



**COALITION FOR  
CIVIL FREEDOMS**

# **2025 Annual Report**

## Mission Statement

**Established in 2010, the mission of the Coalition for Civil Freedoms is to defend civil liberties and freedoms, promote a fair U.S. criminal justice system, and advocate for the rights of political prisoners targeted in the “war on terror.”**



# Member Organizations

## **The Aafia Foundation (TAF)**

[aafia.org](http://aafia.org) / Silver Spring, MD  
[peacethrujustice@aol.com](mailto:peacethrujustice@aol.com)  
301.441.2300

## **Committee to Stop FBI Repression (CSFR)**

[stopfbi.org](http://stopfbi.org) / Minneapolis, MN  
[stopfbi@gmail.com](mailto:stopfbi@gmail.com)

## **Council on American-Islamic Relations FL (CAIR-FL)**

[cairflorida.org](http://cairflorida.org) / Florida, USA  
[info@cair.fl.com](mailto:info@cair.fl.com)  
813.514.1414

## **Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility (CUNY-CLEAR)**

[cunyclear.org](http://cunyclear.org) / Long Island City, NY  
[cunyclear@law.cuny.edu](mailto:cunyclear@law.cuny.edu)  
718.340.4558

## **Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM)**

[drumnyc.org](http://drumnyc.org) / Jackson Heights, NY  
718.205.3036

## **Friends of Human Rights (FHR)**

[@friendsofhumanrights](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhumanrights) / Tampa, FL  
[friendshumanrights@yahoo.com](mailto:friendshumanrights@yahoo.com)

## **International Action Center (IAC)**

[iacenter.org](http://iacenter.org) / New York, NY  
[iacenter@iacenter.org](mailto:iacenter@iacenter.org)  
212.633.6646

## **Islamic Circle of North America Council for Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ)**

[icnacsj.org](http://icnacsj.org) / Vienna, VA  
[info@icnacsj.org](mailto:info@icnacsj.org)

## **The Jericho Movement**

[thejerichomovement.com](http://thejerichomovement.com) / Chesterfield, VA  
[jihadabdulmumit@gmail.com](mailto:jihadabdulmumit@gmail.com)

## **Massachusetts Peace Action (MAPA)**

[masspeaceaction.org](http://masspeaceaction.org) / Cambridge, MA  
[info@masspeaceaction.org](mailto:info@masspeaceaction.org)

## **Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA)**

[mlfa.org](http://mlfa.org) / Dallas, TX  
972.331.9021

## **National Lawyers Guild (NLG)**

[nlg.org](http://nlg.org) / New York, NY  
212.679.5100

## **Project Support and Legal Advocacy for Muslims (Project SALAM)**

[projectsalam.org](http://projectsalam.org)

## **United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)**

[unacpeace.org](http://unacpeace.org) / Delmar, NY  
[unacpeace@gmail.com](mailto:unacpeace@gmail.com)  
518.281.1968

## How to reach us:

### **Coalition for Civil Freedoms**

P.O. Box 55713, Washington, D.C. 20040  
[civilfreedoms.org](http://civilfreedoms.org)  
[info@civilfreedoms.org](mailto:info@civilfreedoms.org)

# A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Dear friends of CCF,**

Once again, we experienced a difficult year in 2025. The genocide in Gaza is continuing, and there is no end in sight. ICE agents are terrorizing many of our neighborhoods, particularly the minority neighborhoods, arresting and deporting people. However, CCF continued to fulfill its mission of supporting and advocating for the prisoners who have been unjustly imprisoned in the War on Terror.

Happily, the numbers are down slightly because prisoners are finishing their sentences and being released. In addition, several compassionate release motions are pending and preparation is underway to file additional motions in 2026, and so we hope for the release of more prisoners.

We are continuing the Prisoner Sponsorship program with ten sponsored prisoners. These are prisoners with no other outside financial help, except for the \$100 a month we send them. We also provide help for a prisoner who has been in prolonged ICE detention.

We held a number of events this year in New York, Iowa, Florida, Minnesota and in Washington DC. These events focused on giving voice to our prisoners and their families.

We were also happy to announce the launch of our new website, which involved months of collaboration to ensure the site better serves our community, from families of political prisoners to longtime supporters of civil liberties.

The year ahead is filled with uncertainties, but CCF will not be deterred. We must, and will, continue our work for justice!

