

Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs



Letter from Governor

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present to you the 2018 Annual Report of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs. This report highlights the dedicated work of the Commission over the past year.

I would like to thank the Commissioners for their review and recommendations throughout the process. You remain committed to honoring the legacy your community has made and celebrating the diversity in this great state. My administration will continue to share your rich heritage with other citizens and pass over your contributions to the next generations to come.



I would like to ask all of you to continue to participate in civic engagement and collaborate with the Commission. The 2020 census approaches, and the role of our communities is enormous. Your voice should be heard. You are the ones who can address the unique needs and strengths of your community. Our administration will do our best to share important information and opportunities for community improvement through the Commission.

I would like to congratulate the Commissioners on this accomplishment again and show appreciation for their leadership and commitment.

Thank you for empowering Marylanders and our communities. I look forward to working with you further in the future.

Larry Hogan

Governor of Maryland

Letter from Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The strength of Maryland comes from the diversity and vibrancy of our communities. Their distinctive culture and traditions make Maryland more embracing and inclusive. The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs has taken an important role to engage, educate, and empower those communities. The Commission has assisted the Hogan Administration in focusing on how it can change Maryland for the better, especially for ethnic populations.

Through our cultural and ethnic commissions, we are educated about your community's beautiful culture, history, and heritage. More importantly, we have been able to address the issues your community faces and to stand



together to find solutions suitable for you. The 2018 activities, projects, and initiatives of the Commission improved our neighborhoods and strengthened their solidarity.

I would like to congratulate the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs and each of the Commissioners who serve as representatives for Governor Larry Hogan and your respected communities. Congratulations to Chair Neveen Kurtom, esq. as her dedication is truly appreciated.

I also would like to applaud the Commission's Administrative Director Kevin R. Craft for his continued support and hard work.

With your perseverance of participation and leadership, the Commission will continue to meet its goals and vision.

Thank you.

Steven McAdams
Executive Director

Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

Letter from Commission Chair

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, it is my honor to present to you our 2018 Annual Report. We hope that our readers use this report to track our progress, review our state demographics, and stay in contact with our office. The work we do is a testament to the commitment of the Hogan Administration to our community. Your involvement is a vital component of our success. Our role as a Commission is to provide the administration with a comprehensive and effective outreach effort and to discuss and address community's needs and concerns. With the assistance of our constituents, we have been able to build and sustain a continually evolving network of businesses, faith



leaders, community leaders, nonprofit entities and residents, which continues to evolve in order to best represent our needs.

A few highlights from 2018 include the Joint Legislative Night held at the Miller Senate building, Ethnic Commission Appreciation Night at the Government House, and the Commission's tour of The Diyanet Center of America in Lanham. Looking forward for 2019, the Commission is planning to work with the Governor's Office of Small, Minority and Women Business Affairs on increasing engagement in order to better understand the Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program and expand on the already robust small business atmosphere existing among the Middle Eastern American community.

As the community continues to grow and strengthen, the Commission is committed to evolving our work plan to best represent that progress. As the nation's first state-level Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, and Executive Director Steven J. McAdams for their innovative leadership and continued support.

Sincerely,

Neveen Kurtom, esq.

Chair

Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs

INTRODUCTION

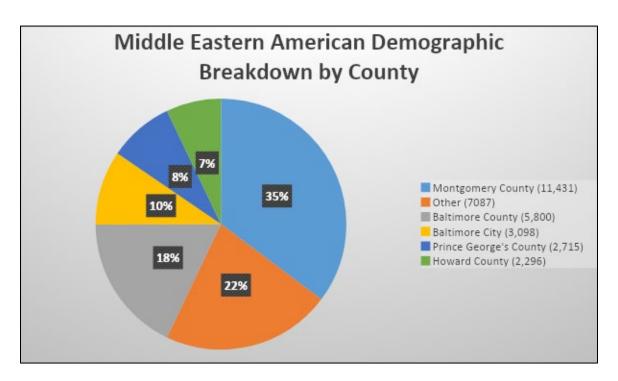
Since the beginning of the Hogan Administration, the focus of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs has been maintaining a dynamic and sustainable outreach effort that while addressing the needs and concerns of the Middle Eastern American community in Maryland. The Commission also invites and encourages increased diversity and inclusion in all matters relating to State activity. The Commission has made numerous visits to important cultural sites, venues and functions as the immediate and forceful responses to incidents that can potentially divide communities. The Commission's constant engagement has aided, supported and led efforts to celebrate the common sensibilities that all Marylanders share. Commissioners stand firmly against the negative stereotyping that all too often plagues minority communities. The report shows a small, but significant piece of the work being done to engage the at-large community through individual and collective effort.

What We Do:

Protect Religious Freedom
Promote Interfaith Dialogues
Support Communities







Source: Arab American Institute Foundation 2016, American Fact Finder 2017 estimates, USA.com 2014, & American Community Survey

Maryland is home for more than 30,000 Middle Eastern Americans.

