

ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION of NORTH AMERICA

NEWS RELEASE

Imam Mustapha Elturk Joins Interfaith Prayer Walk in Support of Immigrants and Refugees

[Lansing, Michigan, May 31, 2026] — Imam Mustapha Elturk, Ameer of the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) and a Co-chair of the Imams Council of Michigan, joined a group of IONA members and dozens of faith leaders, clergy, and community advocates from across Michigan in an Interfaith Prayer Walk in support of immigrants and refugees. The event was organized by Michigan Network Advocates.

The gathering brought together members of diverse faith traditions to pray, reflect, and advocate for the dignity, safety, and humane treatment of immigrants and refugees. Speakers drew from their sacred scriptures and faith teachings to emphasize the shared religious obligation to welcome the stranger, protect the vulnerable, and uphold human dignity.



Representatives from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other faith communities echoed this message. Rabbi Ethan Bair, speaking on behalf of the Jewish community, reflected on the repeated biblical commandment to care for the stranger, noting that the Jewish people's own history is inseparable from the experience of migration and refuge. "Immigrants are not just part of our country; but the backbone of what this country has always been about." He spoke.

Among the featured speakers was Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage of North Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lansing, who spoke passionately about the faith-based responsibility to care for immigrants and refugees. "God calls us all to care especially for immigrants and refugees," Rev. Miller-Purrenhage said. "As a Christian pastor, I believe that every single human being is an image-bearer of God. That means we are made in God's image and are therefore inherently worthy of dignity, love, kindness, and care. When we see that our laws and policies do not treat people with that dignity, love, kindness, and care, it is our moral responsibility to do everything we can to change those laws and policies."

Rev. Elijah Burton of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Lansing, who reminded attendees of the central place immigration occupies within the biblical tradition. "We have come together because we share a concern for our immigrant and refugee neighbors," said Rev. Burton. "Immigration is not a story that sits at the edge of scripture. It is one of the threads woven through the entire biblical story."

Speaking from the Islamic tradition, Imam Elturk reminded participants that migration is deeply embedded in the story of Islam.

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"The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a migrant. His companions were migrants. The Islamic calendar itself begins with the Hijrah, the migration from Makkah to Madinah," Imam Elturk said. "The Qur'an honors both those who migrated and those who welcomed them. The first Muslim community was built by migrants and those who opened their homes and hearts to them."

Drawing from his own experience, Imam Elturk reflected on his journey to America nearly fifty years ago. "I immigrated to the United States almost fifty years ago," he said. "I came seeking opportunity and found a country that welcomed immigrants. I was able to build a life, raise a family, serve my community, and contribute to this nation. For that, I remain deeply grateful."

He added that while every nation has the right to enforce its laws and secure its borders, people of faith must never lose sight of the humanity of those affected by immigration policies.

"Before anyone is an immigrant, a refugee, an asylum seeker, or a citizen, they are first a human being created by God," Imam Elturk said. "Human dignity is not granted by a passport. It is bestowed by God."

Organizers also urged participants and members of the broader community to contact their elected representatives in Congress and oppose proposals that would provide an additional \$70 billion in funding to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Participants expressed concern that expanded detention and enforcement measures could further separate families and increase hardships for immigrant communities.

The Prayer Walk concluded with prayers for justice, compassion, and wisdom, as faith leaders called upon people of conscience to advocate for policies that uphold due process, protect family unity, and respect the inherent dignity of every human being.

The event served as a powerful reminder that despite differences in faith traditions, communities can unite around shared values of compassion, hospitality, and concern for the vulnerable.

The Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) remains committed to fostering interfaith collaboration and standing firmly against all forms of hatred and injustice. **END**



Imam Elturk speaking from the steps of the Capitol in Lansing. Photo courtesy of Karl



Members of IONA participated in the rally. Photo courtesy of Karl

The Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) is a faith-based organization committed to promoting justice, peace, and spiritual development. We believe that faith must be accompanied by action, especially in the face of oppression and human suffering.