Sincerely,



Mel Underbakke, Ph. D.

Executive Director





**CCF has been one of the most generous, uplifting, and hardest working organizations I've come across, albeit under such unpleasant circumstances.**



**~ Shukri Abu-Baker**

# Prisoner and Family Support



<b>Prisoners Receiving Ramadan Gifts</b>	<b>\$100 to 196 prisoners</b>
<b>Prisoners sponsored monthly</b>	<b>\$100 / month to 10 prisoners</b>
<b>Post Release Grants</b>	<b>\$500 to two prisoners</b>
<b>Poetry Awards</b>	<b>\$25 to four prisoners</b>
<b>Pass Through Grants</b>	<b>\$100 to eight prisoners</b>
<b>Correspondence with Political Prisoners</b>	<b>100 prisoners via Prison Email System 196 via Snail Mail</b>
<b>Trial and Hearing Alerts</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Advocacy Alerts</b>	<b>2</b>

## Report by CCF Prisoner Support Coordinator

**My name is Jesse McGraw**, and I serve as the Correspondence Coordinator for the political prisoners represented by the Coalition for Civil Freedoms (CCF).

I am currently in active correspondence with 98 incarcerated men and women through the Corrlinks system. Of those individuals, just over 51% are enrolled in CCF's penpal program.

Since July, 12 participants have taken part in our themed monthly poetry contest.

My role is to maintain a consistent and reliable presence in the lives of those we serve. The correspondence and programs I help facilitate are designed to provide political prisoners with a platform for expression and an opportunity to be heard beyond the confines of incarceration.



These initiatives aim to counteract the isolation imposed by the prison system and to support individuals as they process the psychological and emotional impact of imprisonment.

As someone who has personally experienced more than a decade of incarceration, I understand how rare it is for incarcerated individuals to feel genuinely seen or supported. Continuity, reliability, and trust are essential. CCF is committed to sustaining those relationships and does not abandon the people it supports.

## Annual Ramadan Gift and Card for Prisoners

Every year, CCF provides prisoners with a \$100 Ramadan Gift sent directly to their commissary account. In addition, we send prisoners a uniquely designed Ramadan card letting them know they are remembered and supported.



The Ramadan cards are ready to mail to the prisoners

“ Thank you so much for the generosity this Ramadan and every past one in the last ten years that your coalition donated. You are in our most sweetest prayers. ”  
~ A.S.

“ I remember the first card I got from CCF was the first day of Ramadan while I was in the SHU and it meant a lot to me, and still does. ”

~ S.B.



Mickey Ninos and Julie Fischer preparing the money orders for Ramadan

# Implicit Bias & Islamophobia

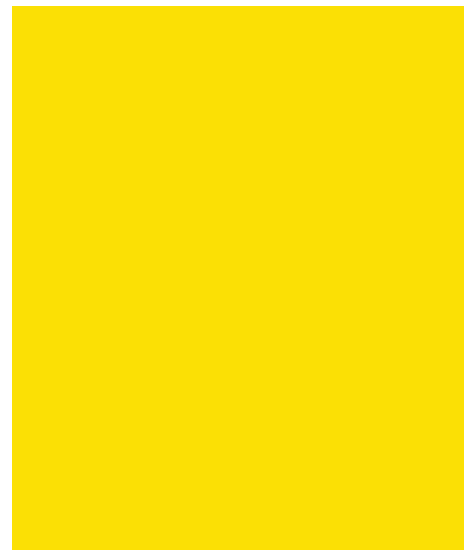
by Shahawar Matin Siraj A.K.A Ali



Oh Allah can I say  
Justice is hard to find  
when they turn a blind eye to the truth  
They heard me tell him not to do it  
Their own wiretaps were the proof  
The implicit bias  
I was predetermined to lose  
three years after 9/11  
They needed guilty verdicts for the news  
Sentenced to thirty years  
took my whole adult life  
because I was in the wrong place, at the wrong time, on the wrong night  
but justice is served  
I got what I deserved right?  
The orchestrator got a hundred grand  
plus sound sleep at night  
twenty two years later  
Allah help me change my way  
accept responsibility and pray  
at least five times a day  
I look forward to my release  
but I don't know how to truly feel  
when Islamophobia in America is all too real.