The number of Arabic-speaking Marylanders has more than doubled over the last four decades. New Arab immigrants to Maryland mostly come from Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco.

The Arab American Institute Foundation Survey responders identify themselves with an ethnicity: Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, or Arab and with their origin country: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

ACTIVITIES

Annual Chanukah Brunch

Governor Hogan and First Lady Yumi Hogan open Government House every year for the annual Chanukah Brunch for the Jewish community in Maryland. A gift from the community was presented to Governor Hogan and First Lady Yumi Hogan in appreciation of their leadership for embracing different communities.





Holocaust Remembrance

Commissioners Sarit Brosh and Gunay Evinch built a partnership with the Israel Embassy to the United States to present "Beyond Duty." The exhibit, curated by Yad Vashem from the World Holocaust Remembrance Museum honored several diplomats as "The Righteous Among the Nations." The honored are non-Jews who took great risks to save Jews from the worst horrors of the holocaust. Many came from nations that were heavily involved in World War II, while others were not. The opening reception for the exhibit was highlighted by remarks given by Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford, Maryland Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith, and Deputy Chief of Mission Reuven Azar of the Embassy of Israel.

The event took place at the Jewish Museum of Maryland in Baltimore. While attending, the Commission also toured the second oldest synagogue in the United States (est. 1845). The synagogue is the oldest religious edifice in continuous use in the State of Maryland.

A subsequent event was also conceived and flawlessly executed by Commissioners Sarit Brosh and Gunay Evinch. The screening of "Desperate Hours" at the Jewish Museum of Maryland was attended by several special guests, including diplomats from Israel and Turkey's embassies to the United States, members of the Turkish Parliament, Maryland Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith, the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives Steven McAdams, Director of the Jewish Museum of Maryland Marvin Pinkert, and Director of the film Victoria Barrett. The film highlights the efforts of several Turkish diplomats who took great risks in providing many potential holocaust victims passports and eventual refuge in Turkey.





Crisis Response

Governor Hogan had a conversation with Israel's Ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer, prior to speaking at an event organized by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington in response to the tragic shootings that occurred just two days prior at the Tree of Life Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh. Joined by Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia, Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, DC, and several faith, community, and leaders from the Capital Region, Governor Hogan spoke powerfully about the free practice of religion and our state's and, indeed, our nation's responsibilities to protect it.

Capital Gazette Interfaith Prayer Vigil

Commissioners Rudwan Abu-Rumman and Maher Kharma joined First Lady Yumi Hogan in showing support for the Annapolis community at an interfaith prayer vigil for the victims of the Capital Gazette shootings. The gathering was organized by Interfaith Director Jennifer Gray in conjunction with several local faith leaders.





Volunteer for Maryland

Commissioner Rudwan Abu-Rumman, Vice Chair Sarit Brosh and Chair Neveen Kurtom assisted the Community Action Council of Howard County at their food pantry in Columbia.





Turkish American Steering Committee Divanet Center of America Community Action Council of Howard County Council on American Islamic Relations - MD Chapter Embassy of Israel to the United States Embassy of Turkey to the United States Embassy of Egypt to the United States **World Artists Experiences** Maryland Sister States Committee **Baltimore Jewish Council** Jewish Community Relation Council of Greater Washington Islamic Society of Baltimore Anne Arundel County Muslim Council Greater Baltimore Muslim Council **Howard County Muslim Council** Muslim Community Center **United Maryland Muslim Council** Jewish Museum of Maryland Middle Eastern American Advisory Group of Montgomery County American Turkish Friendship Association Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations Civilizations Exchange and Cooperation Foundation Muslim Social Services Agency Annapolis Symphony Orchestra Temple Beth Shalom **Beth Tfiloh Congregation** Beth El Congregation **Baltimore Hebrew Congregation** World Trade Center Institute Maryland/Israel Development Center

Individual Partners: Rizwan Siddigi, Lenny Attman, & Bruce Bereano



Mission of the Commission

Remaining consistent with the current executive order, the mission of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs is to respond effectively to the needs and concerns of Maryland citizens who have ancestral heritage in Middle Eastern countries through expanded outreach and engagement with individuals and organizations within the community.

Commission Members

Chair - Neveen K. Kurtom, Esquire Vice Chair - Sarit Brosh Rudwan Abu-Rumman **Enas Elhanafi Mohamad Shahine** Randa Fahmy Karen Paikin Barall John Baddour Joseph (Jay) Taylor Gilda O. Karpouzian, Esquire Gunay Evinch, Esquire Haitham M. Alkhateeb Hesam K. Aghdami Maher Kharma Nadia Hassan **Dareen Daniels Nesrine Taha** Suliman (Sam) Shihadeh Siron Zidan



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