

MARCH 2024



TOOLKIT

# RAMADAN ACCOMMODATIONS

A guide for Muslims students navigating  
Ramadan and student life

AUTHORED BY THE MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF THE US & CANADA



muslim  
students  
association

national



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# ABOUT

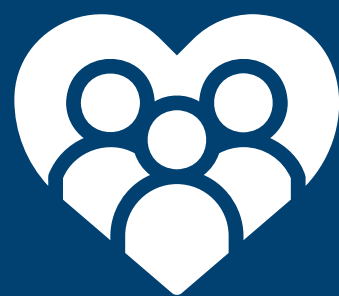
Established in January 1963, the Muslim Students Association of the U.S. & Canada – also known as **MSA National** – serves Muslim students during their high school, college, and university careers by facilitating their efforts to establish, maintain, and develop local MSA chapters. MSA National was first established at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by a conference of Muslim students from around the U.S. and Canada. MSA National has been a uniting forum for Muslim students from diverse backgrounds for over 60 years.

## **Our Mission**

To seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by empowering Muslim students with resources aimed at fostering character and leadership development (*tarbiyyah*), campus activism and *da'wah*, and connecting for a unified vision.

## **Our Vision**

A unifying movement, rooted in *deen*, of all Muslim Student Associations, cultivating safe and transformative spaces for all Muslims on campus and continuing to serve the Ummah beyond graduation.



Muslim students often face **a variety of obstacles** during Ramadan if they are in schools that are not familiar with Muslim religious practices. For some students, Ramadan can be a difficult time if it is spent alone, without a community or family. A **2020 poll by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)** found that younger Muslims, ages 19 to 29, are most likely to experience religious discrimination.

This toolkit provides an outline for Muslim students to take action and seek accommodations for their religious obligations at their respective schools.

# BACKGROUND

Every year during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims fast daily from dawn until dusk. Ramadan marks the revelation of the Holy Quran. It is a time for Muslims to reconnect with God, the Holy Quran, and their faith as a whole. This year, Ramadan is anticipated to begin on **Sunday, March 10, 2024**, at sunset and end on **Tuesday, April 9, 2024**, at sunset. The last night 10 nights of Ramadan are called the **Nights of Qadr**. The day after the end of Ramadan is a religious holiday called **Eid-al-Fitr**. Eid-al-Fitr involves a special prayer and sermon, followed by community and individual celebrations.

# ACCOMMODATIONS

The **Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution** protects your right to exercise your religious beliefs; and **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** protects you from religious discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

The **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** and provincial human rights codes protect you from discrimination based on religion, race, national or ethnic origin, color, or sex, among other listed grounds.

# SNAPSHOT OF A FASTING STUDENT

## HOUSTON, TX - USA

<b>4:00 AM</b>	<b>Suhoor</b> pre-dawn meal
<b>6:15 AM</b>	<b>Fajr</b> morning prayer
<b>9:00 AM</b>	<b>First class begins</b>
<b>1:30 PM</b>	<b>Dhuhr</b> noon prayer
<b>5:00 PM</b>	<b>Asr</b> afternoon prayer
<b>6:00 PM</b>	<b>Last class ends</b>
<b>7:30 PM</b>	<b>Maghrib &amp; Iftar</b> evening prayer & meal to break the fast
<b>8:45 PM</b>	<b>Isha</b> night prayer
<b>10:00 PM</b>	<b>Taraweeh</b> extra night prayer
<b>12:00 AM</b>	<b>End of Day</b>

## TORONTO, ON - CANADA

<b>4:00 AM</b>	<b>Suhoor</b> pre-dawn meal
<b>5:30 AM</b>	<b>Fajr</b> morning prayer
<b>9:00 AM</b>	<b>First class begins</b>
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<b>12:00 AM</b>	<b>End of Day</b>



## ACADEMICS

Students seeking religious accommodations for Ramadan should notify their professors **as soon as possible**, ideally before Ramadan begins.

- Check your school's rules by searching for the "**Religious Observances Policy**" or "**Accommodations Policy**", typically found in the Student Handbook.
- Examples of academic accommodations you can request include:
  - Scheduling your exam or final earlier in the day, when you are more alert
  - Being excused from having to take more than 1 exam in a 24-hour period
  - Leaving class for 15 minutes to pray or break your fast on time
- If your exam will take place during iftar or suhoor time, use this template to request accommodations to take the exam at a reasonable alternative time.
  - [\*\*Ramadan 2024 Accommodations Request Template\*\*](#)
- **For Eid al-Fitr accommodations:** If you have projects, finals, or exams during **Eid al-Fitr**, use this template to request instructors to be flexible with submission dates or to find an alternate date and time in which to take your exam.
  - [\*\*Ramadan 2024 Accommodations Request Template\*\*](#)



## MEALS

Students should also work with Dining Services to ensure that **halal, nutritious meals are provided** for suhoor and iftar.

