

## **Mass Incarceration, Anti-Blackness, and Anti-Muslim Racism**

Mass incarceration is bad for everyone. The scope and scale of the United States' prison-industrial complex is unprecedented in history. Deplorable and oppressive conditions in jails and prisons violate the human rights of incarcerated people, including those who have not been convicted of crimes. The media report only a small fraction of deliberate and sometimes deadly assaults by guards; violence, including sexual violence, from other incarcerated people is also a risk, especially for trans and gender non-conforming people. There are also routine denials of basic health care. Pregnant women may be shackled during delivery, putting themselves and their infants at risk. Conditions in jails and prisons may be dangerous: oppressively hot in summer or perilously cold in winter; water may be inadequate or unsafe. But because of social inequality, as well as discriminatory policing, bail practices, and court systems, jails and prisons affect some people and communities more than others.

Racism is foundational to the prison-industrial complex. Anti-Blackness includes historic and contemporary attitudes, ideas, policies and practices that are built upon and reproduce the dehumanization of Black people. Anti-Blackness makes Black people primary targets of everyday and state-sanctioned violence and structural inequality. Police killings of unarmed Black youth, stop-and-frisk policing, high arrest rates, and predatory fines in

## **Mass Incarceration, Anti-Blackness, and Anti-Muslim Racism**

Black areas are interconnected ways that the prison-industrial complex affects people unequally. Because of racist policing practices a Black person, other person of color, or Native American is far more likely to be arrested and charged than a white person who acts in the same way.

Anti-Muslim racism is a global phenomenon that intersects and overlaps with other forms of discrimination. It identifies Muslims as racial and religious “others,” which leads to Muslims being targets of systemic inequality and violence in both interpersonal and institutional interactions. Muslims, Black people, and especially those who are both Black and Muslim are heavily impacted by the broader structures and histories in which mass incarceration is embedded.

Surveillance of Black (and) Muslim people began during the transatlantic slave trade. In the 1930s, the U.S. government began tracking the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple. (Malcolm X’s 9,000 page FBI file includes his prison activism, calling for pork-free meals for incarcerated Muslims.) Over decades, this surveillance transformed into an elaborate FBI system of targeting and the use of informants known as COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program). The Reagan-era War on Gangs and War on

## **Mass Incarceration, Anti-Blackness, and Anti-Muslim Racism**

Drugs had further devastating effects on Black communities, which were disproportionately affected by discriminatory policing and harsh sentencing strategies. Clinton-era policies continued a prison expansion trajectory, underwritten by notions of Black youth as nihilistic “super predators.” From 1978-2014, the prison population increased 408%, fueled by the economic and political incentives of being tough on crime, serving de-industrialized regions with new prison industry jobs (what some have called “dungeon economies”), and by the parasitic relationship that private contractors, vendors, and employee organization lobbyists have on the publicly-funded criminal justice system.

Although mass incarceration and surveillance have reached previously unimaginable levels, there are commonalities and continuities. The FBI has begun to target so-called “Black Identity Extremists,” organizers and activists critical of state violence, including police brutality and mass incarceration. A leaked FBI report, according to the organization Color of Change, shows this to be an extension of COINTELPRO. This report, the ACLU states, “marginalizes what are legitimate voices within the political debate that are calling for racial and economic justice.”

## **Mass Incarceration, Anti-Blackness, and Anti-Muslim Racism**

The accusation that these Black organizers and activists are terrorists links them in the public imagination to the deliberately cultivated fear of (brown) Muslim terrorists from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Especially since 9/11, Muslims have been surveilled, targeted, and entrapped, and deported. A lawsuit brought against the New York City police department (Hassan v. NYPD) found the police liable for damages that their surveillance caused the mosque and community. Nonetheless, there are ongoing patterns of targeting Muslims, including a recent Department of Homeland Security call for surveillance of Sunni Muslims from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, which the ACLU contends is based on “junk science.” These interconnected issues of policing, surveillance, immigration enforcement, and incarceration are vital for Muslims in the U.S. to grapple with.

