

ISNA Conference 2018

From August 31 to September 3, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) is [hosting](#) its 55th Annual Convention in Houston, Texas.



One speaker noticeably missing from the convention is Wajahat Ali. A playwright, attorney and journalist, Ali's invitation to ISNA was revoked after he took part in the Shalom Hartman Institute's [Muslim Leadership Initiative](#), a program that "invites North American Muslims to explore how Jews understand Judaism, Israel and Jewish peoplehood." Ali traveled to Israel and the West Bank to speak with Jewish residents. He subsequently [published](#) an article in the *Atlantic* which was very critical of his Israeli hosts.

According to Ali, this article led to his expulsion from the convention. ISNA Vice President Altaf Husain [wrote](#) to Ali, stating that "there is perhaps nothing more exemplary and unifying than our community's support for the Palestinian people of all faith traditions, in their struggle against occupation and dispossession." An ISNA supporter [told](#) Ali that the "disdain towards him" resulted from his choice "to engage with a Zionist group about Israel/Palestine."

ISNA's objection to Ali's involvement with the Shalom Hartman program also may have been to win the affections of the Turkish regime, which American Islamist groups, including ISNA, have been [courting](#) for some time. It appears that one of the persons [involved](#) with the Shalom Hartman program is Abdullah Antepli, a [follower](#) of Fethullah Gulen, whom Turkish President Erdogan publicly [blames](#) for an alleged coup attempt in 2016.

While Ali appears beyond the pale for ISNA and its supporters, some of America's most extreme Islamist clerics and activists have been judged to be fine additions to the speaking roster. Titled "In God We Trust," this year's convention once again [features](#) speakers with long histories of inciting hatred against Jews, women, homosexuals and other minorities. Only this year, there are even more of them.

Extremist Speakers

Abdul Nasir Jangda

Jangda is a Texas-based cleric who studied at a Pakistani Deobandi seminary. [Deobandis](#) are a particularly hardline sect of South Asian Islam, and Jangda's seminary—Jamia Binoria in Karachi, Pakistan—fits right in. In 2009, the BBC journalist John Humphreys [reported](#) that Jamia Binoria was "brainwashing" children into supporting terrorism. In 2015, Pakistani law enforcement [raided](#) the seminary after including it on a list of *madrassahs* (Islamic seminaries) linked to terrorist organizations.

Jangda is closely involved with Quranic educational programs in the United States. According to a dossier [published](#) by Jangda's students, Jangda defended the use of female sex slaves, advocates

the killing of adulterers, and stated: "The thing to understand is that the husband has his set of divinely given rights one of which is the right to have his physical desires satisfied."

In a 2014 lecture, Jangda [described](#) the Jews of Mecca as "really bad people" who were "very hateful, very spiteful," and "the enemy." And those who do not accept Islam, Jangda [warns](#) in a sermon titled "A Tour of Paradise and Hellfire," will be "chained up with so many chains they will be walking around the fire pits of hell dragging these chains. And then they will be put inside the fire and burned to a crisp."

Omar Suleiman

Omar Suleiman was condemned by moderate Muslim activists in 2013 after he [described](#) homosexuality as a "disease" and a "repugnant shameless sin." He refers to the Islamic death penalty for the "people that practiced sodomy."

In a 2012 talk titled "Fighting Zina," Suleiman [claims](#) that women who are too close with their brothers are likely to commit incest. Women, he declares, should never be alone with a man outside of her family. Further, he [warns](#), without condemnation, that women who commit adultery risk being killed by a family member.

In the same talk, Suleiman recounts attending conferences organized by the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA) – an organization with close links to terrorism. [According](#) to the FBI, MAYA's leaders "played pivotal roles in building Hamas's [the Gaza terrorist group] infrastructure in the United States." MAYA conferences notoriously featured extremist speakers. In 1995, MAYA invited the Hamas military leader, Sheikh Muhammad Siyam, to address one of its conferences. Siyam [told](#) the crowd: "Finish off the Israelis. Kill them all. Exterminate them. No peace ever." Suleiman [refers](#) to these extremist speakers in his "Fighting Zina" talk – furtively admitting: "I'm not even going to say their names because they are banned now."

