

Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat
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Born and raised in Damascus, Syria. He attended Damascus University and graduated with a degree in Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in 1987 and a degree in Islamic Law in 1988. From 1975 to 1989, under the guidance and mentorship of the late Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, he studied Quranic interpretation, wisdom of the “Shari’ah” and the Islamic spiritual teachings. From 1989 to 1997, he accompanied the Grand Mufti during most of his international programs and conferences.

He served as Imam in Damascus from 1981 to 1989 and was then invited to the United States to lecture in various Islamic Centers. He was Imam of the Islamic Society of Baltimore, Maryland Inc. from 1989 to 1993, founded An-Nur Institute for Islamic Studies and Arabic Language in Baltimore in 1993, co-founded An-Nur Mosque in Carney, Maryland and was the Imam from 1995 to 1997. Currently he is President of the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland, based in Baltimore.

He taught courses on Islamic Studies at the Ecumenical Institute of Theology at St. Mary’s Seminary & University, the University of Maryland in Baltimore County (*UMBC*), Johns Hopkins University, Goucher College, the Renaissance Institute, as well as Comparative Religions at Potomac College in Washington, DC. Currently he is teaching at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

He served as Campus Imam at Johns Hopkins University from 1993 to October 2003, Adjunct Chaplain at Johns Hopkins Hospital from 2000 to October 2003, and Muslim Chaplain for Baltimore City Police Department from 1998 to 2006.

Since moving to Baltimore in 1989, he has been heavily involved with interfaith work, both nationally and internationally, promoting better understanding between Muslims and other faith traditions. In 2010, he received *the Inter- Religious Dialogue & Reconciliation Award* from Clergy Beyond Borders in Washington, D.C. Among the recent seminars and conferences he participated in are:

- “**Schools of the Future: Sailing the Winds of Change**”, National Association of Independent Schools in Chicago, USA
- “**Islam & Civil Society**”, The Witherspoon Institute, Princeton University in New Jersey, USA
- “**Human Rights in Judaism, Christianity and Islam**“, Clergy Beyond Borders in Washington, DC, USA
- “**Imam & the Pastor**”, “**Mary in the Qur’an**”, Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia
- “**Qur’an Conference: Understanding Scientific Developments in the Light of Holy Qur’an**” in New Delhi, India
- “**Muslims and Education: Challenges and Opportunities**” in New Delhi, India
- “**Muslims in Multicultural Societies**” Islamic Religious Council of Singapore

He is the Founder and President of **Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation (CECF)**, which functions as an umbrella to bring people together in a format, where exchanges can take place more effectively to create a better world that enjoins peace and cooperation.

Currently CECF provides religious & cultural training, consultation, and orientation services for the international exchange students and staff of the U.S. Department of State’s sponsored **Youth Exchange Study Program (YES)** in the USA. Imam Arafat is the convener of three annual youth leadership and interfaith conferences, **Better Understanding for a Better World (BUBW)** in Orlando, San Diego, and Baltimore.

As of January 2005, Imam Arafat began conducting programs on “Islam in America” through the International Speakers Program of the United States Department of States in Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Mauritania, Tanzania, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Austria, Czech Republic, Iceland, Spain, Switzerland and the Maldives. The topics addressed during these programs are “**Muslim Life in America**”, “**Pluralism & Interfaith**”, and **Cultural & Religious Diversity.**”

His newly developed two-three week program with U.S. Embassies abroad is titled “**International Observer Program (IOP)**. The program welcomes Muslim clergy, scholars and activists from Arabic and non-Arabic speaking countries to the U.S. to be introduced to “Muslim Life in America.” Meetings, visits and activities are intended to shed more light on the academic, social, political, financial and democratic life style. The program allows the visitors to attend as “observers” one of the three annual **BUBW** leadership and interfaith conferences for exchange students, who come from 35 countries.