Educating ourselves and each other about these facets of our history and our current situation -- perhaps by hosting a fundraising iftar, which the next section explains how to do -- is vital to longer term projects of transformation, including ending the system of money bail. Using our zakat to bail out believers during this holy month of Ramadan is an immediate way to “stand firmly for justice” as the Qur’an (4:135) commands us to do.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

Believers Bail Out Iftars have three goals:

- Raise money to bail out Muslims who are being held in pretrial detention without having been convicted of a crime
- Educate ourselves and our communities about money bail, mass incarceration, and their intersections with anti-Blackness and anti-Muslim racism
- Lay the groundwork for future anti-racist work in our communities grounded in our religion and our faith

### HOW TO HOST A FUNDRAISING IFTAR



CHOOSE  
YOUR  
CREW



INVITE  
GUESTS



PICK A DATE



SET A GOAL



BOOK A  
LOCATION



GET  
EDUCATED

NEED PLANNING SUPPORT? EMAIL [BELIEVERS BAILOUT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:BELIEVERS BAILOUT@GMAIL.COM)



## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

Depending on the size and complexity of your event, you'll need at least two or three weeks to plan it. Having a co-organizer (or two or three) is ideal but not absolutely necessary, especially for a smaller event.

The key components: a meal, a short educational program (about 20 minutes - can be a talk, video, or activity), and fundraising. You'll need to make plans for the space, the people (organizers and participants), the food, the program, and the follow-up.

### BASIC STEPS

**Choose your crew.** Unless you're going to do this all yourself, you'll need to get your people on board early. Decide at the outset if they're co-organizing with you (and if so how you're dividing things up) or if you're in charge and they're volunteering for specific tasks such as arranging the space, a speaker, or the food.

**Pick a date.** As far in advance as possible pick a date between May 15 and June 8. We're looking to have all funds raised at least a week before Eid, the holiday at the end of Ramadan, to get people home in time to celebrate.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

**Book a place.** This is likely going to be someone's home – maybe yours – where you can have 10-25 people or more. If you live somewhere with a common space, like a community room, you might be able to use that. If you've got a backyard and lights, you can host there. Some mosques or community centers also have meeting space. Whatever space you're using, be sure it's available on the date you chose.

**Consider who to invite.** Who you invite and how you invite them depends on a) the capacity of your space; b) how much you're looking to raise; and c) whether you want to focus on Muslims or make this a chance to educate non-Muslims too. You'll probably want to invite two or three times as many people as you want to have attend.

**Set a fundraising goal.** Depending on how many people you're hosting and their resources, you might aim for \$500-2500.

**Plan your program.** Educating ourselves and others is an integral component of the Believers Bail Out. Use the information in this toolkit, for putting together a presentation yourself, choose a short video to show, or invite someone – perhaps a previously incarcerated person or a local organizer – to educate others about bail.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

Reach out to [believersbailout@gmail.com](mailto:believersbailout@gmail.com) and let us know if you need planning support.

### 2-4 WEEKS BEFORE YOUR IFTAR

#### INVITE PEOPLE

- Decide whether you're using Evite, Facebook, email, handwritten notes, and/or postal mail. Invite two or three times as many people as you'd like to have attend since only a portion of those you invite are likely to come. Send your invitations as soon as you can. If you've decided on a date before you have all the other details complete, you could send a save-the-date note.
- Be clear that this is a fundraiser. You don't want anyone to be surprised by the ask. You may want to pick a figure (a suggested donation) but people often find that you they raise more by just sharing your goal at the event.
- Suggest that guests calculate their zakat ahead of time.

Sample language:

Join us to break our fast and Bail Out Believers this Ramadan.

We're raising zakat funds to free Muslims being held in pretrial detention because they cannot afford money bail. Come learn about how money bail puts families, livelihoods, and lives in jeopardy--and what Muslims can do to change this unjust system.

Where

When (put start and end times; include start time for presentation if you're doing it before iftar)

Name and contact info of host/RSVP info

Learn more: [bit.ly/BBOUT](https://bit.ly/BBOUT) or [www.believersbailout.org](http://www.believersbailout.org)  
Calculate your zakat at [www.zakat.org](http://www.zakat.org) or search "zakat calculator"

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

### PLAN FOOD

Decide if you're cooking or catering. You'll want to have dates and/or whatever's customary in your community to break the fast, water/beverages, and a full meal. Maybe you and your co-organizers will split the preparation. Figure out a budget for the food and party expenses. Food for fifty too much for you? You can ask someone to pitch in with funds or food. That can be their donation to the cause. If you're going to order from a restaurant, check with them now to figure out how much advance notice they need for the event and that they'll deliver on time (especially key during Ramadan!).

