

# 2019 Annual Report

## CIVIL RIGHTS



CIVIL RIGHTS

# A year of action // A DECADE OF IMPACT

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"The world truly  
is made up of two  
kinds of people--  
talkers and do-ers.  
We're do-ers."  
-Phil Robertson, Litigation  
Director

Our Civil Rights Department handles cases that range from **prejudiced gestures** to **full-blown discrimination**. Our clients are Muslims, as well as members from other faith communities who have had Islam imputed on them. Law clerks and interns assist our attorneys in several projects **that highlight distinct civil rights issues**. Our work ranges from **fighting** citizenship delays to **securing** the rights of Muslims to practice freely in the public sphere, whether it be at schools, places of employment, prisons, or other institutions.

**TRAVEL>>**In 2019, CAIR-Chicago continued to represent Muslim travelers who were mis-treated during their air flights, either due to their religion or their national origin. The CRD helps travelers get their complaints heard by the airlines.

In addition to TAP, CAIR-Chicago attorneys assist Muslim travelers who have had issues of being detained and interrogated at airports and border checkpoints across the United States. The legal team helps them file complaints with TSA, Homeland Security, and Customs and Border Protection. The CRD is also preparing a further challenge to government watch-lists, such as the No-Fly list.

CAIR-Chicago's lawyers are leading the way in effectively preserving the civil and human rights of Muslim travelers through its proposed Port of Entry Bill of Rights, which would affect travel globally by allowing travelers certain fundamental rights.

**EMPLOYMENT>>**In 2019, the CAIR-Chicago legal team continued to litigate a case brought on behalf of a Muslim police officer who was terminated by the North Chicago Police Department in retaliation for complaining about the constant harassment he endured from his fellow officers and supervisors regarding his religion and Iranian national origin.

Attorneys settled an employment discrimination case with G4S Security on behalf of a Muslim man who was forced to choose between attending Friday prayers or keeping the security job, salary, and position which he had for the past 13 years.

On behalf of a Muslim pharmacist who was discriminated at work due to his religion and Egyptian nationality, CAIR-Chicago lawyers brought an action in Federal Court in 2017 challenging his termination by a hospital. The case was appealed in 2019 and is now before the Seventh Circuit.

CAIR-Chicago often assists Muslim employees who have matters pending before the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

**IMMIGRATION>>**In 2019, CAIR-Chicago's legal team brought a number of mandamus cases against the government in Federal Court on behalf of asylum applicants and other immigration petitioners, such as those seeking to bring their family members from other countries to the United States.

In 2019, a Muslim man from Saudi Arabia

was granted asylum after CAIR-Chicago filed his application in 2015 and worked with him for four years to make sure that he received his interview and that his application was properly processed.

In 2019, CAIR-Chicago's lawyers finally received data in response to its 2017 FOIA request to USCIS about a special secondary vetting program for citizenship applicants known as CARRP. The CRD's goal is to determine whether or not applicants from Muslim-majority countries are being unfairly directed into the program based solely on their countries of origin. The Department is working with partners to review the millions of points of data provided by USCIS, with the results hopefully to be released soon.

CAIR-Chicago took on an asylum case in 2019 that was referred to it from CAIR-California involving female genital mutilation / cutting, and has been working with the client to prepare her for her asylum interview and draft a legal memo to USCIS in support of her case.

A U-visa application was filed by CAIR-Chicago's legal staff in 2019 on behalf of a Muslim man from Pakistan who helped State law enforcement apprehend narcotics dealers. His testimony was helpful in the prosecution of the case, which made him eligible for the U-visa.

CAIR-Chicago's team filed a petition on behalf of a former Iraqi diplomat who arrived here on a G-2 visa in 2015 to participate in a course on behalf of the Iraqi government. The worsening conditions in Iraq prompted him to seek approval to stay in the United States.

**PRISON>>**In 2019, CAIR-Chicago took on a case on behalf of a Muslim inmate who had been denied halal food for many years at multiple correctional facilities in Illinois, and had also been denied certain prayer and religious accommodations by the Illinois Department of Corrections.

CAIR-Chicago continues to monitor conditions for Muslim inmates at many correctional institutions, and will intervene on behalf of those inmates if a civil rights violation is found. Currently, the CRD is looking at addressing the lack of halal food in Illinois prisons, and addressing the need for Qurans and other religious materials therein.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT & GOVERNMENT>>**In 2019, CAIR-Chicago's attorneys filed a case against the Illinois Secretary of State to enjoin its use of a form to be signed by all persons wearing religious head coverings. The form stated that if the applicant



Top: Ahmed Rehab, right, meets with Tom Ricketts, left, owner of the Chicago Cubs, following the leaking of Joe Ricketts' Islamophobic emails in February 2019.