Money orders ready for mailing



## Financial Assistance for Prisoners

Incarceration creates a significant financial burden on prisoners and their families. With most services and operations being outsourced to predatory for-profit companies, prisoners are charged outrageous prices to make phone calls, send emails, and purchase basic essentials like hygiene products and supplemental food. For many prisoners, the \$100 Ramadan gift is the only financial support they receive all year. Prisoners are required to work prison jobs and earn only 12¢ to 40¢ per hour.

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In addition, many prisoners have no outside help and so CCF started a Prisoner Sponsorship Program which currently provides \$100 a month to ten prisoners. We also provide a \$500 post release grant to prisoners needing financial assistance with the difficult reentry process. In addition, one prisoner who has been in indefinite ICE detention receives \$300 per quarter.

“ I'm personally a beneficiary of your financial support program, and it has helped me more than you can imagine. That support is pretty much all I have. ”

~ Z.C.

## Family Support

CCF joined Siena College staff in a meaningful event at the Alice Moore Black Arts & Cultural Center in Albany, NY: ***“The American Incarceration Experience: Through Art and Poetry.”*** Powerful art and poetry from CCF political prisoners was displayed. Family Support Coordinator Shelley MacInnes shared heartfelt reflections on the importance of prisoner art and CCF's commitment to promoting it. We connected with parents of incarcerated children who submitted artwork, discussing how their kids are using art as a way to reclaim their identities.

This event highlighted the resilience and creativity of those behind bars. CCF staff attorneys Kathy Manley and Steve Downs also spoke at the event.



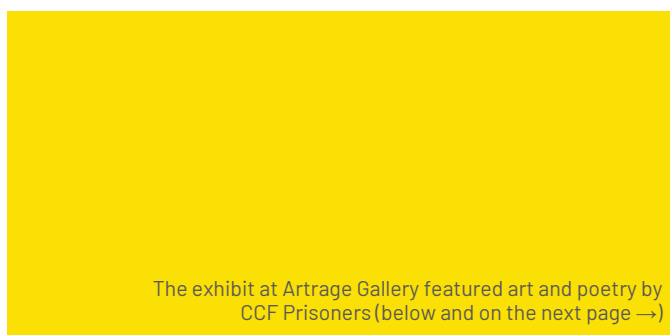
“The American Incarceration Experience: Through Art and Poetry.”

Our second event was a **Political Prisoner Solidarity Letterwriting Workshop** in Washington, DC at the Martin Luther King Library. Shelley MacInnes and Attorney Amith Gupta spoke at the event and a sample of prisoner art and poetry were displayed. In addition to speakers and information sharing, a number of letters were written to CCF political prisoners. Overall, this was a successful collaboration with DCAARPR and JVP-DC Metro.

Another event took place in Syracuse, NY at the Artrage Gallery where we joined Professor Nausheen Husain from Syracuse University and supporters Lenden Center for Social Justice Team, NY Humanities Center, Muslim Counterpublics Lab and Syracuse Peace Counsel for an inspiring event **"The Stories We Told Ourselves: The American War on Terror."** CCF art and poetry was displayed along with works by other artists from the community. This event ran for two weeks and was open to the public.



Shelley MacInnes speaking



The exhibit at Artrage Gallery featured art and poetry by CCF Prisoners (below and on the next page →)





The organizers with CCF staff, from left to right: Mary Hanrahan, Olivia Boyer, and Mohammad Ebad Athar, Nausheen Husain, Stuart MacInnes, Shelley MacInnes, and Stacey Hines.

Photo credit: Megan Chelednik

# The 13th Annual Conference for Families of Political Prisoners

**This year**, the Family Conference was held in Minneapolis. As always, this weekend was filled with emotions, strength, strategy and hope. We opened our weekend with a welcome by our ED Mel Underbakke, followed by open mic. Saturday, Nida Baker (daughter of Shukri Abubaker) and Sarwat Malik-Hassan kept the CCF tradition alive by leading the “narrating our realities” session with our families. Steve Downs, Kathy Manley, with our guest speaker, Coleen Rowley, former FBI agent turned whistleblower, lead a brilliant, helpful and informative Know Your Rights session, particularly critical in light of the ongoing repression of speech and clamp down on dissent.

On Sunday, Lynne Jackson and Steve Downs led a session on advocating at home. The weekend concluded with the youth presenting the video they created under the guidance of Ayesha Hoda and Hany Massoud.



