

## **Preventing Hunger in the Bay Area and Beyond**

### **For Distribution among Muslims and their Guests in Interfaith Iftars**

1. Today, despite all the advances of modernity, hunger is still widespread in the world. Eleven percent of the world's population, or one out of every nine people, a total of 830 million out of 7.5 billion, suffer from hunger.
2. Although the US is among the most affluent countries on earth, the hunger rate in the US is actually higher than the world rate at 12.7%; one out of eight people in the US, a total 41.5 million out of the total US population of 326.7 million, suffer from hunger.
3. Here in California, although we have the [5<sup>th</sup> largest economy](#) in the world, we have a rate of hunger higher than the world average, at 12.3%, or almost five million people out of a total state population of nearly 40 million.
4. Here in Silicon Valley, one of the wealthiest areas in California and in fact the world, the hunger rate is around 25%, twice the national rate, impacting 720,000 out of 2.8 million people.
5. It is shocking that both the United States and California, despite their great affluence, have hunger rates greater than the world hunger rate.
6. In Silicon Valley, home to some of the world's most successful companies and wealthiest people, it is even more shameful that the hunger rate is actually twice what it is worldwide.
7. Hunger is often termed "food insecurity," meaning that people are not sure where their next meal will come from. The risk factors for people in this situation include missing meals, relying on food banks or food stamps, borrowing money for food, or neglecting bills and rent in order to buy groceries. The main reasons for the higher hunger rate in Silicon Valley are higher housing costs, lack of higher paying jobs, and lack of sufficient food providers for those in need.

### **The importance of feeding the hungry in Qur'an and prophetic sayings**

There are numerous Qur'anic verses and prophetic sayings about the obligation and virtues of feeding the hungry and the immense reward and high status for doing so:

"And they give food, out of love for Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive, [saying] 'We feed you, for God's pleasure only — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks. Surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day.' So God will protect them from the evil of that day, and give them radiance and happiness and reward them for their steadfastness, with a garden and silk." (Qur'an 76:8-12)

"Or feeding, on a day of severe hunger, an orphan of near relationship, or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion. Those are the companions of the right." (Qur'an 90:14-18)

Among the many prophetic sayings on this topic is the famous one which ties belief to feeding one's neighbor: "He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbor goes hungry."

(turn over)

In another prophetic saying, God will ask people on the Day of Judgement: "...O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not. He will say: O Lord, and how should I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds? He will say: Did you not know that My servant So-and-so asked you for food and you fed him not? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that (the reward for doing so lies) with Me?" [Muslim]

## **Suggestions for helping reduce hunger this Ramadan**

To this end, we suggest the following during this holy month of Ramadan during which we are not only reminded of the preciousness of food and drink but are also encouraged to increase our good deeds, especially feeding other people:

1. Sponsor an iftar (breaking of the fast dinner) at the mosque and invite those in and outside the community who are most in need of food.
2. Instead of lavish iftar dinners for friends, use that same amount to donate to a soup kitchen or charity that provides food for the needy or to sponsor an iftar dinner for the needy.
3. Donate goods to local food drives both in and outside the mosque.
4. Donate time and money to local charities such as Rahima, which has been serving the needy in our community for many years.

We should also be vigilant about avoiding wasting food, first, because it is a bounty from God, and second, because, as we have mentioned, millions of people in the world, in this country, and in this state do not have sufficient food to keep them free from hunger. It is most unfortunate that, while large numbers of people suffer from food insecurity, about 40% of the food in America is wasted, filling up landfills rather than people's stomachs.

As the Qur'an states: "O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God does not love the wasters." (Qur'an: 7:31)

To that end, we should make extra efforts this Ramadan to ensure that we:

1. Avoid any waste of food, whether at the masjid or at home.
2. Donate any leftovers to a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, or other charity. Please check with them in advance to find out their requirements for food donations.
3. Conserve and preserve the environment by limiting our use of water bottles and unrecyclable materials.

May the blessings of this holy month make it truly a time for giving, sharing, and making our communities and this world a better place. Ameen.

The following are select charities which provide food for those in need:

1. Rahima Foundation, [www.rahima.org/](http://www.rahima.org/)
2. Alameda Food Bank, [www.alamedafoodbank.org/](http://www.alamedafoodbank.org/)
3. Berkeley Food Pantry, [www.berkeleyfoodpantry.org/](http://www.berkeleyfoodpantry.org/)
4. Second Harvest Food Bank, [www.shfb.org/](http://www.shfb.org/)
5. St. Anthony Foundation, [www.stanthonysf.org/](http://www.stanthonysf.org/)