- Ask if you can pick up a **prepackaged meal** for suhoor.
- Ask if you can eat at the dining hall **after hours** (i.e. for iftar).
- Ask your MSA or local mosque to **provide meals at least once a week**.

# PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ORGANIZING CAMPUS IFTARs

Taken from *MSA Link*, 2008

## **Goals & Theme**

Decide on a goal and a theme for the month. A possible goal can be to ensure that the Ramadan iftars are as welcoming as possible for both the Muslim and greater campus community. A corresponding theme can be *A Tour of the Muslim World: Foods from Around the World*. The theme helps in planning the menu for the month.

## **Food & Restaurants**

Some general advice:

- Have a consistent *zabihah* standard (e.g. verbal confirmation from the owner) when selecting restaurants.
- Know how much time each restaurant needs to prepare food and if they deliver.
- Vary the food: if possible, don't get food from the same place more than once a week.
- Have extra menus to put on the tables to help support the restaurant of the evening.
- If you are having people pick up food, buy plastic painting sheets and use them to line the trunk of the car so that any food spills or leaks can be easily cleaned up!
- Always be sure to have enough dates for everyone to break their fast; however after people start to eat, put the box under the table, otherwise, dates become dessert.
- Make sure you have plenty of water.

## **Volunteers**

Typically, you need 2 shifts per day, with the first shift helping with set up and serving food and the second shift helping with clean up. Some volunteers become flaky as the month progresses. It can be tough to remain positive when people back out 20 minutes before volunteering because they have too much work. But look for the positive each night; be it a kind act by a brother or a sister or just the smile of someone's face when they say salaam to you. Use these as sources of inspiration for the month.

## **Logistics**

This is the foundation for a smoothly run iftar. Here are some key tasks:

- Confirm the room reservation with the appropriate on-campus office.
- Know exactly how expense reimbursement works, who has the authority to spend money on behalf of the MSA, and who needs to approve spending.
- Confirm a storage location for all the paper products, extra soda/water, dates, serving spoons, and utensils.
- If you will be praying Maghrib at the iftar location, have volunteers bring prayer sheets (and headscarves) for the iftar.



# PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ORGANIZING CAMPUS IFTARS

Taken from *MSA Link*, 2008

## **Budgeting & Fundraising**

It is critically important that whoever is organizing the iftars has a clearly agreed upon budget; this number needs to be explicitly stated from the outset. It is most effective to have a single person responsible for making the final call on expenses and accountable for keeping the month on budget.

Fundraising is a key component of the Ramadan iftar process. Think about how to creatively reach out and include a broader community:

- Parents
- Alumni
- Dollar-a-day campaign (everyone who comes to the iftar contributes a dollar)
- Muslim professors & doctors (particularly if the university also has a hospital)
- Mini sponsorship (sponsoring the dates for the night or water for the week)
- Co-sponsorship with other clubs/programs/university departments

## **Cosponsored/Interfaith Events**

One of the largest events in most iftar calendars is Fast-A-Thon, which draws on the greater campus community. Given the resources needed to make it successful, I would recommend having a separate team dedicated to organizing Fast-A-Thon and thinking through:

- Program/content
- Obtaining sponsors
- Advertising
- Budget
- Venue

## **Review**

Creating an anonymous survey halfway through the month is a great way to understand what is working well and what could be adjusted. This review can be very simple for categories such as food, organization, communication, and promptness, and then additional lines for suggestions. Don't take any criticism personally; recognize that this kind of feedback will help to make the month the best that it can be.

Remember, Ramadan is the most blessed time of the year. Organizing iftars for fasting people is a great service to your MSA community that will, God willing, gain great reward in both this life and the next.

# RESOURCES

## Spiritual/Religious

- [Yaqeen Institute](#)
- [Celebrate Mercy](#)
- [Qalam Institute](#)
- [Miftaah Institute](#)
- [Rabata](#)
- [IRUSA: Ramadan Duas](#)
- [MSA National YouTube](#)

## Education & Tools

- [The Family & Youth Institute](#)
- [Pillars Prayer App](#)
- [Zakat Calculator](#)
- [Online Quran](#)
- [Online Hadith](#)

## Planners

- [Rabata Teens](#)
- [IRUSA: Ramadan Action Plan](#)
- [Ramadan Planner by Dina](#)

## Charities

- [Mercy Without Limits](#)
- [Baitulmaal](#)
- [READ Foundation](#)
- [Palestine Children's Relief Fund](#)
- [Bonyan Foundation](#)

## Mental Health

- [Naseeha Mental Health](#)
- [RUH App](#)

## Legal

- [CAIR National](#)
- [Muslim Advocates](#)
- [National Council of Canadian Muslims](#)



For more questions, please contact  
**[info@msanational.org](mailto:info@msanational.org)**

Or view our resources at  
**[www.msanational.org](http://www.msanational.org)**