Kathy Manley (left) and Steve Downs (right) with Coleen Rowley (center), who was a guest speaker at the Family Conference



Ayesha Hoda (left) and Hany Massoud (right) with the Youth



Family member participants at the Conference



### Family Night

In October, family night resumed. It was wonderful to gather with the families who attended!

The CCF poetry contest has been going great with beautiful entries from our imprisoned artists! Many thanks to Jesse and Ashleigh who have been running this empowering program!

### GOALS FOR 2026

- ❖ Road trip/travel tour with families
- ❖ Billboard design and display in selected state
- ❖ Continue with the art program with hopes to get more of our loved ones involved
- ❖ Organize fundraising events with performing arts centers

Submitted by: Shelley MacInnes/CCF Family Support Coordinator



# Education and Outreach

## 2025 By the Numbers

Videos posted to Youtube for the public	7
Public Events	5
News Digests	52
Speaking Engagements	5
Media Interviews	15
Tabling at conferences	4

## Events

# 11th Annual New Years Day Potluck Gathering

**Throughout the year,** a focus has been placed on our prisoner's art and poetry with the ongoing *Truth, Justice and Freedom Through the Arts Program*, giving them a voice outside the prison walls. In addition, outreach was achieved in a number of different ways. Our year always begins with our Annual New Years Day Gathering.

Since 2016, a diverse group of people in the Tampa Bay area have come together to show support for each other. The group has always included Muslims, Christians, Jews and Buddhists, as well as political leaders and activists.

They share food and fellowship during a peaceful afternoon, either at a park or sometimes at a mosque.

This year, a group of over 75 people gathered on January 4th at a local park on the river to start the new year right – with unity in diversity.

In addition to the Coalition for Civil Freedoms, the event was sponsored by the Islamic Community of Tampa, Muslims for Democracy and Fairness, Friends of Human Rights, WMNF,

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Tampa Friends Quakers, Unitarian Universalist Church of Tampa, First United Church of Tampa, CAIR FL, Indivisible Temple Terrace, and ADC Tampa.

In 2025, the public was invited to a Saturday evening panel at the Family Conference in Minneapolis. Steve Downs (CCF Chair Emeritus), Kathy Manley (CCF Legal Director), Nida Abubaker (Daughter of HLF CEO & Prisoner Advocate) and Jaylani Hussein (Ex. Dir. of CAIR-MN) explored the theme of interconnected liberation, highlighting the struggles of political prisoners. CCF's work to secure compassionate release for Muslim Political Prisoners was also covered.



Attendees at the 2025 Gathering



← The Panel from left to right - Family members Ikraan Abdurahman and Nida Abu Baker, Legal Director Kathy Manley, CAIR MN Ex.Dir. Jaylani Hussein and Former CCF Ex. Dir. Steve Downs

Kathy spoke at three other events, including **"It Could Happen to You"** where she received an award for her ongoing work for justice and she spoke at a conference hosted by CT Civil Liberties Defense Committee.

Kathy was also on the panel following a screening of **"Tarik Shah: Don't Play Like Them"**. This was a documentary about local jazz luminary Tarik Shah who was accused of terrorism and incarcerated for nearly 15 years. The panel discussion also featured Tarik Shah as well as the film's director, Barry Rubinow. The event was organized and moderated by Jeanne Finley.



# Legislative Advocacy

**One year into this new administration in Washington**, the Coalition for Civil Freedoms plans to revive our lobbying efforts to advocate for the various issues of our prisoners and their families.

One of our priorities will be to push for CCF's proposed law, "**The Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act**", (**EGO**), that will prevent new cases of preemptive prosecution from occurring, and will provide a basis for bringing old cases back into court for reevaluation and reversal.

A summary of our proposed Bill:

## **The Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act (EGO Relief Act)**

Liberty today is threatened by political encroachment and governmental overreach, in the name of National Security. At present there is no codified defense against entrapment, no check on the arbitrary expansion of security laws to include Constitutionally protected activities, and no prohibition against showing secret evidence to judges (but not the defense) in criminal trials. The government uses these legal loopholes to incarcerate political enemies rather than people who intended to commit crimes.

The EGO Relief Act limits these abuses by:

- A.** Codifying (for the first time) an Entrapment defense to limit prosecutions of targets induced by the FBI to commit crimes created by the government,
- B.** Limiting material support to terrorism prosecutions to cases where there is proof that the target intends to support violence,
- C.** Providing that any classified evidence shown to the judge by the prosecution must also be disclosed to security-cleared defense counsel.