Opposite: Litigation Director Phil Robertson and Executive Director Ahmed Rehab stand with Fred Tsao of ICRR at a press conference in July 2019.

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**“CAIR-Chicago is an organization dedicated to fighting for the civil rights of Muslims in a country where people shouldn't have to fight for civil liberties.”**  
-Facebook review

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**“Faith and hope comes in all forms, and know that you could have faith in this organization to listen and help. Thank you again for making our family and our hearts whole!”**

-Client testimonial

was seen in public not wearing the head covering, their driver’s license or State ID could be suspended.

In 2019, CAIR-Chicago settled a case against the Chicago Police Department and a number of its officers who attacked a Muslim woman while she was walking on a subway platform in Chicago. The client, who wears a niqab, was profiled and assaulted by the officers due to her religion.

CAIR-Chicago continues to act on behalf of clients who are approached by law enforcement (such as the FBI, DHS, or CBP) at their homes or offices and asked to answer questions about themselves or their friends or family members. The CRD works with clients to prepare them for the interview, and if requested, attends the interview with the client.

A Muslim student in a police officer training course offered at the Universi-

ty of Illinois was offended by some of the training scenarios used by the instructors. CAIR-Chicago lawyers worked with the student to bring a complaint to the attention of the school to address his concerns, resulting in greater cultural and religious sensitivity.

CAIR-Chicago attorneys advocated on behalf of a Muslim man who, during the course of a child custody hearing, was repeatedly accused of wanting to abduct his children based on antiquated understandings of Islamic law. The CRD helped him file a complaint against his ex-wife’s lawyer before the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

**GENERAL>>**Through its partners around the State and around the country, CAIR-Chicago works as a catalyst for change at the legislative level as well, working to address matters such as the processing of mug shots for Muslim detainees and the abrupt closing of Muslim bank accounts.

CAIR-Chicago routinely handles cases involving hate crimes, whether they occur in public, at school, or in neighborhoods. Lawyers work with the police department, campus security, and local prosecutors and investigators to make sure such cases are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, including the bringing of hate crime charges if warranted.



Above: Communications Coordinator Hannah Faris documenting the work of CAIR-Chicago in Winter 2019.

Below: Deputy Director Sufyan Sohel (far left) and Executive Director Ahmed Rehab (far right) pose with allies at the Share the Dream Together rally in August 2019.



# 2019 CASE BREAKDOWN

ONLY AROUND 1/3 OF HATE CRIMES ARE REPORTED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS\*



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**“There’s no denying a rise in discrimination, but that only drives us to be stronger and unwavering in our fight for justice!”**

-Brian Huff, Staff Attorney

## TOP 3 INTAKE CATEGORIES



111 GENERAL



108 IMMIGRATION



79 TRAVEL

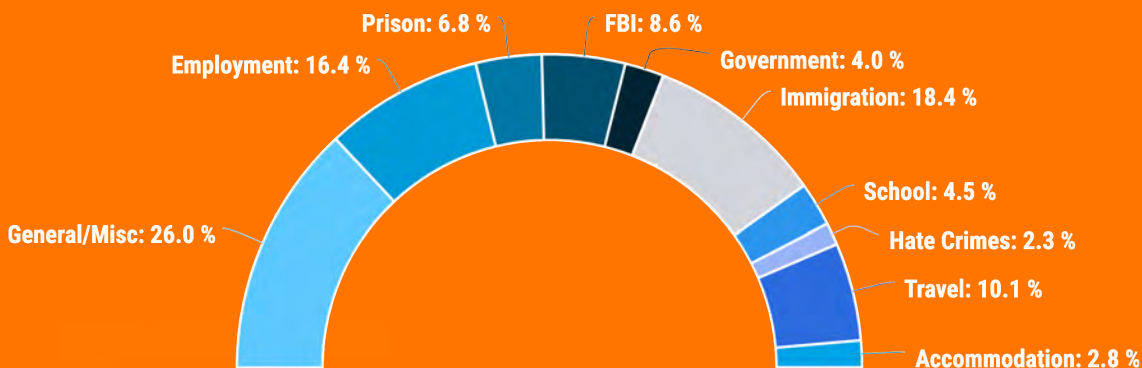
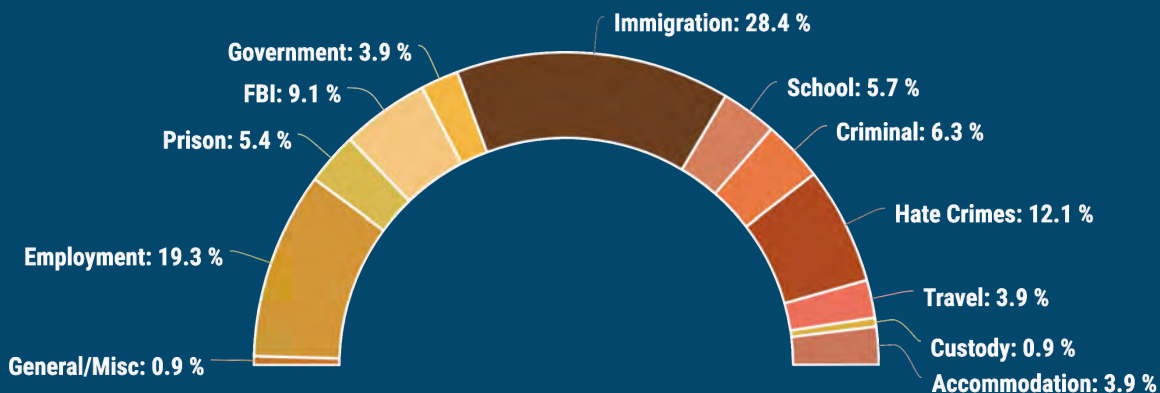
## RESIDUAL CATEGORIES



