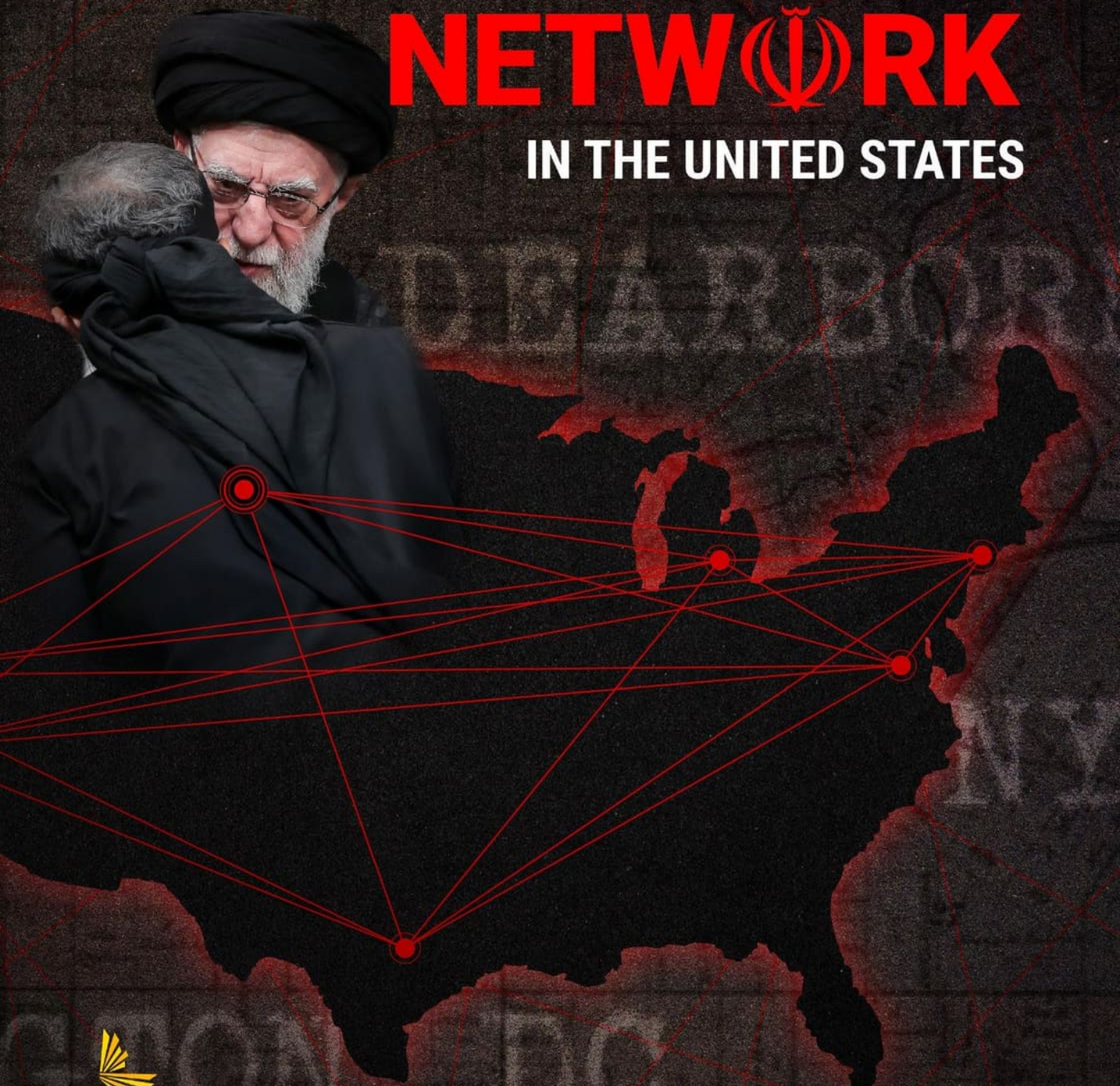
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S
INFLUENCE NETWORK
IN THE UNITED STATES



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THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S INFLUENCE NETWORK IN THE UNITED STATES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard has stated that the threat posed by Islamist ideology represents "the greatest near- and long-term threat to American freedom." One concrete dimension of that threat has received limited sustained scrutiny: the construction of durable, institution-based influence networks operating inside the United States through religious, educational, and nonprofit structures. This report examines several of these networks built by the Islamic Republic over decades, designed for persistence, replication, and adaptation rather than short-term or covert operations.