Our bipartisan effort seeks to engage all elected representatives willing to hear our struggle.

# Legal Report

## 2025 By the Numbers

<b>Court cases</b>	<b>6</b> filed – <b>5</b> pending <b>1</b> finished (and <b>one</b> still pending from last year) <b>3</b> to be filed soon
<b>Reviewed legal papers and advised prisoners or sent them legal material</b>	about <b>7-10</b>
<b>Legal calls</b>	at least <b>4</b> (less than usual due to the ban on calls to people in the CMU)
<b>Email correspondence with prisoners</b>	at least <b>50</b> prisoners, many with frequent emails
<b>Snail mail</b>	Kathy sent at least <b>70</b> letters to prisoners, and recieved even more
<b>Media/film</b>	Kathy did at least <b>2</b> interviews, and wrote <b>one</b> article
<b>Events</b>	Kathy spoke at <b>4</b> events

### Compassionate Release Motions

**This year** CCF filed four new compassionate release motions (for four co-defendants), which are currently pending in court, and we are almost ready to file three more (for three co-defendants in another case.) We also started preparations to file two more in the next few months, and another two-four later in 2026. Our waiting list for compassionate release motions currently has ten people on it, which is expected to take until the end of 2028. ***If we can get more attorneys to file these motions, we could do more of them sooner.***

### Other Legal Cases

Kathy filed a challenge to the denial of legal calls to people in the CMU. It is pending in the federal court for the District of Columbia with Judge Beryl Howard, who seems very good.

Kathy also filed a federal habeas petition for a Palestinian prisoner who was in ICE detention for many months. It took awhile but she was eventually sent to the West Bank, where she is hoping to reunite with her children, who live in the US.

## Other Activity

We have a Case Alert system, which allows us to learn of upcoming trials, pleas, sentencing, and other court appearances. We inform people about them in our News Digest to try to get supporters to attend.

Kathy also continued to update our extensive database of cases, and our Ramadan List of prisoners we support. This includes evaluating new cases to see if they meet our support criteria.

Kathy wrote letters and emails and made phone calls to advocate for prisoners with regard to several issues. She also requested and obtained medical records for prisoners, in order to advocate for proper treatment. She corresponded with and advised many prisoners, and researched their cases.

Kathy also won an award, in part for her work with CCF, from *It Could Happen To You*, an organization which tries to prevent wrongful convictions.



Kathy Manley Receiving an Award from a group called It Could Happen to You

# Development



## 2025 By the Numbers

<b>General Donations</b>	<b>\$26,907.90</b>
<b>Ramadan Donations</b>	<b>\$28,731.67</b>
<b>Family Conference Donations</b>	<b>\$2,870.00</b>
<b>Legal Department Donations</b>	<b>\$22,495.04</b>
<b>Grants from other nonprofits</b>	<b>\$25,000.00</b>

**We are very grateful to United Voices**, who has covered part of the cost of the Family Conference. This is greatly appreciated.

# What's Ahead for the Coalition for Civil Freedoms



**Our Legal team** has successfully obtained freedom for six prisoners by filing compassionate release motions. In 2025, Legal Director Kathy Manley will be continuing this important work. Five motions are pending, and preparations are underway for three other cases. Hopefully we will be able to do these motions more often in the future, but it depends on our resources, and on how many volunteer attorneys are willing to take them on.

Another important focus for 2026 is to expand our reach by holding events and speaking at a variety of locations. Our first engagement in 2026 will be at the Community Church of Boston. Shelley, our Family Support Coordinator, will continue to take CCF on the road as well with the **TRUTH, JUSTICE and FREEDOM through the ARTS program**. The goal is also to increase family involvement with CCF.

In addition, we will be returning to Washington, DC, to lobby our representatives to work for our causes. We will include family members in these efforts, as they are excellent advocates for our cause. We will look for sponsors of our bill, the Entrapment and Governmental Overreach Relief Act (EGO Relief Act). This is an important bill that provides a defense against entrapment. We will continue to meet with congressional representatives in search of sponsors for the EGO Relief Act and to further our cause of justice for everyone.

