

Miracle Winner of New Jersey State Senate Race Forced to Endure Lecture from Islamist Group



Within a few days of New Jersey's recent November elections, Edward Durr, the unexpected victor in the State Senate's 3rd Legislative District, was sitting in the hot seat in a [meeting](#) with the New Jersey chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NJ) to atone for being an accused "[Islamophobe](#)." Thanks to a misguided, two-year-old [tweet](#) aimed at Muslims, Durr agreed to subordinate himself to CAIR's reprogramming and indoctrination, rather than face calls for his immediate resignation.

However, CAIR-NJ and its radical partners are hardly the appropriate advisors to lecture anyone regarding hatred and bigotry. Among the New Jersey Muslim leaders to mentor the senator-elect on November 5 at the Al Minhal Academy of

Islamic Education were several Islamists with appalling histories of misogyny, homophobia, and anti-Semitism.

Durr's surprise victory over 20-year incumbent and Senate President Steve Sweeney shocked and astonished the political world. The press was awash with [headlines](#) of the win and stories of Durr, the underdog, who won a challenging race over an implacable opponent on a shoestring budget.

However, the euphoria lasted just a few hours after the race was called in Durr's favor, when a local reporter looking into the victor's social media history discovered a particularly offensive [tweet](#). "Mohammed was a pedophile! Islam is a false religion! Only fools follow Muslim teachings! It is a cult of hate," Durr wrote in September 2019.

Durr, a blue collar conservative and nonunion truck driver who [thinks of himself](#) as "a simple guy," tried to [apologize](#) for his misstep, stating, "I support everybody's right to worship in any manner they choose to, the God of their choice. I support all people and I support everybody's rights."

Unsatisfied, CAIR and other Muslim groups demanded more from the political novice, arguing that his statement endangered the lives of New Jersey Muslims. They asked for a more explicit apology: "If he fails to do this again, he is unfit to represent New Jersey's Third District and must give up the office."

Yet, while Durr has a history of offensive tweets, his hosts were in no position to pass judgement. For starters, CAIR-NJ, which organized Durr's re-education, is part of a nationwide nonprofit with a long and notorious [history](#) of unchecked anti-Semitism and extremism.

In 2009, the [FBI severed relations](#) with the nonprofit after evidence in a terror finance trial revealed CAIR's links to Hamas, a U.S. designated [terrorist group](#) that seeks the

destruction of Israel. In fact, at least [seven CAIR officials](#) have been arrested, convicted, or deported for serious terrorism charges.

Nationally, CAIR staff are known to traffic in anti-Semitic conspiracies. From implying that [Jews were responsible](#) for 9/11, to [equating](#) Israel with ISIS and calling its [supporters](#) “Zionazis,” CAIR’s record of anti-Jewish bigotry is astounding.

These issues extend to the New Jersey chapter, which recently added its name to a [petition](#) falsely accusing Israel of “war crimes” against the Palestinians and urging New Jersey’s elected officials to take action against the Israeli government for a list of “atrocities.” In 2019, CAIR-NJ lobbied against a [bill](#) which would have banned anti-Semitic rhetoric in public schools and universities while prohibiting poisonous boycotts against Israel.

When CAIR-NJ finally took a meaningful [stand](#) against anti-Semitism in 2018, with then-director Jim Sues condemning the head of an allied Islamist organization for making rabidly anti-Jewish remarks, it quickly retracted its criticism following a backlash from angry extremists. Soon after, CAIR-NJ teamed up with the same disreputable group to inform Congress about Israel’s “mass killings” in Gaza.

Selaedin Maksut, who since replaced Sues as director of the New Jersey chapter, was present at Durr’s meeting with local Muslim leaders. In May, Maksut [tweeted](#) that, “Israel is a state based on a racist doctrine. Zionism is racism. Pure and simple.”

During a June 2020 “Day of Rage” protest in New Jersey, Maksut sought to capitalize on racial division in America following the George Floyd slaying by claiming “that the foot on the necks of the Black and Brown people of this nation is the same foot and the same knee that is choking the Palestinian

people.” He also called Zionism “evil,” prompting [condemnation](#) from the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey.

Unlike Durr, Maksut never apologized for his offensive speech. Even after the newly elected senator issued a remorseful press release, Maksut was [inconsolable](#), resolving to “not let the matter go unchecked.”

Others counselling Durr at Al Minhal Academy had no right to [correct him](#) for his “xenophobia and Islamophobia.” This includes Imam John Starling, a [disciple](#) of the fundamentalist Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence, who is known for promoting strict interpretations of Islamic laws. For instance, Starling [advised](#) his followers that it is inappropriate for a Muslim man to shake hands with a member of the opposite sex – unless, that is, she is “elderly” or “unattractive.”

In a sermon titled “[A Knife in the Back](#),” Starling describes the treasonous Jews who betrayed their Muslim neighbors in Medina during the Prophet Mohammad’s lifetime. He referenced Islamic scripture that advises against “associating closely” with non-Muslims.

Starling was educated at the notorious Islamic University of Minnesota, which the Investigative Project on Terrorism has [called](#) a “hotbed of extremism.” IUM President Waleed Idris Al-Maneesy has invoked [sermons](#) that call for killing Jews for spreading “corruption in the land,” and he has ruled that Muslims should place Sharia law above “man-made” laws.

Imran Bhutta, a trustee at the Islamic Center of South Jersey (ICSJ), was also invited by CAIR-NJ to impart his wisdom to an accused Islamophobe. Bhutta represents a mosque that the infamous Duka brothers [attended](#) prior to their 2007 arrest as they prepared to attack U.S. soldiers at Fort Dix. Subsequently, ICSJ distributed a jihadist religious text at a

May 2007 [open house event](#) catering to non-Muslims.

Even the venue for Durr's rehabilitation at Al Minhal Academy in Sewell, New Jersey, appears to teach a radical strain of Islam. A [sermon](#) from the academy on the "Rights of the spouse" commands couples to avoid "evil matters" such as television, movies, newspapers, magazines, cartoons, social media, and the internet.

Without a doubt, Durr's remarks towards Muslims were misguided and offensive, but he should not have to listen to Islamists to atone for them. Based on his radical hosts, Durr could have very well emerged from the sit-down with his base prejudices about the Islamic faith confirmed.

Instead, the political newcomer appeared to walk out of Al Minhal as an honorary Muslim, bearing a fresh copy of the Quran and repeating CAIR's favorite talking points. "I stand against Islamophobia and all forms of hate, and I commit to that going forward," a defeated Durr [said](#), adding, "I look forward to working with the Muslim community."

Politically savvy and well-versed in coordinating PR stunts, CAIR's Islamists-in-suits knew precisely how to manipulate a straight-talking amateur like Durr, who never stood a chance. Unfortunately, there will be others, and while CAIR's leaders are free to indulge in the worst slanders about Jews, Israel and others, their next target may be forced to prostrate themselves before known extremists for legitimate criticism of Islamism.

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