At the center of this architecture sits the Alavi Foundation, a New York City-based nonprofit whose principal asset, a 36-story office tower located on Fifth Avenue, generates sustained revenue used to support affiliated institutions nationwide. Court filings and public reporting describe the foundation as operating under the direction of Islamic Republic officials. Through Alavi-funded properties, clerical placements, and affiliated organizations, Tehran has established long-term institutional footholds that extend beyond cultural or religious activity. According to the foundation's own disclosures, its aid program has supported more than thirty-five organizations across the United States. Tehran's messaging, personnel, and ideological guidance are disseminated domestically, forming an infrastructure that extends beyond isolated religious or cultural programming.

Across regions, the model is consistent. An anchor property provides permanence and legal insulation. Clerics and administrators trained in Iran, primarily in Qom, supply ideological leadership. Accredited K–12 schools, youth programs, and community organizations extend influence into weekday education and social life. Over time, personnel establish additional mosques and programs, reproducing the same structure in adjacent communities. The result is a network of interoperable nodes through which money, ideas, and individuals circulate across state lines.

The Washington, D.C., metropolitan area represents the origin point of this approach. Early efforts centered on institutional capture and intimidation, including the attempted takeover of the Islamic Center of Washington in 1981. Within the same region, the Muslim Student Association–Persian-Speaking Group (MSA–PSG) emerged as a critical node. FBI reporting and Senate testimony characterize the group as an intelligence-gathering and transnational repression platform aligned with the Islamic Republic, operating under the cover of a campus-recognized student organization.

In Maryland and Virginia, the network evolved into a replicable school–mosque model. The Islamic Education Center in Potomac combined an Alavi-funded property with a co-located K–12 school, embedding clerical ideology into daily education. That configuration proved durable and portable. In Virginia, affiliated actors adapted the same approach through youth-facing cultural and language programs that served as entry points to structured religious and ideological instruction.

Michigan demonstrates the model under conditions of demographic concentration and institutional density. In Dearborn, where a large Shia population is geographically concentrated, multiple aligned institutions reinforce one another. Anchor mosques, splinter centers, private schools, youth organizations, and media platforms function as an ecosystem that normalizes regime-aligned narratives within routine communal life.

Texas illustrates the same architecture operating at scale across large metropolitan areas. In Houston, an Alavi-funded anchor institution supports a full-time private school, coordinated youth rituals packaged for Iranian state media, and an outward-facing mobilization arm that translates religious ideology into activist frameworks accessible to non-Muslim audiences. Parallel structures operate in the Dallas–Fort Worth area, where conversion programs and youth networks replicate the same model in a separate metropolitan context.

Taken together, these cases show a coherent strategy rather than disconnected incidents. The network emphasizes long-term investment, youth formation, clerical circulation, and property ownership to ensure persistence across leadership changes and periods of scrutiny. Addressing this challenge requires policy responses that focus on structural enablers rather than isolated actors, enforce existing transparency and disclosure requirements, and protect civil liberties while preventing foreign state exploitation of open civic space.

This report does not assess Islam or Muslim communities in the United States. It examines the actions of a foreign state and the institutional mechanisms it uses to project influence abroad. The focus throughout is on property ownership, governance, funding, clerical pipelines, and coordination with state entities, assessed through publicly documented evidence and existing legal frameworks.

The Nation's Capital: The D.C. Metro Area

The first successful iteration of an Islamic Republic influence network, which later served as a template for expansion elsewhere in the United States, emerged in the Washington, D.C metropolitan area.