**Onward together to justice!** 



The CCF Team. From the left: Kathy Manley, Steve Downs, Shelley MacInnes, Mel Underbakke, Sarwat Malik-Hassan. Rear: Fred Bryant and Jesse McGraw

# Meet the Coalition

## The CCF Team



**Mel Underbakke, PhD**  
Executive Director  
[melva@civilfreedoms.org](mailto:melva@civilfreedoms.org)



**Kathy Manley, Esq.**  
Legal Director  
[kathy@civilfreedoms.org](mailto:kathy@civilfreedoms.org)



**Sarwat Malik**  
Political Advocacy and  
Outreach Director  
[sarwat@civilfreedoms.org](mailto:sarwat@civilfreedoms.org)



**Hatem Fariz**  
Development Director  
[hatem@civilfreedoms.org](mailto:hatem@civilfreedoms.org)



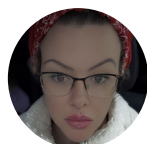
**Amith Gupta**  
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**Shelley MacInnes**  
Family Support  
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**Jesse McGraw**  
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**Ashleigh Crause**  
Social Media Associate  
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## Board of Directors

**Hatem Fariz**  
Chairman of the  
Board & Former  
Political Prisoner

**Fahd Ahmed**  
Desis Rising Up and Moving

**Ghassan Ballut**  
Al-Nahda and Former  
Political Prisoner

**Zahra Billoo**  
CAIR-SF

**Jonathan A.C. Brown, PhD**  
Georgetown University

**Zahid Bukhari, PhD**  
ICNA for Social Justice

**Sara Flounders**  
International Action Center

**Lynne Jackson**  
Project SALAM

**Mauri' Saalakhani**  
The Aafia Foundation

**Sonali Sadequee**  
Holistic Health Coach and  
Impacted Family Member

## Advisory Council

**Ahmed Bedier**  
United Voices

**Tom Burke**  
Committee to Stop FBI  
Repression

**Fred Bryant**  
Friends of Human Rights

**Ramzi Kassem**  
CLEAR-CUNY  
School of Law

**Marilyn Levin**  
UNAC

**Daniel McGowan**  
Former Political Prisoner

**Huma Yasin**  
Attorney and Activist

# 2025 Financials

## Current Assets

As of December 31, 2025

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PayPal Balance	\$7,578.29
BMO Bank Checking	\$14,424.56
BMO Bank Saving	\$3,560.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,562.96</b>

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## Income

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Contributed Income	
General Donations	\$26,907.90
Ramadan Donations	\$28,731.67
Family Conference Donations	\$2,870.00
Legal Department Donations	\$22,495.04
Grants from other nonprofits	\$25,000.00
Total Contributed Income	\$106,004.61
Other Income	
Interest (BMO)	\$60.23
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$106,064.84</b>

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## Expenses

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Communications	\$6,783.72
<b>Total for Communications</b>	<b>\$6,783.72</b>

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### Contract & Professional Fees

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Executive Director	\$17,000.00
Advocacy & Outreach Director	\$12,000.00
Prisoner Support Coordinator	\$3,270.00
Family Support Coordinator	\$680.00
Social Media Associates	\$5,171.87
Corporation Fees	\$25.00
Legal Director	\$7,505.00
Miscellaneous Legal Services	\$15,967.17
Accounting Fees	\$3,005.22
Miscellaneous	\$180.00
<b>Total Contract &amp; Professional Fees</b>	<b>\$64,804.26</b>

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### Office Expenses

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Bank Fees & Service Charges	\$1,516.10
Office Supplies	\$16.90
Printing	\$749.98
Shipping & Postage	\$722.58
<b>Total Office Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,005.56</b>

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## Travel

Airfare	\$7,108.07
Hotels	\$215.72
Miscellaneous travel expenses	\$1,469.65
<b>Total Travel Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,793.44</b>

## Uncategorized Expense

Family Conference - Food	\$49.23
Family Conference - Hotel	\$11,459.15
Family Travel	\$240.00
Prisoner Sponsorship Program	\$14,490.60
Ramadan Gifts to Prisoners	\$18,978.22
<b>Total Uncategorized Expense</b>	<b>\$45,217.20</b>

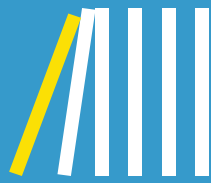
**Total Expenses** **\$128,604.18**

**Net Income** **\$-22,539.34**









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