### PICK A PLACE

If you're doing this any place other than a private residence, be sure to confirm any necessary arrangements. If you're using an apartment and you'll have lots of people over, consider letting your neighbors know. If you need to get temporary parking permits for guests, now's the time to arrange that.

# How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

## ORGANIZE THE PROGRAM

You'll need to make some decisions to guide your planning:

- Are you going to do the program/fundraising before or after breaking fast? If you're doing the presentation before iftar time (probably the better option if some guests have young kids or if you're doing this on a weeknight when folks work the next morning), be sure you emphasize the arrival time and maybe even note the start time for the program on the invitation. There are samples schedules for both options below.

- Are you going to pray maghrib together?

- o If yes:

- Where will you do it? Do you have sheets/rugs as needed?
- Who's going to lead it?
- Where can people make ablution if they need to?

- o If no:

- Figure out a space where those who want to pray can do that.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

Review the basic structure for the program (25-30 minutes total)

1. The host welcomes people (2-3 minutes)
2. A speaker (you already decided who this is going to be; it can but does not need to be the host) talks about bail, mass incarceration, ideally tells at least one story, and connects this to Islam, Muslims, and zakat (15-20 minutes). If you're going to watch a short video or have someone tell/read a personal story, this is the time. The discussions of money bail and mass incarceration in this toolkit, as well as the educational resources listed at the end will give you key information, links to learn more, and additional ideas for this part of your program. Feel free to reach out to [believersbailout@gmail.com](mailto:believersbailout@gmail.com) if you need planning assistance.
3. Someone (the host or another person - not bashful!) reminds people of the fundraising goal for the event and asks people to pull out their phones (or checkbooks or wallets) to give. More specific instructions for donations are below, as part of the sample schedules. Ideally, you will have people let you know (anonymously if they prefer) how much they've given by writing it on an index card or slip of paper so you can get, and announce, a final tally!

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

### 1 week before the iftar

- Cooking? Buy or borrow any kitchen supplies you need to cook for a big group.
- Buy non-perishables including anything you'll need for tea/coffee. Do you have a big enough pot/urn? If not, arrange to borrow or buy one.
- Do you have sheets to cover the floor for prayer or if you're sitting on the floor to eat?
- Do you have enough dishes on hand or paper plates/cups/napkins?
- If you're ordering from a restaurant, confirm your order.

### 1-2 days before the iftar

Do the rest of the grocery shopping if any; begin food preparation as appropriate.

Send out a reminder email/text/post with directions

Confirm with speaker - arrange parking or any last minute details

### Day of the iftar

In addition to setting up for the iftar and dinner, and preparing prayer spaces if applicable, get a small stack of index cards or pieces of paper and pens to use during fundraising. If people coming may be unfamiliar with your space, you can tie a balloon to your mailbox, post a sign at the entrance to your apartment complex, or whatever seems useful to direct guests to your space.

# How to Host a Fundraising Iftar - Option 1



15-30 mins: people arrive, mingle  
5 mins: announce order of events

Before Iftar

break fast  
pray maghrib if you're going to  
buffet style dinner



Iftar Time!



30 mins: presentation begins  
55-60 mins: fundraising  
60-90 mins: coffee/tea/dessert

After Iftar



Remind people of your goal

- Pass out index cards or paper for them to write down how much they're giving (no names necessary) so you can tally it up
- Give them five minutes to make their donations
- Credit card or PayPal donations via [www.launchgood.com/believersbailout](http://www.launchgood.com/believersbailout)
- Checks payable to Sirat Chicago, memo: BBO/zakat (you'll send them in - see below)
- Venmo or QuickPAY [siratchicago@gmail.com](mailto:siratchicago@gmail.com) (message/memo: BBO/zakat)

While they donate, you add up the figures and make an announcement

Thank guests as they depart and tell them we'll be in touch if they've signed up with us.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar - Option 2



60-45 mins: people arrive, mingle  
35-30 mins: presentation  
10-5 mins: fundraising

### Before Iftar



Remind people of your goal

- Pass out index cards or paper for them to write down how much they're giving (no names necessary) so you can tally it up
- Give them five minutes to make their donations
- Credit card or PayPal donations via [www.launchgood.com/believersbailout](http://www.launchgood.com/believersbailout)
- Checks payable to Sirat Chicago, memo: BBO/zakat (you'll send them in - see below)
- Venmo or QuickPAY [siratchicago@gmail.com](mailto:siratchicago@gmail.com) (message/memo: BBO/zakat)

While they donate, you add up the figures and make an announcement



break fast  
pray maghrib if you're going to  
buffet style dinner



Iftar Time!



