



MICHAEL P. ROSS
BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

December 4, 2009

Happy holidays and a belated happy Eid al-Adha!

I regret that a last-minute invitation to an event at the White House means I cannot be with you in person tonight. I want to recognize the important work of the New England Council of the American Islamic Congress here in our community.

In the last year, the American Islamic Congress has held a number of events that have brought Boston's diverse cultures together. You have helped organize world-class concerts, hosted human rights activists, organized a Muslim Film Festival, and planned a food drive during Ramadan to benefit Boston's Pine Street Inn.

Promoting an understanding of Muslim culture and diversity beyond geopolitical conflicts and theology was important when the American Islamic Congress was formed after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and it is just as vital today. Islam is the second largest religion in the world, yet many continue to hold misconceptions about its vast cultural diversity. One of the most effective ways to combat prejudice and misinformation is to share our culture and our stories with each other. It's a lesson I learned firsthand from my father, Steve Ross, a Holocaust survivor who shared his story with some of Boston's most vulnerable youth in the hopes they would see that they had opportunities in America that he never dreamed of in Poland.

I know that your organization does important work far beyond Boston, assisting jailed dissidents in Egypt, implementing daring anti-violence programs in Iraq, and growing a network of student chapters on campuses across the country. The fact that AIC acts on its stated principles gives your organization special credibility as a responsible voice of civic leadership. You do not merely talk about religious freedom and individual rights – you and your staff stand up for these values in challenging environments around the world.

Political leaders—including myself—consider the American Islamic Congress to be a valuable resource, both in Boston and around the world. Congratulations on a year of remarkable work. I look forward to watching the American Islamic Congress grow in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Michael P. Ross
President, Boston City Council

DISTRICT 8

BOSTON CITY HALL, ONE CITY HALL PLAZA, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02201
(617) 635-4225 FAX: (617) 635-4203 MICHAEL.ROSS@CI.BOSTON.MA.US