

Leadership,
Spirituality, &
Education



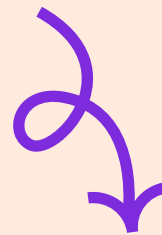
Muslim Student Life
Syracuse University



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

mslatsu.com

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ABOUT US

Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit Corporation Under the Section 193 Law of NYS and serves in lieu of Muslim Chaplaincy at Syracuse University.

Our Vision

To be the model University-based spiritual & education center in the USA.

Our Mission

To create an inclusive community and to engage in sincere reflections that result in religious, intellectual, and social growth through educational programs and spiritual guidance based on Islamic principles.

Muslim Student Life Board of Directors

Dr. Riazur Rahaman

Position: President | **Years Served:** 11 Years

Dr. Abu Badruddin

Position: Vice-President | **Years Served:** 11 Years

Dr. Mirza Tihic

Position: Treasurer | **Years Served:** 12 Years

Tahsin Tahmid

Position: Secretary | **Years Served:** 6 Years

Esmir Omerovic

Position: Board Member | **Years Served:** 7 Years

Mehdi Meghezzi

Position: Board Member | **Years Served:** 5 Years

Kaitlynn Chopra

Position: Board Member | **Years Served:** 3 Years

Jehan Muhialdain

Position: Board Member | **Years Served:** 3 Years

Avva Boroujerdi

Position: Board Member | **Years Served:** 1 year



MUSLIM STUDENT LIFE
at SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

A Message from the Chaplain

Assalamu Alaikum (May Peace Be Upon You)

As we look back on the past academic year, we extend our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support of Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University. Your contributions have greatly enriched our campus, transforming it into a much more inclusive and welcoming home for our Muslim students. We can clearly see the tangible reflection of this positive change in the steady increase in the number of Muslim students participating in our programs over the last few years. Together, we are writing a historic chapter and building a lasting legacy for the future, In Shaa Allah (God Willing).



This year marked my first year at Syracuse University and MSL. A whole year went by so quickly, yet it was incredibly productive. We organized numerous activities and programs during both the Fall and Spring semesters. Our students showed great interest in our Tafsir, Hadith, Seerah, and Quran classes. Through our Seerah Competition (with an Umrah trip prize) and Hadith Memorization contests, we had fun while learning together.

The turnout for our Jummah prayers at Hendricks Chapel was over 120 people every single week. Attendance was also close to 100 people at the lunches we hosted for our students after every Friday prayer. Furthermore, we participated in many interfaith events throughout the year, which gave us the opportunity to get to know other chaplaincies.

Our Ramadan was also deeply fulfilling. We hosted over 20 iftars, held partly at the university and partly at the Tahera Azmath Community Center (1443 E Genesee St, Syracuse, NY), with hundreds of students attending. We built beautiful connections with many Muslim communities from different cultures and backgrounds who sponsored us. Throughout Ramadan, several guest speakers joined us before the Taraweeh prayers we performed together. Additionally, our Annual Iftar with over 350 attendees and our Itikhaf Night, which we spent in worship all night long, became unforgettable memories of this Ramadan.

For this beautiful year, I would first like to thank Muslim Student Life and my esteemed Advisor, Dr. Amir Duric, Hendricks Chapel, and of course, the MSA, who worked in coordination with us, as well as our intern, Farzad Amiri, who has been incredibly helpful since his very first day with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hamza Gursoy".

Hamza Gursoy
Muslim Chaplain

MEET THE TEAM



Hamza Gursoy
Muslim Chaplain

Chaplain Hamza Gursoy joined Muslim Student Life at Syracuse University in 2025. He is the Muslim Chaplain at Syracuse University's Hendricks Chapel, where he provides pastoral care, leads religious services, and mentors the university's Muslim Student Association (MSA). Originally from Bursa, Turkey, he holds a Master of Divinity in Islamic Chaplaincy from the Chicago Theological Seminary and dual bachelor's degrees in Islamic Sciences. Before arriving in Central New York in August 2025, he built a diverse career in the Midwest as a healthcare chaplain at Chicago's Swedish Hospital, an Islamic Studies educator at the Science Academy of Chicago, and a community leader for the Islamic Society of the Midwest. On campus, he is known for fostering an inclusive environment through interfaith collaboration, student leadership cultivation, and community programming, balancing his theological and pastoral work with a deep personal passion for literature, history, and creative writing.