In October 1981, shortly after the Islamic Revolution, a group of Iranian supporters of Ruhollah Khomeini occupied the Islamic Center of Washington. Participants intimidated staff and the mosque's imam in an effort to seize control of the institution.

The mosque's governing board, composed of ambassadors from more than forty Islamic nations, initiated legal proceedings. A Superior Court judge ordered the demonstrators to vacate the premises. After they refused, some of the occupiers were charged with criminal contempt. While unsuccessful, this instance catalyzed a strategic switch to persistence through legal pressure and organizational replication.

Muslim Student Association–Persian-Speaking Group (MSA–PSG)

The MSA–PSG, headquartered in Washington, D.C., has a long-documented record of alignment with the Islamic Republic and, according to FBI reporting, has functioned as an intelligence-gathering and transnational repression node since its inception. Violent Khomeinist activity was present from the organization's earliest years. Today, MSA–PSG continues to organize major pro-Tehran youth programming, including the yearly conference and logistical support such as arranging student buses to transport attendees to protests, rallies, and affiliated events.

Mostafa Chamran, who later served as the Islamic Republic Minister of Defense, and Ebrahim Yazdi, who later held the positions of Islamic Republic Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for Revolutionary Affairs, founded the Islamic Students' Association of America in 1964. Several years later, this organization was formally incorporated into the Muslim Student Association (MSA), which had been originally established by Arab and Pakistani students, and designated as the parent organization's "Persian-speaking group" (MSA–PSG).

While affiliation with the MSA provided a "useful security cover" to the Khomeinist radicals, the Persian-Speaking Group nonetheless "retained its autonomy [from the overall MSA] at all times," enabling it to pursue regime-aligned objectives without effective internal oversight.

According to FBI assessments, Washington, D.C. serves as the strategic center of gravity for MSA–PSG. Policy formulation and major funding activities are concentrated in the capital, with financial support flowing from the Iranian Foreign Ministry through the Iranian Interest Section.

The FBI has assessed that MSA–PSG operates as an extension of the Islamic Republic on United States campuses, where it has sought to suppress opposition through intimidation and, in some cases, violence.

In 1999 Senate testimony, then-FBI Director Louis Freeh, described MSA-PSG as "comprised almost exclusively of fanatical, anti-American Iranian Shiite Muslims," which, "the Iranian government relies heavily upon...for low-level intelligence and technical expertise." Separate 1998 Senate testimony from Dale Watson, then-FBI International Terrorism Section Chief, corroborates these statements. An older, but relevant 1987 FBI report said participants at the MSA–PSG's fifteenth annual conference were prompted to "pledged their allegiance to the Government of Iran."

Additional FBI reporting has described the group's primary targets as individuals in the United States, "in opposition to Khomeini." FBI reporting also notes that MSA-PSG members frequently traveled to Iran and met with authorities to discuss measures aimed at countering opposition groups and organizations based in the United States.

The FBI also detailed an overlapping extremist pro-Khomeini ecosystem in the United States, referred to variously as Anjoman, Hezbollah (Party of God), or MSA–PSG, which operated primarily through the campus-recognized MSA–PSG channel. According to FBI descriptions, participants within this ecosystem engaged in activities including:

- Gathering intelligence on anti-Khomeini Iranians residing in the United States;
- Facilitating the covert shipment of embargoed United States technology to Iran;
- Disseminating propaganda through meetings, publications, and demonstrations;
- Attempting forcible takeovers of mosques to advance Khomeini's ideological project.

Since the early '80s, MSA–PSG has hosted an annual conference that it presents as a forum for "spiritual reflection and Islamic values." Reporting and speaker lineups indicate that the conference has functioned as a platform for Tehran-aligned Shi'a clerics from across North America to disseminate hardline regime messaging.

