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## **NY-NJ Area Mosques & Nonprofits Bring Questions, Get Answers about Governance, Charitable Giving & Legal Rights at Seminar**

*Experts from IRS, Leading Law & Accounting Firms Address Community Concerns*

(NEW YORK, NY)—More than 150 imams, board members and executive officers from mosques and nonprofit organizations gathered to have their most pressing questions about financial and legal obligations answered at a free seminar at New York Law School on Saturday, March 6. The all-day event was hosted by [Muslim Advocates](#)—a national non-profit organization that offers legal and policy expertise to the Muslim American community—in partnership with the Muslim Bar Association of New York, the New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association, Muslim Consultative Network and the Association of Muslim American Lawyers.

Seminar attendees formed a large and diverse cross-section of the Muslim community in the Tri-State New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area. In addition to the many masjid and religious school representatives who filed into the law school's auditorium from the morning chill, there were people like Zamir Hassan, whose organization, Muslims Against Hunger, provides volunteers to shelters, churches and soup kitchens in 13 cities in the United States and Canada. Zamir is now seeking to form a 501(c)(3) nonprofit for New Jersey's first halal soup kitchen and Muslim social services center in Newark that will provide a domestic violence shelter, a free health clinic and an employment support training center and library.

Sessions like “Nonprofit Governance 101: What Every Muslim Nonprofit Leader Needs to Know,” prompted attendees to queue up with their often detailed questions. Other sessions focused on immigration law and employment law essentials for nonprofit managers.

Executives from international charities like the Al-Shifa Foundation, which helps direct *zakat* donations to build hospitals in Pakistan, had their questions answered by Marcus Owens, one of the nation's leading experts on international charitable giving. Owens, an attorney and former Internal Revenue Service official, told listeners how they can continue to fulfill their religious obligation to give charity without running afoul of the multiple federal laws, policies and regulations put into place since 9-11, which often confuse and complicate donors' efforts.

“We hope that the New York Muslim Charities Seminar—the fifth in a national series of educational seminars already held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston—filled the hunger for answers amongst New York's and New Jersey's Muslim community,” said Farhana Khera, President and Executive Director of Muslim Advocates. “Many American Muslim charity leaders are eager for guidance, especially because of intensive public and law

## 2 Muslim Advocates NYC Charities Seminar

enforcement scrutiny of Muslim institutions. With fewer charity dollars to go around in these tough economic times, these organizations welcome the assistance to strengthen their institutions and build confidence with donors and the public. That's where our seminar experts may help."

In addition to the focus on charitable giving and professional skills, the attorneys at Muslim Advocates and legal experts like Khurrim Wahid, gave attendees an overview of what to do when approached by federal law enforcement agents. Muslim Advocates provides a free video, **"Got Rights?"** (translated into English, Arabic, Farsi, Somali and Urdu) that advises viewers what to do when approached by federal law enforcement agents in their home or at international airports. Muslim Advocates also provides a national network of *pro bono* attorneys who can also assist community members.

*Muslim Advocates ([www.muslimadvocates.org](http://www.muslimadvocates.org)), a national legal education and advocacy organization with a network of over 500 attorneys, has launched the Muslim Charity Works program to strengthen Muslim nonprofit institutions and protect the right of Muslim Americans to fulfill their religious obligation of zakat (charity). A major component of the program is a nationwide series of comprehensive, free legal educational seminars that focus on legal compliance, financial accountability, and good governance.*

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