Farzad Amiri
Student Intern

Farzad joined the Muslim Student Life (MSL) team at the commencement of the Spring 2026 semester, bringing an exceptional enthusiasm for community outreach, strategic social media management, and campus engagement. Currently pursuing a degree in International Relations at Syracuse University, Farzad has also been elected to serve as the President of the Muslim Student Association (MSA) for the upcoming academic year.

VOLUNTEERS



Dr. Amir Duric
Advisor

Dr. Amir Duric joined MSL in 2017. He is a nationally respected interfaith leader, educator, and scholar who serves as the Assistant Dean for Religious and Spiritual Life at Hendricks Chapel and Adjunct Professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.



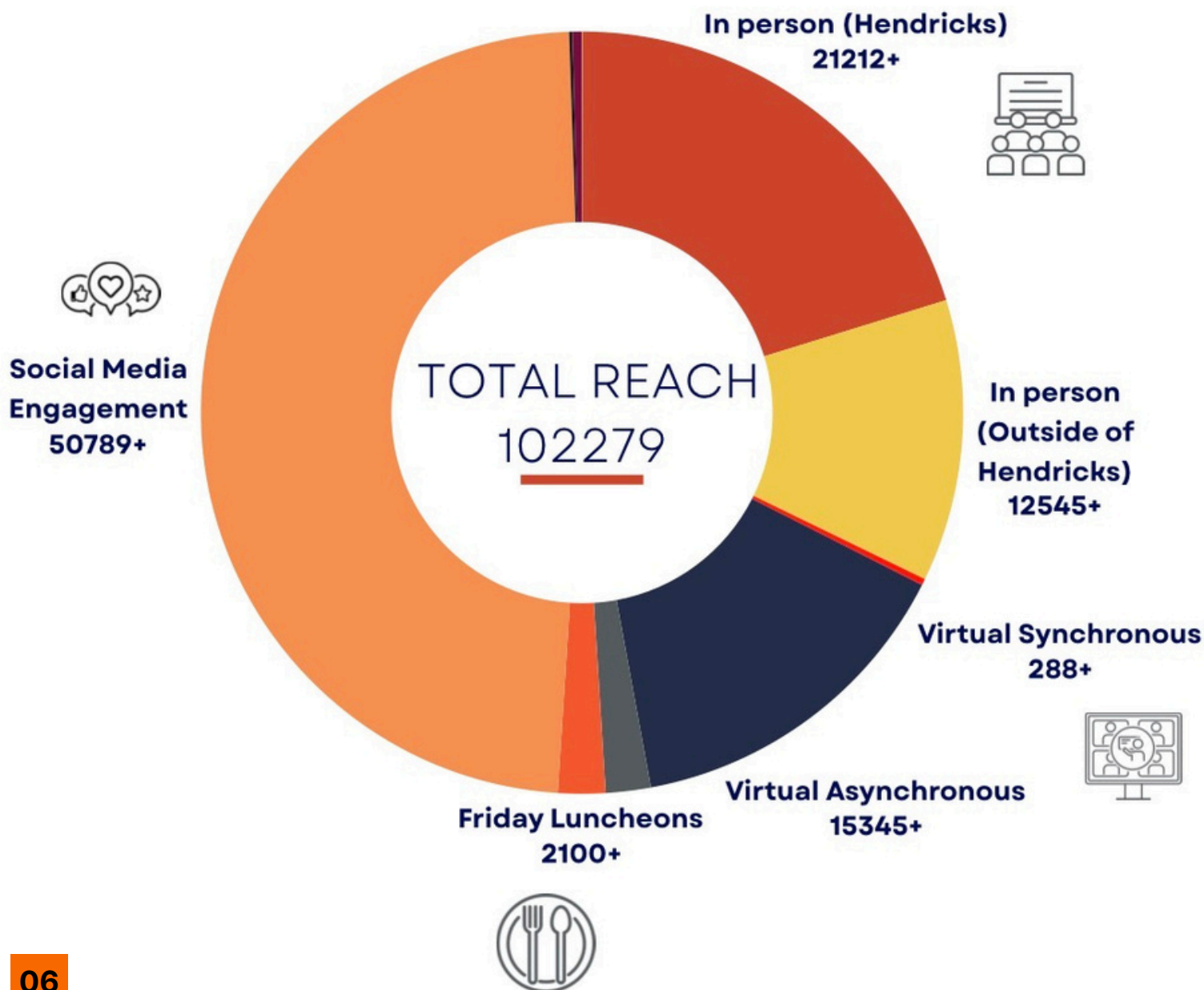
Dr. Ahmet Celik
Scholar

Dr. Celik leads our online Tafsir Class and facilitates discussion groups and seminars on Islamic political and legal theory, law, jurisprudence, exegesis, and how they relate to contemporary issues and context. Dr. Celik earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. In addition to his instructional and seminar roles, he serves as an Imam and University Chaplain at Colgate University.

OUR IMPACT

For over a decade, MSL has provided exceptional support to Muslim and Non-Muslim students at Syracuse University. This year's aim was to challenge us all to embody the values of inclusivity, empathy, and social justice in our daily lives. Our unwavering commitment to this goal has fostered a significant and measurable impact on the lives of Muslim and non-Muslim students and faculty at Syracuse University.

The following visual snapshot showcases our reach statistics, a testament to the growth and impact we've achieved over the past year.



OUR IMPACT



Muslim Student Life
Syracuse University

MUSLIM STUDENT LIFE SYRACUSE

Community Statistics



Friday Prayer

4,000–4,500
people



Friday Luncheon

2,450
people



Iftar & Suhoor

more than
2,000
people



BUILDING COMMUNITY



SEEKING KNOWLEDGE



SERVING OTHERS



STAYING CONNECTED

PROGRAMMING

FOSTERING FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE



The Lecture at the Plymouth Church

At the invitation of Rev. Craig French, Chaplain Hamza Gursoy gave a lecture titled 'The Story of Ishmael (as) According to the Quran' to the congregation of Plymouth Congregational Church. During the program, where many questions were asked about Islam, Prophet Abraham, and his family, various aspects of the Islamic faith were discussed."



Islamophobia Workshop

The Community Standards Office, in collaboration with the MSL Muslim Chaplaincy, recently hosted an Islamophobia Workshop tailored exclusively for university staff. The event featured Chaplain Hamza Gursoy as the guest speaker. It proved to be a highly informative and profound session, fostering meaningful dialogue on Islam, Muslim-majority nations, and the historical context of the 9/11 tragedy—specifically its enduring impact on both the American public and Muslim communities. Participants also explored the concept of Islamophobia alongside various related contemporary issues



PROGRAMMING

FOSTERING FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE



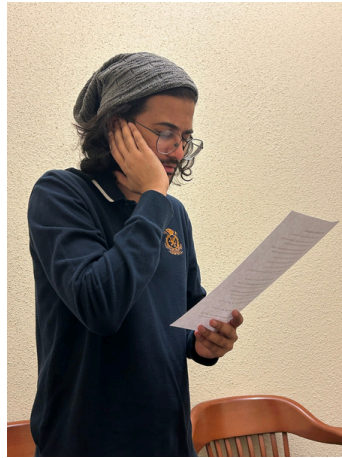
Shahadah Certificate Ceremony

If anyone wants to embrace Islam as one's religion and to live a life with faith, s/he will become a new Muslim by making the testimony of faith (Shahadah) in front of two or more Muslims.

MSL and Chaplain Hamza Gursoy can help you in this journey, just as they have helped many students this year.

Khateeb & Muezzin Training Program

In this program, which we started in the spring semester, our students received Khateeb and Muezzin training and had the opportunity to practice during Tarawih and Friday prayers, and received their certificates at the end of the program.



Meeting with Local Syracuse Imams

The MSL House successfully hosted a leadership breakfast uniting local Imams, Syracuse Muslim community leaders, and Chaplain Hamza Gursoy.

The primary objective of this gathering was to lay the groundwork for a unified network among local Muslim communities. By fostering personal connections and identifying shared goals, participants took the first steps toward establishing a collaborative platform for community support and advocacy.