The 2025 conference, held in Detroit, Michigan, from December 26 to December 28, featured several speakers mentioned elsewhere in this report, including Usama Abdulghani and Sheikh Navid Chroosheh. Islamic Republic state-run outlets, including IRNA, routinely promote the conference

MARYLAND

Islamic Education Center in Potomac, Maryland (IEC-M)

After their removal from the Islamic Center of Washington following their attempt to take over the center, members of the same Khomeinist network used Alavi Foundation resources to acquire a new facility, **the Islamic Education Center in Potomac, Maryland (IEC-M)**, in 1981. For years, IEC-M was "run directly by the Alavi Foundation." In 1998, the center re-registered as an independent nonprofit while continuing to operate on Alavi-owned property. Cumulatively, IEC-M and its co-located K–12 Muslim Community School/Alim School have received at least $3.6 million from Alavi.

The pairing of a mosque with a full-time school on a single property confers institutional durability. The school's daily operations extend the worldview of Qom-trained imams into weekday instruction and peer networks. This configuration proved replicable and became a standard template for subsequent expansion.

Key features of the Potomac model include:

- An Alavi-funded property serving as a permanent institutional base
- A co-located accredited K–12 school integrated into religious programming
- Clerical leadership trained in Qom with authority over both mosque and school spaces



Since its inception, the IEC-M has repeatedly served as a venue for officials of the Islamic Republic. In 2007, the center hosted Ayatollah Mohsen Qaraati, former head of the Islamic Republic's Literacy Movement Organization and a prominent Quran recitationist on Islamic Republic state television, positions that require approval from the Supreme Leader. Qaraati delivered sixteen sermons during his visit to Maryland, which were then uploaded to U.S. based social media websites for distribution. In the years that have followed, IEC-M has continued to host official regime programming, including events organized by the Islamic Republic's Interest Section in Washington, D.C., commemorating the Anniversary of the Victory of the Revolution. One notable event commemorated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which was broadcast on Islamic Republic state television.

This pattern has continued as recently as May 2024, when IEC-M again hosted senior Interest Section officials following the deaths of President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian. At that event, the head of the Interest Section, Mehdi Atefat, addressed attendees described as supporters of the Islamic Republic and Islamic Revolution. The gathering prompted significant community backlash after an Interest Section employee reportedly made a threatening gesture toward Iranian-American protesters outside the venue.

Idara-e-Jaferia - Burtonsville, MD

Opened in 1990 in Burtonsville, Maryland, Idara-e-Jaferia operates as an Arabic and Urdu alternative to the IEC while continuing to maintain its political connections with Qom via its resident alim, Sheikh Jalil Nawee. The Idara-e-Jaferia represents one of the largest mosques in the United States, located roughly 25 miles from Washington, D.C. Idara-e-Jaferia administers several subsidiary institutions that operate in-house in Burtonsville like:

- Jaferia Islamic School
- Idara Youth
- Idara Kids

Sheikh Jaili Nawee was born and raised in Accra, Ghana where he was trained at a seminary that was founded and funded by the Islamic Republic regime. He eventually moved to Qom where he attended Al-Mustafa University/Seminary, a U.S.-sanctioned entity. He also received an M.A. from Imam Khomeini Seminary in Qom.

Nawee often delivers sermons in conjunction with IEC-M, and is a teacher at the IEC-M's Alim Academy. While IEC-M operates directly under the supervision of the Alavi Foundation, and therefore the Islamic Republic, Idara-e-Jaferia seems to operate with greater autonomy.

VIRGINIA

The Manassas Mosque

In 1994, Abolfazl Bahram Nahidian, an organizer associated with the Potomac network, founded **the Manassas Mosque**, replicating the Maryland model in Virginia. Within this ecosystem, the Manassas Mosque has adopted a more direct public posture than other affiliated centers, with fewer efforts to moderate or contextualize its ideological messaging.

Nahidian's involvement in Khomeinist organizing in the United States predates the mosque by more than a decade. A 1980 Washington Post profile described him as "acknowledged by all as the most prominent supporter in this country of Khomeini" and an "inspirational force behind the supporters of the revolution" in the United States. On November 4, 1979, the same day radicals seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Nahidian was arrested alongside several others for scaling the Statue of Liberty and unfurling an anti-Shah banner. In the spring of 1980, Nahidian led the group of pro-Khomeini militants who occupied the Islamic Center of Washington on Massachusetts Avenue in October 1981.