Suleiman also works as an [instructor](#) at the Al Maghrib Institute, a prominent Salafi institution. His colleagues include Abdullah Hakim Quick, who [calls](#) upon God to "clean and purify Al-Aqsa from the filth of the Yahood [Jews]"; and Abu Eesa Niamatullah, who [says](#) of Jews: "They find it so easy and natural to do what they do....Look at them today, look at the way they massacre. They blow up babies like as if it's a computer game. They have no humanity, no morality, no ethics."

Shamsi Ali

Imam Shamsi Ali is chairman of the Al-Hikmah Mosque in Astoria and the director of Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens, and has been [praised](#) for his interfaith work.

His social media posts in Indonesian, however, are very different to his public persona. They include overtly pro-terror and anti-Semitic views. "Since 1947," Ali [writes](#), "the Zionist Jews has been subjugating Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque." Elsewhere, he [adds](#): "Protecting the Jewish state is not the West's real interest; to the contrary, the West aims to cover up as well as strengthen its influences in the region. Of course, the only goal is maintaining the interests of world capitalism, particularly in regards to the discovery of oil fields in the Gulf States region."

In one particularly angry sermon, Ali [declares](#): "Jews are working to destroy Islam and the Ummah [the worldwide Muslim community]." Of course, opposition to the Jews means support for Islamist groups dedicated to their eradication. Ali [expresses](#) "respect for the fighting spirit of Hamas."

Not all of his venom is reserved for Jews and Israelis. Ali [describes](#) homosexuality as "an unbearable epidemic," and [laments](#) the West's acceptance of homosexuality, claiming that Muslims who oppose it are "considered to be against human rights and freedom as well."

Yasir Qadhi

Qadhi is one of the most prominent Islamic clerics in the U.S. In 2001, he [told](#) an audience of Muslims:

Hitler never intended to mass-destroy the Jews. There are a number of books out on this written by Christians, you should read them. The Hoax of the Holocaust, I advise you to read this book and write this down, the Hoax of the Holocaust, a very good book. All of this is false propaganda and I know it sounds so far-fetched, but read it. The evidences [sic] are very strong. And they're talking about newspaper articles, clippings, everything and look up yourself what Hitler really wanted to do. We're not defending Hitler, by the way, but the Jews, the way that they portray him, also is not correct.

In an undated audio recording, Qadhi [advocates killing](#) homosexuals:

...this is a part of our religion to stone the adulterer and to chop the head off of the sorcerer and so many other things, and to kill, by the way, the homosexual – this is also our religion. ... This is all a part of our religion. This doesn't mean we go and do this in America but I'm saying if we had an Islamic state we would do this.

In 2008, Qadhi claimed to have renounced his anti-Semitism. At the same time, however, Qadhi [expressed support](#) for the notorious British Holocaust denier, David Irving.

In addition, Qadhi reserves some of his hatred for Shia Muslims. He has [denounced](#) Shia Islam as "the most lying sect of Islam.... Shias are allowed to lie and it is their religion to lie." When [challenged](#) on this view in the comments of the above-referenced 2008 post, he responded that, "I cannot 'retract' from certain theological doctrines that I said in that clip. These doctrines were not taken from racist websites (as in the case of the Jewish comments), but from reliable sourcebooks (both Sunni and Shiite)."

Ghassan Hitto

A naturalized US citizen originally from Damascus, Ghassan Hitto was [elected](#) interim prime minister by Syria's main opposition in 2013. His [candidacy](#) was "100% supported and trusted by the [Muslim] Brotherhood."

Hitto has previously been [involved](#) with the Islamist-run Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), as well as a number of Hamas-linked organizations active in the United States. He was a

“[founding member](#)” of the Muslim Legal Fund of America, which has a [long history](#) of providing legal support to Al Qaeda and Hamas terrorists.

Hitto was also a senior official of the Islamic Services Foundation, where his colleagues included Nabil Sadoun, who was [deported](#) from the U.S. in 2010 after the government found that he had ties to terrorist groups in the Middle East.