60 mins: wrap up

### After Iftar

Thank guests as they depart and tell them we'll be in touch if they've signed up with us.

## How to Host a Fundraising Iftar

After your iftar (within the next 1-2 days)

- Follow up with thanks to those who attended. This doesn't have to be long or formal. Please include a link to [www.believersbailout.org](http://www.believersbailout.org).
- If anyone donated by check, send those along to Sirat Chicago, 4572 S Lake Park Ave, Chicago IL, 60653.

Let us know how your event went - write us at [believersbailout@gmail.com](mailto:believersbailout@gmail.com) or post on social media and tag us: @believrsbailout on Twitter, @believersbailout on Instagram, or <https://www.facebook.com/BelieversBailOut/>.

## Q & A

What if I have committed my zakat elsewhere or I'm not sure this is a valid use of zakat? Or what if I don't owe zakat this year? Can I still participate?

Of course. You can give sadaqa (voluntary charity) of any amount. And whether or not you give financially, you can also get involved in the work to end mass incarceration. Sign up to learn more at [www.believersbailout.org](http://www.believersbailout.org) and check out resources in the Learn More section of this toolkit.

There are a lot of people in jail. How do you choose who to bail out?

We are prioritizing Muslims whose incarceration is likely to cause the greatest harm to themselves and those who depend on them: primary caregivers, disabled people, or others who are especially vulnerable, including because of their gender identity or health conditions, including mental health.

How do we know the person we're bailing out is Muslim?

Our referrals will mostly come from Muslim organizations and people working with incarcerated Muslims. We're relying on people's self-identification as Muslim. As Muslims, we are warned not to declare other Muslims disbelievers lest we risk disbelief ourselves.

## **Q & A**

But shouldn't I give my zakat to someone innocent instead of someone who may have committed a crime?

The American legal system is supposed to operate on the presumption of innocent until proven guilty. That means that someone being held before trial because of inability to pay bail is not being punished for their alleged crime but rather for being poor. Money bail leads to far harsher outcomes for the poor than the wealthy, something the Muslim tradition ardently opposes. Additionally, holding people in jail for inability to pay bail affects not only their lives but also those of their families, including children, and communities.

What if I want to participate but I'm not Muslim?

By all means, join us!

What is the process for donations?

Donations to the Believers Bail Out are passed along to the Chicago Community Bond Fund to pay the bond. If sufficient funding is received, it might be used to provide zakat-eligible forms of post-bond support to poor and needy Muslims released from incarceration.

## Q & A

So, just to clarify, what happens to money I give that gets used for bond once cases are resolved?

Bond money is returned, minus fees, when a person comes back for a trial or if charges are dismissed before that. In the case of the Believers Bail Out, that money will remain with the Chicago Community Bond Fund to be used in their ongoing work. Learn more at <https://chicagobond.org/>

What can I do besides give money?

There are lots of ways to get involved with Believers Bail Out and other organizations working to end mass incarceration. (Sign up to learn more at [www.believersbailout.org](http://www.believersbailout.org).) You can find a community bail fund in your area. You can get involved in efforts to change the behavior of prosecutors, who have enormous discretion and power in the court system, or to elect District Attorneys who will be accountable to the communities they serve. The current criminal justice system is massively unfair and has repercussions in all areas of American life, from health care to employment to electoral politics. And you can educate yourself, starting with the resources in this toolkit.

## Learn More

This section includes resources for learning about money bail and mass incarceration as well as their links to anti-Muslim racism and anti-Blackness in the US. We have not tried to replicate the more extensive resources, links, and activities available in the National Bail Out toolkit available via <https://nomoremoneybail.org/>. The resources we link here are meant to start a conversation among Muslims about about how race and religion intersect with the prison-industrial complex and mass incarceration.

About mass incarceration, race, and the prison-industrial complex (PIC)

A short, provocative book, Angela Davis *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (Seven Stories Press 2003) is a good place to begin.

With charts, maps, and statistics, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/> provides national and state overviews of the state of mass incarceration in the U.S.