Nahidian's network also intersected with the only known successful Iranian-directed assassination on U.S. soil. David Theodore Belfield, an African-American convert to Islam who took the name Daoud Salahuddin, frequented an Iranian student center operated by Nahidian in Washington, D.C. According to reporting in the Washington Post, Nahidian provided Salahuddin with housing and employment during the late 1970s with some accounts describing Salahuddin as Nahidian's bodyguard. On July 22, 1980, Salahuddin, disguised as a postal worker, appeared at the Bethesda, Maryland, home of Ali Akbar Tabatabai, a former Iranian diplomat and vocal critic of the Khomeini regime. Salahuddin shot Tabatabai three times. Salahuddin fled to Iran via Canada and Switzerland, where he has remained as a fugitive. A CIA report and multiple press accounts place Nahidian in Salahuddin's orbit during the period leading up to the killing. Nahidian would go on to tell the Washington Post that he was "very happy this happened," referring to Tabatabai's killing.

Despite this record, Nahidian reestablished himself through the Manassas Mosque in 1994. The mosque received a total of approximately $193,000 from the Alavi Foundation in 2004 and 2005, according to federal tax filings. As with other Alavi-funded institutions, this financial link connects the mosque to a foundation that the Department of Justice has alleged operates on behalf of the Islamic Republic regime.

Nahidian has maintained a consistent ideological line since the 1990s. At a 2010 Quds Day rally in Washington, D.C., he publicly claimed that Israel had orchestrated the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as part of a Zionist conspiracy, calling Israelis "the most devilish ones on the Earth." The mosque's own website featured a blog tribute to Qasem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander responsible

for the deaths of over six hundred American military personnel, who was killed in a U.S. strike in January 2020. Nahidian authored the tribute. In 2019, the mosque openly celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized 750 pounds of Iranian-made ceramic tiles donated to the mosque for potential violations of sanctions on Iran; the tiles were later released.

This continuity remained visible through October 2023, when the mosque publicly declared support for what it described as the "Palestinian Resistance," specifically Hamas. In a community newsletter, the mosque stated: "We stand firmly with the Palestinian Resistance (Hamas)." A 2023 letter from nine House Republicans to Attorney General Merrick Garland and Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines identified the Manassas Mosque as one of four U.S.-based Islamic organizations suspected of operating under Iranian influence. The letter cited video footage showing the mosque's interior adorned with photographs of IRGC members killed in Syria, a life-sized cutout of Ayatollah Khomeini, and Iranian flags and slogans.

As recently as March 2026, following the deaths of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in joint U.S.-Israeli strikes, the Manassas Mosque hosted a Ramadan iftar and remembrance service. Social media posts from the mosque offered "condolences and glad tidings on the martyrdom of His Eminence Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei," referring to him as "our leader." The mosque also co-sponsored a "Stop the War on Iran" march on the White House alongside organizations including CodePink and the D.C. chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America.

The Manassas ecosystem has focused heavily on youth-facing cultural programming that operates as an entry point to religious and ideological instruction. These programs have emphasized language and cultural activities as an initial draw, followed by structured Shia religious education. The mosque maintains a dedicated youth wing and organizes programming through WhatsApp networks and community events. As with the IEC-M model in Potomac, this approach embeds ideological formation within routine community activities, extending the influence of the imam's worldview beyond Friday prayers into sustained peer and educational networks.

Taken together, the Manassas Mosque illustrates a distinctive variant within the broader network: one in which a single figure with deep operational roots in the Khomeinist movement has sustained an institutional platform for over three decades. Nahidian's trajectory, from the Islamic Center occupation and the Tabatabai assassination of the early 1980s, through the founding of a mosque with Alavi funding, to public declarations of support for Hamas and memorials for Iranian state leaders, demonstrates that the network's longevity depends not only on institutional structures but on the continuity of committed ideological actors operating within them.