Ilhan Omar

Ilhan Omar is a Somali-American Congressional candidate in Minnesota. In 2012, she [tweeted](#) “Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the word and help them see the evil doings of Israel.” When this was criticized, she answered that “[drawing](#) attention to the apartheid Israeli regime is far from hating Jews.”

Zahra Billoo

Billoo has [served](#) as the executive director of CAIR’s San Francisco Bay Area chapter since 2009. She regularly refers to Israel as an “[apartheid](#)” state. Billoo uses her personal Twitter account (most recently in 2015) to promote support of terror financier [Sami Al-Arian](#) and indeed [Hamas](#) itself.

In February 2011, Billoo’s CAIR chapter [posted](#) an image on their website saying "Build a Wall of Resistance / Don’t Talk to the F.B.I."

Waleed Basyouni

Basyouni is the [vice-president](#) of Al Maghrib [Institute](#), a hardline Salafi institution. He is also a member of the North American Imam Federation (NAIF). Basyouni has [preached](#) that Hamas is not a terrorist group:

As for Hamas, they are not included in the group that I am talking about today ... Hamas, it is a political issue putting it or listing it as a terrorist group. What defines a terrorist group is not the State Department for us. What defines a terrorist group is not the NATO. What defines terrorists for Muslim scholars like me or students of knowledge like myself will be the Quran and Sunnah.

Muzammil Siddiqui

President of ISNA from 1996-2000, and still closely [involved](#) today, Siddiqui received a BA from the Islamic University in Medina and a degree in comparative religion from Harvard University. He has served as the director of the Islamic Society of Orange County since 1981.

In an interview previously published on ISNA’s website, Siddiqui [condemned](#) the LGBT community: “Homosexuality is a moral disorder. It is a moral disease, a sin and corruption...” which must be “checked and corrected.” Siddiqui even [expressed support](#) for laws in countries where homosexuality is punishable by death.

In the 1990s, Siddiqui [called](#) for “the whole land of Palestine” to come under Islamic rule:

I can see that there is already some impact after Jihad in Afghanistan in the Intifada movement in Palestine. With this, more courage, more strength, more confidence and shall I even say that in a few years we will be celebrating with each other the victory of Islam in Palestine. Insh'allah, we shall be celebrating the coming of the Masjid al-Aqsa under the Islamic rule. We shall be celebrating insh'allah the coming of Jerusalem and the whole land of Palestine insh'allah and the establishment of the Islamic State throughout that area.

Zulfiqar Ali Shah

Executive Director of the Fiqh Council of North America and Director of Religious Affairs at the the Islamic Society of Milwaukee, Shah is also the former president of the Sharia Scholars Association of North America (SSANA) and the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), a [proxy](#) of the South Asian Islamist movement, Jamaat-e-Islami.

Speaking in Chicago in 2001, Shah [declared](#): “If we are unable to stop the Jews now, their next stop is Yathrib [the Saudi Arabian city of Medina] where the Jews used to live until their expulsion by Prophet Muhammad. That's the pinnacle of their motives.”

Pervez Nasim

Nasim is an ISNA board member and Vice President of ISNA Canada. In August 2018, he promoted an anti-Semitic [video](#) on Facebook captioned “What and Who Created ISIS,” in which noted anti-Semitic activist Ken O’Keefe claimed that ISIS stands for “Israel Secret Intelligence Services,” and that the US government and media are controlled by the Jewish State. O’Keefe also stated: “If Jewish people believe that they are the chosen people and that all the rest are sub-humans, goys, as we are referred to in the Talmud, then I have a big problem with Judaism.”

Nasim has also [shared](#) social media posts about the IDF, commenting: “These Zionist Nazi government soldiers have gone crazy. They have crossed every limit of decency.” He captioned a similar [video](#): “Does it not make Nazis look more tolerant than Zionists?”

Salah Obeidallah

Salah Obeidallah is the [executive director](#) of the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). He is a [founder](#) and previous [president](#) of the Islamic Center of Passaic County (ICP) in Patterson, New Jersey. The Center’s Imam, Mohammed Qatanani, is currently fighting a deportation order after federal officials [found](#) he failed to disclose a previous conviction in Israel for his membership in Hamas.

