HOW A MOSQUE MANAGED A CRISIS

How should a mosque respond when the unthinkable becomes a reality?

CASE STUDY: The ISBCC Response to the Boston Marathon Bombing

On April 15, 2013, a terrorist attack targeting the iconic Boston Marathon kills 3 and injures more than 260 people.

News is announced that the attackers identified themselves as Muslim.

The Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) must navigate the ensuing crisis by engaging and working with all parties involved:

- News media
- Law enforcement
- Government officials
- Muslim and interfaith communities

What does ISBCC’s response teach about navigating a crisis?

Before a Crisis:

1. Build Strong Relationships with media, law enforcement, government agencies, and interfaith leaders.

2. Conduct Media Trainings for community members to build capacity for effective media engagement.


During a Crisis:

1. Communicate Regularly with law enforcement and government agencies to help provide information and support without sacrificing respect for civil rights and legal protections.

2. Reach Out to allies and professionals both inside and outside the Muslim community. Be prepared to invest in the services of professional agencies to help navigate the crisis.

3. Be Consistent in communicating a clear and coherent message to the media that highlights American Muslims’ identity as Americans, not Others.

4. Engage the Community such that in times of crises, community members can be easily identified to carry out tasks, like working with the media or organizing relevant committees.

5. Focus on Agility by streamlining internal processes and decision-making for effective crisis management.

6. Provide Support to leaders at the frontline of the crisis. Mental health support and community backing help leaders manage the stress of the situation.

After a Crisis:

1. Reinforce the Message Through Action by proactively planning for events such as anniversaries of the crisis or memorials.

The success of how the Boston bombing was handled started before the bombing.

- Imam Suhaib Webb, former ISBCC Senior Imam

During “the marathon crisis we were telling people that we were Bostonians, the anniversary we showed them how we were Bostonians.”

- Yusufi Vali, ISBCC Executive Director

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