PROGRAMMING

FOSTERING FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE



Quran and Tajweed Classes

Under the guidance of Chaplain Hamza Gursoy, we organized both online and in-person Quran and Tajweed lessons for our students throughout the year. In these lessons, tailored to each student's level, our students made significant progress in both reading and Tajweed practice.



Seerah Classes

Throughout the Fall semester, Chaplain Hamza Gursoy facilitated a weekly Seerah lecture series dedicated to examining the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the formative era of Islam. These academic and reflective sessions provided students with a comprehensive historical and spiritual framework, analyzing the foundational events and enduring principles of early Islamic history.

PROGRAMMING

FOSTERING FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

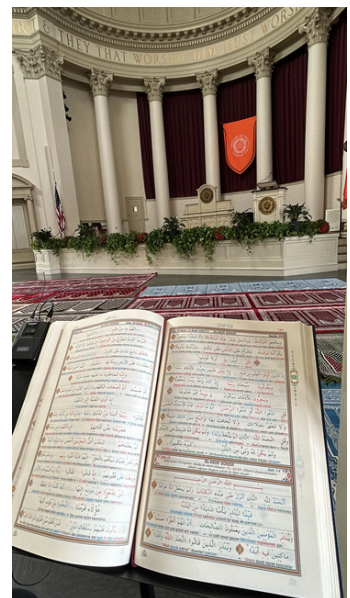


Hadith Classes

During the Spring semester, we hosted a Hadith lecture series titled 'Legacy of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him),' moderated by Chaplain Hamza Gursoy. These sessions provided an in-depth exploration of the nuances of Hadith methodology and examined various categories of Hadith traditions. Furthermore, the curriculum offered students a comprehensive understanding of the historical background of Hadith literature and its foundational importance to the Islamic faith

Online Tafsir Classes

During the Fall semester, we conducted our online Tafsir (Quranic exegesis) seminar series designed for student engagement and spiritual growth. Under the guidance and moderation of Dr. Ahmet Celik, participants explored the contextual meanings and nuances of various short Surahs. The curriculum drew upon the insights of prominent historical and contemporary scholars, fostering meaningful discussion and intellectual development among attendees.



PROGRAMMING

FOSTERING FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE



MSL Hosts Regional "Half of the Deen" Marriage Conference

We launched the Spring semester with a vibrant and well-attended event, the "Half of the Deen: Islamic Marriage Conference." Under the moderation of Chaplain Hamza Gursoy, the conference brought together a diverse group of prominent guest speakers: Chaplain Numan from Cornell University, Sister Afnan Abusheikha from the Diwan Center, Sister Fatma Celik from Syracuse University, Dr. Ahmet Celik from Colgate University, and Imam Muris Neimarlija from Le Moyne College. Together, they addressed the concept of Islamic marriage through various theological and contemporary lenses. A dynamic question-and-answer session allowed students from both the Cornell and Syracuse campus communities to engage directly with the experts and address key inquiries.

Ramadan Reflection: Chaplain Hamza Gursoy Visits Masjid Isa Ibn Maryam

This Ramadan, Chaplain Hamza Gursoy delivered a special post-Asr Halaqa at Masjid Isa Ibn Maryam, following a gracious invitation from Brother Yusuf Soule. Speaking on the core existential and spiritual topic, "Why did Allah (swt) create mankind? What is man's purpose in this world?" Chaplain Hamza engaged attendees in a profound exploration of human purpose in Islamic tradition. The event concluded with a dynamic Q&A session, enriched by the presence of international guests visiting from Indonesia.



PROGRAMMING

BUILDING COMMUNITY & IDENTITY



MSL Pre-Welcome Program

Arriving at Syracuse University can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to navigate it alone! The MSL Pre-Welcome and Mentorship Program is here to ease your transition. Led by experienced upperclassmen, who will become your guides and friends, this program offers workshops and discussions on study skills, campus life hacks, balancing academics and faith, and more. You'll get to know Syracuse's hidden gems, discover valuable resources, and connect with a welcoming community of fellow Muslims. Join the MSL Pre-Welcome Program and make your transition to SU smooth, successful, and filled with friendly faces!

Jumma Prayer & Luncheon

Throughout the Fall and Spring semesters, our weekly Jumma (Friday) prayers at Hendricks Chapel, paired with a complimentary post-prayer luncheon, have served as a vital cornerstone for community building. This initiative consistently facilitates meaningful connections among both on-campus and off-campus brothers and sisters, significantly contributing to the growth, visibility, and cohesion of the university's Muslim community.



