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## US Outreach to the Muslim World, meetings at the US State Department

Posted [October 12, 2012](#) at 12:55 pm by [Judithanne Scourfield-McLauchlan, Ph.D.](#)



View of the press risers while Secretary Clinton speaks at the Eid al-Fitr Reception at the State Department

Just two days after the tragic attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, I was in Washington, DC participating in briefings on outreach to the Muslim world and an Eid al-Fitr reception at the [State Department](#).

The briefings, “Inspired to Engage: Stories of Muslim Engagement at the State Department,” were facilitated by Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith.

The panel included eight speakers who “have been inspired by the Secretary’s vision to reach out to Muslim communities around the world to bring Muslim voices to the table, build bridges between communities, promote cooperation between young Muslim leaders overseas and their American counterparts, and bring about change in their communities.”

After President Obama [delivered his “New Beginning” speech](#) at [Cairo University](#) in June of 2009, [Farah Pandith was appointed](#) and her office launched initiatives to build relationships with Muslims around the world.

The speakers included Mohamed Ali, a founding member of *Generation Change Somalia*, spoke about youth leadership development and training he is organizing in Mogadishu.

Humera Khan spoke about her Viral Peace program, using social media training designed to prevent radicalization and violent extremism in the American Muslim community through engagement and empowerment.

Andrew Rabens, Special Advisor for Youth Engagement at the State Department, spoke about his work on youth engagement initiatives with 18 posts in the Middle East and North Africa.

Visit the [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) for more information about these exchange programs.

Following the briefings, I attended an Eid al-Fitr reception in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the Department of State. Secretary Clinton introduced the Libyan Ambassador to the United States, Ali Suleiman Aujali, who spoke briefly.

He offered heartfelt condolences to the United States over the loss of Ambassador Chris Stevens.

Secretary Clinton [delivered powerful remarks about the need for religious freedom and toleration](#). She asked the crowd to work towards building a world where if one person commits a violent religious act, millions of people will stand up and condemn it.

“We can pledge that whenever one person speaks out in ignorance and bigotry, ten voices will answer,” Clinton said forcefully. “They will answer resoundingly against the offense and the insult; answering ignorance with enlightenment; answering hatred with understanding; answering darkness with light.”

The secretary urged the audience not to be discouraged by the hatred and violence that exists, but instead resolve to do something tangible to promote religious tolerance in their own communities.

“In times like these, it can be easy to despair that some differences are irreconcilable, some mountains too steep to climb; we will therefore never reach the level of understanding and

peacefulness that we seek, and which I believe the great religions of the world call us to pursue,” she reflected. “But that’s not what I believe, and I don’t think it’s what you believe... Part of what makes our country so special is we keep trying. We keep working. We keep investing in our future,” she said.

Later Ms. Pandith recognized three of the leaders from the *Generation Change* program, who elaborated on their projects.

I appreciated the opportunity to network with others interested in civic engagement, the use of social media to affect positive change, and outreach to the Muslim world.

In 2002 I traveled to Egypt and Morocco as a delegate with the [American Council of Young Political Leaders](#). More recently, I participated in an ACYPL alumni summit in Amman, Jordan in December.

It was in Jordan that I made a connection with the Women Lawyer’s Group of the Middle East.

During the Spring semester, my Constitutional Law students conducted comparative legal research on Women’s rights in the Middle East.

Students were partnered with an attorney from the group (practicing law in one of the seven countries my students were researching), who mentored them as they pursued their project. [Read our blog for more information about the Women Lawyers Group, the research project assignment, and the students’ research findings.](#)



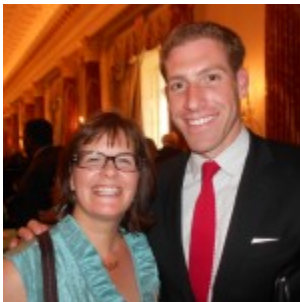
Stories of Muslim Engagement – briefings at the State Department



Libyan Ambassador Ali Suleiman Aujali offers his condolences to the US over the loss of Ambassador Chris Stevens



Secretary Clinton speaks at the Eid al-Fitr Reception in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the State Department



With Andrew Rabens, Special Advisor for Youth Engagement at the State Department – we first met in Amman, Jordan, when I attended an ACYPL Summit.





Flags of all nations on display in the State Department lobby



One of the Generation Change leaders speaking about his project



On the balcony at the US State Department



Gifts for guests as they left the Eid al-Fitr reception