



FACT SHEET

Scouting in the Islamic Community

Background

Scouting serves an important role in the Islamic community. Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, and Venturing crews operated by Islamic organizations can be found in major cities throughout the United States.

In 1982, the National Islamic Committee on Scouting (NICS) was formed by a group of concerned Muslims who represented many national Muslim organizations. Primarily, the NICS is responsible for formulating policies that govern the formation of Scouting in Islamic organizations and for guiding their cooperation with the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The NICS also establishes policies affecting the participation of Muslim men and women in Scouting through Islamic centers and mosques and advises the BSA National Council in all matters relating to Scouting among Muslims.

Religious Emblems

The NICS also promotes the BSA religious emblems program. This program provides guidance to Muslim youth in achieving the spiritual pledges made in the Scout Oath and Law.

- **Bismillah.** The Bismillah program encourages Muslim Cub Scouts to advance in the knowledge and practice of Islamic living.
- **In the Name of God.** This program helps Muslim Scouts fulfill the first part of the Scout Promise: "On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God." As the Scout grows in the program, he becomes active in four areas of study and experience: Islamic faith, practice, brotherhood, and service.
- **Allaho Akber (God Is Great).** The National Islamic Committee on Scouting established this program to recognize outstanding service by adults in the promotion of Scouting among Muslim youth.

For information on religious emblems, contact National Islamic Committee on Scouting, P.O. Box 731516, Elmhurst, NY 11371, 718-779-6505, fax 718-779-6532.

Leadership

Unit leaders are chosen by the Muslim organization that organizes the unit. The local council assists the Muslim organization in recruiting and training the leadership.

Islamic Terms

There are several Islamic terms with which Scout officials should be familiar.

- **Islam.** The Arabic word *Islam* means the voluntary acceptance of the will of Allah and obedience to His commands.
- **Muslim.** A person who freely and consciously accepts the Islamic way of life, and practices it, is called a Muslim.
- **Qur'an.** The Qur'an is the sacred book of Islam. Muslims usually learn to read it in Arabic, and many memorize it in its entirety. They are expected to understand its meaning and practice its teachings. Many Muslim Scouts study with religious teachers at obligatory training sessions at the mosque (a Muslim house of worship) until about age 12.

Basic Beliefs

The five fundamental Islamic beliefs are *Tawhid* (Oneness of Allah), *Risalah* (Prophethood), *Yaum al-Akhira wa Ma'ad* (Day of Judgment and Life After Death), *Ghaib* (Angels and the Unseen), and *Kutub* (All the Books From Allah).

Foundations of Faith

There are five pillars of Islam (or foundations of faith).

- A Muslim boy of Boy Scout age must offer prayers five times a day (when in camp, time for this activity should be allowed). Before he can begin, the youth will need to wash himself in the prescribed way. Then, with other men and boys, he will attend the mosque (or other suitable area when in camp) to say prayers.
- The Muslim Boy Scout will need to fast the whole month of Ramadan from dawn to sunset (no food or drink).
- The other pillars of the faith are giving to the needy, openly declaring faith in Allah and Muhammad as His last messenger, and making a pilgrimage at least once during one's lifetime to the first House of God in Mecca.

Diet

Muslims are permitted only *halal* foods (i.e., foods that have been prepared according to Muslim law). Some Muslim youth will eat beef, lamb, and chicken only if they have been slaughtered in the Islamic manner (*Zabiha*). Pork is forbidden to Muslims, but fish is acceptable.

Festivals

Leaders should allow the Scout appropriate time off from usual activities for special religious festivals. The leaders are encouraged to find out from the boy's family when these festivals occur and note the obligations.

Support

The Islamic Society of North America supports the use of Scouting and is represented on the National Religious Relationships Committee.