PROGRAMMING

BUILDING COMMUNITY & IDENTITY



Brother and Sister Halaqas

Serving as a space for student fellowship and spiritual development, the MSL House hosted weekly Brother and Sister Halaqas throughout the year. These student-driven sessions focused on relevant religious and social themes, supplemented by daily communal prayers.



Turkish Tea Time with the Chaplain

Throughout the academic year, Chaplain Hamza Gursoy hosted multiple "Turkish Tea Time" gatherings in his campus office, welcoming both Muslim students and members of the Hendricks Chapel staff. These sessions served as an excellent platform for community integration, fostering intercultural dialogue, and enhancing the visibility and understanding of Muslim identity across diverse faith traditions within the university.



PROGRAMMING

BUILDING COMMUNITY & IDENTITY



Iftar & Suhoor with the Chaplain

Chaplain Hamza Gursoy hosted both suhoor and iftar programs for SU students at his own home. Stating that he loves inviting guests over—a sunnah of the Prophet—the Imam added, 'We also love guests in Turkish culture.'



Meeting at the Coffee Shop

After the winter break, we met up with our students at a newly opened cafe, Haraz Coffee Shop, on Marshall Street and caught up over some quality coffee. Of course, Chaplain Hamza Gursoy also joined us.



PROGRAMMING

BUILDING COMMUNITY & IDENTITY



After our congregational Friday prayer service, and some weekends, MSL kept the blessings of community alive with a variety of engaging events geared towards fostering social connections and further exploring Islamic themes. MSL offered many thought-provoking discussion topics this past year, ranging from finding a healthy balance between faith and college life, to navigating your Muslim identity, to exploring Islamic approaches to mental health.





PROGRAMMING

BUILDING COMMUNITY & IDENTITY



PROGRAMMING

COMPETITIONS & AWARDS



Seerah Competition with Umrah Trip as Prize

This Fall, Muslim Student Life hosted its second annual Seerah Contest, centered around the award-winning biography *The Sealed Nectar* (Arabic: *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum*). Authored by Safiur Rahman Mubarakpuri, the text was awarded first prize by the Muslim World League at the inaugural worldwide biography competition held in Mecca in 1979. Beyond fostering a deeper comprehension of Islamic history and facilitating spiritual enrichment, this seminal work serves to prepare readers for their pilgrimage to the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.

The competition comprised four distinct phases, with the grand prize being a sponsored Umrah trip. Participants prepared and delivered two separate presentations focusing on the Meccan and Medinan eras, followed by an analytical essay on the text. The final evaluation concluded with a comprehensive examination. Ultimately, in a rewarding initiative where every participant gained invaluable knowledge, Naimul Islam achieved first place.



Hadith Memorization Contest

This spring semester, we hosted our inaugural 40 Hadith Memorization Contest, providing students with a profound opportunity to engage with the Sunnah and the rich tradition of Hadith. We are pleased to announce that our student, Issaiah Miller, achieved first place in the competition.



PROGRAMMING

COMPETITIONS & AWARDS



At the end of the spring semester, Muslim Student Life (MSL), in collaboration with the Muslim Students Association (MSA), hosted its Annual Awards Gala. The evening primarily celebrated the achievements of our graduating seniors, while also recognizing the MSA Executive Board members for their dedicated service and leadership throughout the academic year. Furthermore, special certificates of appreciation were presented to distinguished individuals whose invaluable assistance and active participation significantly contributed to the success of both MSL and MSA initiatives.



INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING



Throughout the academic year, Muslim Student Life (MSL) actively participated in and hosted numerous interfaith dialogue initiatives across the Syracuse University campus. Serving as a key voice for the Muslim Chaplaincy and the Islamic faith, Chaplain Imam Hamza Gursoy contributed as a panelist and guest speaker at various university conferences, engaging with co-speakers and audiences to foster mutual religious understanding.

