



PRESS RELEASE
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**ACLU OF HAWAII' I BOARD APPOINTS
SALMAH Y. RIZVI AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

HONOLULU, HAWAII': The Board of Directors of the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i (ACLU-HI) is excited to announce the appointment of **Salmah Y. Rizvi** as **Executive Director** to lead the ACLU-HI team. This bold new hire will allow the ACLU to protect and advance civil rights and liberties throughout Hawai'i.

Salmah Y. Rizvi brings a deep background in law, public policy, and security to her new position. She began her career working for the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, impacting many high-value missions. She was the first Chairwoman of the Defense Department's Islamic Cultural Employee Resource Group. She elevated the profile of Muslims as assets to U.S. national security and led ninety-two analysts in demanding accountable intelligence reporting on the Muslim world, free from Islamophobia. In this role, she worked tirelessly to protect the civil rights of Muslims working within highly-militarized institutions by speaking truth to power, and raising internal governance concerns. She often liaised with the Office of Equal Employment and Opportunity as an early pioneer in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives, enabling Muslims to be their authentic selves, spiritually and culturally, without employment backlash.

Rizvi decided to pivot and refocus her efforts on addressing systemic injustices more directly by turning to the law. Rizvi has litigated complex, impactful cases, including with other ACLU affiliates and their partners. Her civil rights litigation, advocacy, and activism have centered around bail reform, increased monitorship of prisons, enhanced conditions for incarcerated people, greater integrative mechanisms within reentry courts, the abolishment of mandatory minimums, religious freedom, the protection of free speech rights of LGBTQIA+ students, the right for student activists to boycott and divest, voting rights, and racial justice in appellate law spaces. She has also worked on issues intersecting Native Hawaiian rights, criminal immigration, and asylum. She has argued at the U.S. Court of Appeals. Importantly, she also co-founded and served as Founding President of the American Muslim Bar Association. Rizvi also completed two distinguished judicial clerkships, for the Honorable Judge Theodore McKee of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and most recently with the Honorable Judge J. Michael Seabright of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i.



Rizvi holds a J.D. from the New York University School of Law, an M.S. from the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, and a B.A. in Anthropology from Johns Hopkins University. She is a Soros Fellow and Truman Scholar.

“We are delighted to have Salmah step into this new role as our Executive Director,” ACLU of Hawai‘i President Marianita Lopez said. Former Board President and current Secretary Barbara Ankersmit, who chaired the search committee, added, **“We know, with Salmah’s leadership, that we will continue to provide a strong presence in Hawai‘i and will continue to do vitally important work.”**

Rizvi replaces outgoing Executive Director, Scott T. Greenwood, who will continue to serve the ACLU as its Executive Director in Arizona. **“The Board could not have made a better choice in appointing Salmah as its Executive Director. She is a brilliant, visionary leader who will advance on the foundation this talented staff rebuilt in the last fifteen months.”**

In her free time, Rizvi organizes for the Zawayah Foundation of Hawai‘i, hosting initiatives aimed to heal residents. She also knows multiple languages and has travelled to over seventy countries for pleasure, work, school, and speaking engagements. Born in Indonesia, Rizvi is the daughter of immigrants—a Pakistani father and Guyanese mother. Raised as a Shia Muslim, Rizvi’s fight for justice is embedded in her creed.

Rizvi previously lived in the Puna District of the Big Island and currently resides in Honolulu, with her children who are learning ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and her husband, Dr. Saquib Ali Usman, who teaches Anthropology at the University of Hawai‘i.

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The mission of the Hawai‘i affiliate of the ACLU is to protect the civil liberties contained in the state and federal constitutions through litigation, legislative, and public education programs. The ACLU is funded primarily through private donations and offers its services at no cost to the public. The ACLU does not accept any government funds.