Critical Resistance has a video guide on the PIC:

<http://criticalresistance.org/videoproject/>.

Of special interest: “Muslims, New Afrikans and U.S. Empire”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk8UsGCCDPMlist=PLYn1EYMDfKqnY2I4I8FzaJoGqEGLdHi6v&index=3)

[v=kk8UsGCCDPMlist=PLYn1EYMDfKqnY2I4I8FzaJoGqEGLdHi6v&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk8UsGCCDPMlist=PLYn1EYMDfKqnY2I4I8FzaJoGqEGLdHi6v&index=3)

## Learn More

### About prison abolition

This recent essay, “A Jailbreak of the Imagination,” makes the case for a fundamental transformation in how we think about prisons:

<http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/44350-a-jailbreak-of-the-imagination-seeing-prisons-for-what-they-are-and-demanding-transformation>

### About conditions in detention facilities

A book of harrowing, heartrending, and illuminating accounts by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Robin Levi and Ayelet Waldman, eds. *Inside This Place, Not of It: Narratives from Women’s Prisons*. Voice of Witness 8. San Francisco: McSweeney’s Books, 2011.

From *Dignity & Power Now*, a succinct twelve page report on the “Impact of Disproportionate Incarceration of & Violence Against Black People with Mental Health Conditions in the World’s Largest Jail System” and included as part of the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’s review of the United States, highlights the racial discrimination, medical neglect, and human rights violations that are present within the LA County jail system.

[http://dignityandpowernow.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CERD\\_Report\\_2014.8.pdf](http://dignityandpowernow.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CERD_Report_2014.8.pdf)

## Learn More

Another report from the same organization details more horrendous conditions and deliberate maltreatment. “Breaking the Silence: Civil and Human Rights Violations Resulting from Medical Neglect and Abuse of Women of Color in Los Angeles County Jails.”

[http://dignityandpowernow.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/breaking\\_silence\\_report\\_2015.pdf](http://dignityandpowernow.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/breaking_silence_report_2015.pdf)

About Muslims, policing, and incarceration in the US

Muslims accused and convicted of ideologically-motivated violence are sentenced far more harshly than others:

<https://theintercept.com/2018/04/05/muslims-violence-media-attention-prosecution/>

Surveillance of Muslims in New York by the NYPD was the subject of a successful lawsuit and settlement. The Center for Constitutional Rights has a video about *Hassan v. NYPD*, a historic lawsuit in which the NYPD was ordered to pay damages for its surveillance of a mosque and community. <https://ccrjustice.org/film-hassan-v-nypd>

The Tayba Foundation - which estimates that 4-7% of those currently incarcerated in the US are Muslim - works with Muslims impacted by incarceration. <https://www.taybafoundation.org/about-us/>

## Learn More

The FBI's COINTELPRO focused on the Black Panther Party, Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and others. COINTELPRO also sought to undermine, intimidate, and slander avowedly nonviolent black leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/cointelpro-1956-1976>

Masjid al-Rabia in Chicago does prison outreach with LGBTQIA+ Muslims, who may be particularly vulnerable to victimization while incarcerated. [www.masjidalrabia.org](http://www.masjidalrabia.org)

Chicago's Iman (Inner-City Muslim Action Network) has a Green ReEntry program for formerly incarcerated people.

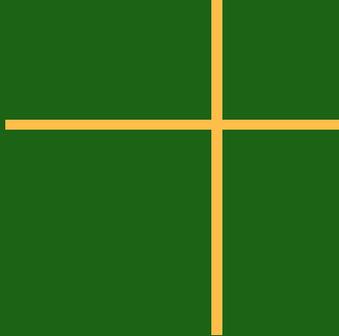
<https://www.imacentral.org/project-green-reentry/>

There are films about Muslims and incarceration, including The Ta'leef Collective's "Prison Blues" <https://taleefcollective.org/ondemand/taleef-films/#mg> and the documentary "The Honest Struggle"

<http://honeststruggle.co/>.

(If you have suggestions for additional resources on Muslims, policing/surveillance, mass incarceration, and the prison-industrial complex, send them to us.)

Numerous American Muslim organizations are working to counter anti-Muslim racism, combat anti-Blackness, and end mass incarceration. Visit [www.believersbailout.org](http://www.believersbailout.org) to learn more about our community partners and join the struggle for justice.



"O you who believe: stand firmly for justice!"  
Qur'an 4:135