Michigan: An Extremist Vision Completed

Michigan's influence network represents the Islamic Republic's ideological model nearing completion on American soil. The state is home to one of the largest Shia Muslim populations in the United States. In Dearborn, approximately forty percent of residents identify as Muslim, the majority of them Shia. Within this environment, regime-aligned institutions operate in close proximity, allowing Tehran's ideological narratives to be embedded in routine religious, educational, and communal activity.

Rather than relying on a single organization or cleric, the Michigan network functions as an ecosystem. Anchor mosques, splinter centers, private schools, youth programs, and media-facing initiatives reinforce one another. Clerical lineages and leadership pipelines link these institutions to one another and to seminaries in Iran, reducing dependence on any single figure while preserving ideological continuity.

DEARBORN

Islamic Center of America (ICofA)

The **Islamic Center of America in Dearborn**, originally established in 1962 and now the largest mosque in North America, serves as a central anchor within the Islamic Republic's influence network in Michigan. Over the decades, ICofA became a launchpad for clerics who later established ideologically aligned institutions across the region.When ICofA relocated to a new $14 million campus in 2005, its original Detroit mosque on Joy Road was repurposed as the **Al-Zahraa Islamic Center**, ensuring the old site remained an active node in the network. ICofA itself has attempted to present a more moderate public image, while at the same time incubating figures who went on to advance more openly hardline positions at their own centers.

ICofA emphasizes that its founding imam, Mohamad Jawad Chirri, secured a $44,000 gift from Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to help buy land and construct the original mosque. This claim, which was absent from ICofA's website only a few years ago, attempts to frame the mosque as a pan-Arab, anti-colonial era effort rather than one currently rooted in post-1979 Khomeinist ideology.

While ICofA's institutional history and clerical lineage provide critical context for understanding its long-term role within the Islamic Republic's influence ecosystem, that background alone does not fully capture the center's present-day orientation. The transition from formative influence and indirect ideological diffusion to overt political signaling becomes most apparent in ICofA's actions following major geopolitical events involving the Islamic Republic. In recent years, senior ICofA leadership has moved beyond historical ambiguity and public neutrality, engaging in conduct that reflects explicit alignment with regime narratives, priorities, and personnel. This shift is particularly evident in the center's response to the killing of senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps figures and in the public activities of its leading clerics in both domestic and national forums.

In January 2020, shortly after the United States conducted the strike that killed IRGC Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, ICofA hosted a vigil commemorating his life, during which senior ICofA imam Ibrahim Kazerooni delivered remarks praising Soleimani and crediting him with instilling fear in what he described as the enemies of Islam, particularly the United States. The following month, Kazerooni appeared at Amherst College during Interfaith Harmony Week to deliver a lecture titled "Islamic Law and Human Rights," where he made vulgar remarks to students, defended the Islamic Republic's use of violence, and asserted that United States authorities discriminate systematically against Shia Muslims. His response to a student question concerning Soleimani escalated into a confrontation that drew visible discomfort from attendees and required moderator intervention, with reporting from the event quoting Kazerooni posing a graphic hypothetical involving sexual violence as part of his remarks. On May 4, 2020, the Islamic Republic-run Tehran Times published an English-language article highlighting Kazerooni and ICofA's role in advancing support for the Islamic Republic.

Islamic House of Wisdom (IHW)

The **Islamic House of Wisdom**, founded in 1995 by Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi, represents a significant institutional offshoot of ICofA. Elahi served as ICofA's imam from 1992 to 1995 and moved to the United States from Iran in 1989 with the stated purpose of working at ICofA. IHW's public materials openly venerate Ruhollah Khomeini, and the institution has received direct funding from the Alavi Foundation.

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Elahi, who was still in Iran, became an ideological indoctrination officer within the Iranian Navy, whose personnel he said were "more Westernized," and therefore needed to be further "educated." He was promoted to serve as the political-ideological head of the Islamic Republic's Bushehr Naval Base during the Tanker War with Iraq.