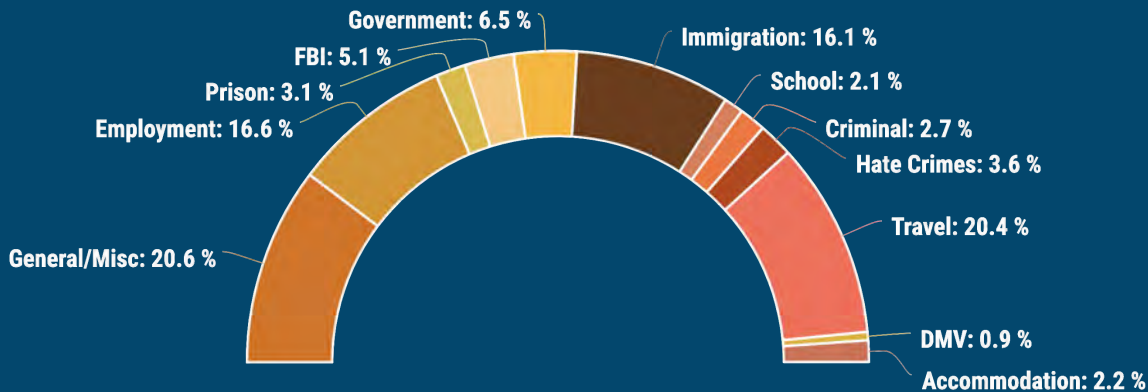
# Five Year Wrap-Up

Take a look at our case distribution since 2015.

2015



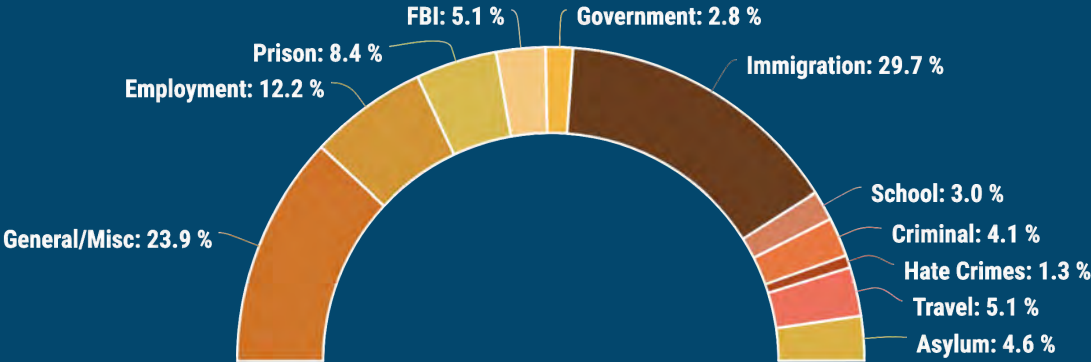
2017



**2018 saw a spike in immigration cases; this surge immediately followed the Trump Administrations three Muslim Bans in 2017.**

2018

2018



2019

**2017 was the year of the first Muslim Ban in January. It was also the year CAIR-Chicago launched the Travelers Assistance Project to help with the growing surge in travel cases.**