Under Obeidallah’s watch, in January 2014, the ICP hosted Syrian Sheik Mohammad Rateb al-Nabulsi, a Syrian cleric who [justifies](#) suicide bombing against “all the Jewish people”, supports Hamas, advocates the killing of homosexuals, and [insists](#) that women should never leave the home.

Medhi Hasan

Mehdi Hasan is a prominent British Shia journalist, and the [presenter](#) of ‘UpFront’ and ‘Head to Head’ on *Al Jazeera English*.

In 2009, Mehdi Hasan gave a speech at a Shia center in London, [stating](#):

The *kuffar*, the disbelievers, the atheists who remain deaf and stubborn to the teachings of Islam, the rational message of the Quran; they are described in the Quran as, quote, ‘a people of no intelligence.’ Allah describes them as not of ‘no morality,’ not as ‘people of no belief’ – [but as] people of ‘no intelligence’ – because they’re incapable of the intellectual effort it requires to shake off those blind prejudices, to shake off those easy assumptions about this world, about the existence of God. In this respect, the Quran describes the atheists as ‘cattle,’ as cattle of those who grow the crops and do not stop and wonder about this world.

Khalid Griggs

Khalid Griggs is the [former](#) Vice President of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), as well as the former Chairman of ICNA’s Council for Social Justice. ICNA has openly [identified itself](#) as an organization of the Pakistani-based Jamaat-e-Islami, a violent Islamist group that was complicit in the 1971 Bangladeshi genocide, and whose military wing, Hizbul Mujahideen, has been [designated](#) by the State Department as a terrorist organization. Other board members of ICNA’s Council for Social Justice, meanwhile, [include](#) Mohsin Ansari, who has [expressed praise](#) for convicted war criminals and states his pleasure that the Islamist party in Turkey is in power despite the “power brokers of the world, the liberal anti Muslim media headed by Jews.”

Several decades ago, Griggs [belonged](#) to the (now-defunct) Islamic Party of North America (IPNA) whose foundational publication, *Taking Islam to the Street: The Da’wah of the Islamic Party of North America*, [brags](#) about bringing “the Revolutionary Islamic political and social thoughts of [Muslim-Brotherhood ideologue] Sayyid Qutb, [Libyan dictator Muammar] Qaddafi, [Iranian Ayatollah] Khomeini, and [South Asian Islamist Abul a’la] Maududi to the...streets of Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Cleveland and a dozen other cities.”

In fact, according a history of the IPNA written by Griggs (which appears as a chapter of *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*), in July 1976, Griggs and other IPNA organizers attended the ‘Zionism is Racism’ conference in Tripoli. At the conference, Gaddafi’s government reportedly [provided](#) IPNA with a \$100k loan so that Griggs could open IPNA’s Washington, D.C. headquarters.

Griggs is also a friend and vocal supporter of [Imam Jamil al Amin](#) (AKA H. Rap Brown), a former Black Panther-turned-radical imam who is currently serving a life sentence for the [murder of a police officer](#) in 2002. Though Amin was [found guilty](#) of all 13 charges against him, Griggs [has pushed](#) the popular conspiracy theory that the U.S. government has a vendetta against al-Amin because of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. In December 2016, Griggs’s organization, ICNA-CSJ, launched an [online petition](#), demanding al Amin’s immediate release on this basis.

In 2014, Griggs [referred](#) to Al-Qaeda as the “presumed” perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, and asserted that the Bush Administration launched an “open-ended war... against any and all unaffiliated terrorists (which came to indiscriminately include legitimate resistance fighters and anti-imperialist ‘extremists’) found anywhere in the world.”

Hamed Ghazali

Ghazali is the [Director](#) of the Houston Quran Academy and chairman of the MAS Council of Islamic Schools.

Ghazali's speech at a 2010 conference hosted by the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and the Muslim American Society (MAS) was [cited](#) by the Anti-Defamation League as an example of anti-Semitic incitement, after Ghazali said that "Allah gave us the Jews" as the primary historical and religious example of those who "take the wrong path."