The cornerstone of this year's programming was "Salaam-Shalom," a collaborative initiative featured twice in local media. Led jointly by Rabbi Natan Levy and Imam Hamza Gursoy, this innovative program brought Jewish and Muslim students together for shared Arabic and Hebrew language and culture classes. By utilizing linguistic commonalities as a foundation for discovering shared values, "Salaam-Shalom" marked a significant advancement in campus interfaith dialogue, demonstrating the power of cultural exchange in building meaningful community connections.



RAMADAN 2026

REMEMBERING THE HOLY MONTH



During the holy month of Ramadan, the Muslim Student Life (MSL), in collaboration with Muslim Student Association (MSA) volunteers and students, successfully hosted nearly 20 iftar dinners. These gatherings took place at the MSL House and various locations across the Syracuse University campus, serving over 1,700 meals in total. The events provided students with valuable opportunities to connect and cultivate meaningful relationships with local Muslim-owned restaurants and community sponsors. Additionally, weekday Taraweeh prayers were held throughout the month at Hendricks Chapel for students, campus members, and guests.



RAMADAN 2026

REMEMBERING THE HOLY MONTH



Annual Community Iftar Brings Hundreds Together at Goldstein Auditorium

Muslim Student Life recently hosted its annual Community Iftar, 'Beneath The Crescent,' at Goldstein Auditorium, drawing nearly 400 guests from a wide array of faiths and backgrounds to share in the fast-breaking tradition. This year's event featured a special performance by 'Salaam the Band,' a student Islamic musical group recently founded by Chaplain Hamza Gursoy. The program opened with a formal Quranic recitation by Izmir Ikbal, marking a milestone celebration for his completion of the campus Quran and Tajweed instructional courses.



RAMADAN 2026

REMEMBERING THE HOLY MONTH



Ramadan Talks

Throughout the month of Ramadan, Muslim Student Life hosted a signature lecture series titled 'Ramadan Talks.' These evening sessions provided students with the opportunity to engage with esteemed guest speakers, scholars, and community leaders following the nightly iftar meals.

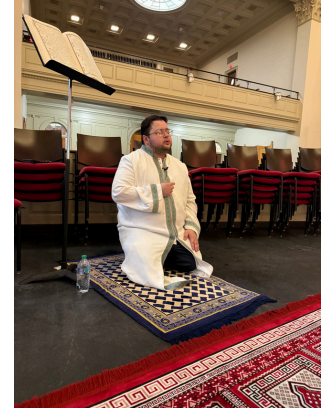
A Special Iftar Dinner at MSL House

MSL House was honored to host a beautiful iftar gathering that brought together distinguished guests, long-time supporters, and our beloved community. We were deeply honored by the presence of Chancellor Kent Syverud and Dr. Chen, as well as Interim Dean of Hendricks Chapel Rebecca Kantrowitz — whose steadfast support has made a sustainable Muslim chaplaincy at Syracuse University not just a dream, but a reality. Our hearts were uplifted by the soul-stirring Nasheed of Dzemal Crnkic, and our tables were graced with the rich flavors of Bosnian and Arabic cuisine. To our long-time supporters who have stood by MSL through the years — this evening was as much yours as ours.



RAMADAN 2026

REMEMBERING THE HOLY MONTH



Night of Itikhaf

On the evening of March 16th, following the Taraweeh prayers, Muslim Student Life hosted an all-night spiritual retreat (Qiyam-ul-Layl) at Hendricks Chapel.

Throughout the night, students and staff engaged in communal worship, Quranic recitation, and voluntary (nafilah) prayers. The program concluded with a suhoor (pre-dawn meal) generously sponsored by the Syracuse Turkish Community, followed by the congregation of the fajr (morning) prayer.



EID AL-FITR

CELEBRATIONS



EID AL-FITR

CELEBRATIONS



MSL WAQF

HOW TO SUPPORT US

Spread the word! Tell your family, friends, and colleagues about our cause and encourage them to learn more about MSL!



Help us, help you, help others!

Your donation, no matter how big or small, will contribute to the growth of the non-profit, aid in the support of students, and help maintain our Chaplaincy.

Secure online donation: You can donate directly to a specific project through our “Givelify” platform!

SCAN QR CODE HERE!



<https://giv.li/avzrcu>

Interested in sending a mail-in donation?

You may also send a check payable to "Muslim Student Life" to 1443 E Genesee St, Syracuse, NY, 13210.

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