

In Their Names: The National Effort to Document and Honor the Lives of Muslim Victims of Domestic Homicide

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From June 2022 until July 2022, there were three publicly reported murders of Muslim women, children, and extended family members by their Muslim husbands or former spouses, as well as another suspected case. In total, ten Muslim lives were lost. In these cases, the most frustrating and terrifying commonality is the lack of identifiable patterns. These women were married, divorced, and/or separated. In addition, not all of them wore the hijab, had children and/or college degrees, were immigrants, had family support, and/or had sought spiritual, legal, and social services. In all cases, the male perpetrator used a firearm and took his own life, thereby leaving two sets of families and the entire Muslim American community desperate for answers.

Domestic homicide is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it is well established not only in the United States, but also within the Muslim American community as well as Muslim-majority countries worldwide. Tragically, historical data reveals that it is precisely when a victim of domestic violence seeks help and tries to actively stop the pattern of abuse that she is the most vulnerable to death, serious injury, the kidnapping of her children, and so on.

The Peaceful Families Project (PFP, www.peacefulfamilies.org), a 21-year-old US-based national non-profit organization, seeks to eliminate family-based violence in Muslim homes using Islamic values and teachings through training research, resource development, and affiliated partnerships. While the Quran and Hadith are clear on women's rights (Quran 4:1); the model of a marriage based on love, compassion, and mercy creating peace for all involved (Quran 30:21); and the absolute prohibitions of oppression and mistreating women (Quran 4:19), somehow our communities find it difficult to uphold these most basic Islamic tenets.

Due to these recent tragic events, PFP is initiating a national/global project to both recognize and document the stories of, as well as honor, the victims of domestic homicide in Muslim communities located both here and abroad. The collected data are designed to help domestic violence experts understand the critical factors underlying these events and how we can prevent any more deaths. Equally, as a community we will be able to hear the victims' names and stories, make *du'a* for them, and place their lives in the high regard they deserve.

While we, as individual staff, board members, and researchers, are well aware of and understand deeply the effects of pervasive Islamophobia in many societies, we cannot use this as an excuse to turn away from the reality of domestic homicide in our midst. PFP is committed to gathering information about these narratives, for increasing our knowledge about the dangers of family-based

violence and honoring its victims is a basic human obligation that we, as Muslims, are called upon to do when confronted with such ongoing oppression. Having definitive data will help our community increase its awareness of family-based violence and create more effective responses to reduce and finally end this pervasive tragedy.

PFP asks each individual who knows of a victim or an incident of domestic homicide in the Muslim American community to participate in this effort. We extend our deepest gratitude for your willingness to participate in this critical activity. All information gathered will be analyzed in its conglomerate form, and no personal narrative will be used in an identifiable manner without first obtaining the explicit desire and permission of the appropriate family members or representative.