Suhaib Webb

An Oklahoma [convert to Islam](#), Suhaib Webb served as a resident scholar at the [extremist-linked](#) Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) from 2011 to 2014

While [addressing](#) Muslim youth about *zina* [adultery or fornication], Webb blames the temptation of pre-marital or extra-marital sex "on the distance from the Islamic influence ... 24 hours a day you are being pounded by the ideology of the Kuffar [derogatory term for non-Muslims]." Webb makes his views on *zina* abundantly clear: "Someone who is married and commits Zina? What is the punishment for them? He is to be stoned to death."

Webb has also [claimed](#) that animosity toward Jews is understandable, [declared](#) that "the men who imitates [sic] a woman and the women who imitate the men and their dress" are cursed, and has [described](#) secularism as a "radical, lunatic ideology," stating his preference instead for an Islamic state.

[According](#) to FBI surveillance documents, Webb spoke at a dinner in 2001 alongside the late Al Qaeda leader, Anwar Al Awlaki, to raise money for the legal defense of Jamil Abdullah Al Amin (AKA H. Rap Brown), who murdered a police officers in Georgia. As a result, in 2013, Massachusetts' Governor Deval Patrick's office [withdrew Webb's invitation](#) to speak at an interfaith service.

Hussain Kamani

Kamani is American-born and studied for several years at an extremist [Deobandi](#) seminary in England. He works as an instructor for the [Qalam Institute](#). In his courses and lectures, Kamani has [endorsed](#) sex slavery:

And then Allah...said if a person wishes to fulfil his desires, his common desires, there are only two ways he can fulfill these desires where he will not be held responsible for it. ... How? What are the two things? ... The first thing is that he fulfills his desires with a spouse. The second thing is that he fulfills his desires with a female slave that belongs to him.

One of the Qalam Institute's most popular courses – titled "The Prophetic Code" and taught by Kamani – [warns](#) Muslims to seek "cleanliness" and "purity", so "do not resemble the Jews." Kamani also [cites](#) Quranic commentary to advise parents: "Order your children to pray at the age of seven. And beat them (lightly) if they do not do so by the age of ten."

In a talk titled “Sex, Masturbation and Islam,” Kamani [explains](#) that Muslim men may fulfill any sexual desires “with a female slave that belongs to him.” Those who commit adultery or have sex outside of marriage, Kamani [explains](#), must be “stoned to death.” And when Muslim husbands are learning to “train their wives,” beating them, Kamani concedes, should only be a “last measure.”

Western society, Kamani [declares](#), is “filth. ... We are surrounded by filth ... our environment is full of this filth, everywhere we turn.”

AbdelRahman Murphy

Murphy also works for the Qalam Institute. Murphy has [stated](#): “There is no such thing as an innocent Israeli.”

Zaid Shakir

Zaid Shakir has a long history of promoting and defending violently extremist ideas.

In a 2001 [article](#) titled, “Muslim involvement in the American political process,” Shakir wrote that Muslims should reject “the legal and political system of America”, which is “sinful and constitutes open rebellion against Allah.” He argued that “Islam presents an absolutist political agenda, or one which doesn’t lend itself to compromise,” and that because Islamist involvement in politics has largely failed, Muslims should not discount violence, citing examples such as the Taliban’s “armed struggle” in Afghanistan. He further [warned](#) against “seeking the help of,” or “befriending,” the “*kuffar*, Jews and Christians.”

In a 2007 blog post, Shakir [argued](#) that “Zionists” and the FBI were responsible for the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and that [there were](#) “glaring weaknesses and inconsistencies in the official narrative” of the 9/11 attacks.

In a 2010 editorial in *Tikkun*, he [claimed](#) that the [jihadist](#) Luqman Ameen Abdullah, who died after attempting to shoot FBI agents, was the victim of a “self-serving racist agenda.”

Mohammed Qatanani

Qatanani, the leader of the Islamic Center of Passaic County, is currently fighting a deportation order after federal officials [found](#) he failed to disclose a previous conviction in Israel for his membership in Hamas. [According](#) to his own lawyer, Qatanani was also a member of the student chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.

In 2007, Qatanani [prayed](#) for the defeat of “occupation and oppression” in Iraq, Palestine, and Chechnya. He also preached that Jews and Christians “will be swiftly punished by Allah” and that Muslims should not speak badly of Sheikh Yousef Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood.

A July 2008 N.J. Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness intelligence report [identifies](#) Qatanani as a Hamas supporter.

In December 2017, Qatanani [called](#) for a new intifada against Israel, in response to the U.S. decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem.

Hatem Bazian

Chairman of American Muslims for Palestine [AMP](#), Hatem Bazian is one of the main figures behind the Islamist anti-Israel movement in the United States.

As Director of Berkeley's Al-Qalam Institute of Islamic Sciences, Bazian was featured as a speaker at a 1999 American Muslims for Jerusalem conference. According to the Journal of Counterterrorism and Security International, Bazian [stated](#):

In the Hadith, the Day of Judgment will never happen until you fight the Jews. They are on the West side of the river, which is the Jordan River, and you're on the East side...until the trees and the stones will say, oh Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me. Come and kill him! And that's in the Hadith about this, this is a future battle before the Day of Judgment.

In one of Bazian's most infamous acts, he was filmed at a 2004 Berkeley anti-war rally [issuing](#) a public call for violence:

We've been watching intifada in Palestine, we've been watching an uprising in Iraq, and the question is, what are we doing? How come we don't have an intifada in this country?...They're going to say it's a Palestinian being too radical. Well, they haven't seen radicalism yet!

In 2017, Bazian was rebuked by his employer, the University of California Berkeley, for retweeting two anti-Semitic [images](#) that accused "Ashke-Nazis" of rape, murder and organ trafficking.

Osama Abuirshaid

Osama Abuirshaid works as the National Director of American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), an organization the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) [notes](#) "promotes extreme anti-Israel views and has at times provided a platform for anti-Semitism under the guise of educating Americans about "the just cause of Palestine and the rights of self-determination." Abuirshaid previously served as the editor of *Al Zaytoonah*, the official newspaper of the Islamic Association of Palestine, which the U.S. government has [described](#) as part of " Hamas' propaganda apparatus."

Abuirshaid has [written](#) that the terrorist group Hamas is "an army for liberation" whose fighters "rise up for the blood of martyrs."

Nihad Awad

Awad is the Executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). During the 1990s, when Awad worked for the (now defunct) organization Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP), the organization [distributed](#) a [pamphlet](#) (stamped with the IAP logo) declaring "America's Greatest Enemy: The Jew! And an Unholy Alliance!" In 1998, Awad reportedly [blamed](#) the Clinton administration's foreign policy on the prevalence of Jews in his administration.

Salam Al-Marayati

[Salam Al-Marayati](#) is the president and co-founder of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC), an American Islamist group that has [claimed](#) the war on terrorism is a "war on Islam."

MPAC has denounced Muslim moderates and reformists. When Muslim physician [Zuhdi Jasser](#) was appointed to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom in 2012, MPAC [called it](#) "an affront to all Muslims" and characterized Jasser, who battles supremacist interpretations of Islam, as a threat to religious freedom.

MPAC's outburst came not long after it hosted a [dinner for Rachid Ghannouchi](#), a Tunisian Islamist who had blessed the mothers of suicide bombers and called on Arab nations to "get rid of the bacillus of Israel." MPAC [celebrated Ghannouchi](#) as "one of the most important figures in modern Islamic political thought and theory."

In 2013, the Anti-Defamation League selected MPAC as one of the "[top ten anti-Israel groups in the U.S.](#)," observing that it has sponsored anti-Israel events and "helped propagate the notion that American foreign policy is directed by Israel." MPAC has also disseminated bogus stories accusing Israel of intentionally [flooding Palestinian homes](#) and [murdering Palestinians](#) to harvest their organs.

Marayati appears to share his organization's views. In 2001, he [named Israel](#) as a suspect hours after the 9/11 attacks. Al-Marayati has stated that "when Patrick Henry said, 'Give me liberty or give me death,' that statement epitomized jihad." He has also described Hezbollah terrorism as "legitimate resistance."