Elahi is a long-time insider of the Islamic Republic who, today, often meets with top U.S. politicians and foreign policy lobbyists "on behalf of the Dearborn Shia community," but, in reality, the record suggests has consistently served the interests of the Islamic Republic. Some examples include:

- On September 3, 2017, Imam Elahi traveled to Iran to attend the "6th International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada," at which time he spoke with his "longtime friend," former Islamic Republic President Khatami, as well as Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who would go on to serve as Islamic Republic Foreign Minister.

- Then-U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris spoke with, and was photographed alongside, Elahi on July 12, 2021. Harris thanked Elahi for his "preparation to host her at the House of Wisdom," where she was scheduled to visit the week prior, having missed the event due to a "flood emergency in the area."

- On January 1, 2023, Elahi delivered a prayer at the Inaugural Ceremony of Gretchen Whitmer, who was being sworn in for her second term as the 49th Governor of Michigan.

- On September 24, 2025, Elahi met with Islamic Republic President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. National Iranian-American Council founder and Quincy Institute Vice President Trita Parsi, and Scott Ritter, a disgraced former U.S. Marine Corps officer convicted of sex crimes who regularly defends U.S. adversaries on Russian state outlets such as RT and Sputnik, were also in attendance.





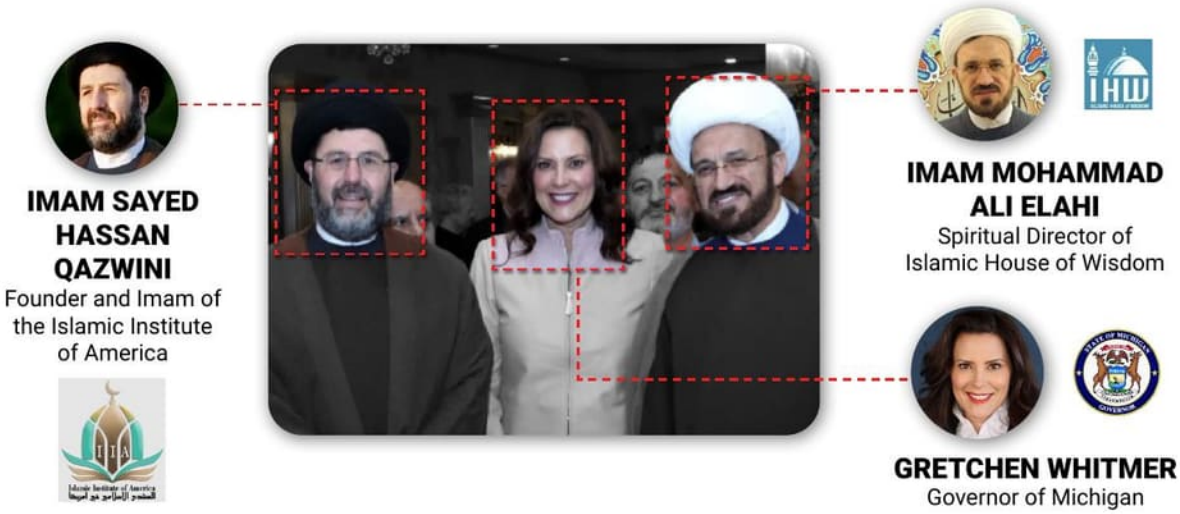
Islamic Institute of America (IIofA)

The **Islamic Institute of America (IIofA) in Dearborn Heights** is a prominent splinter node in the broader Dearborn ecosystem, illustrating how the region's anchor institutions incubate satellite centers that then become autonomous nodes.

Founded by Imam Hassan Qazwini following his departure from ICofA, where he had served for approximately eighteen years, IIofA purchased and converted a former Baptist church into its permanent base of operations.

IIofA's power structure is tightly identified with the al-Qazwini family, a prominent clerical family originally from Karbala, Iraq, then settling in Qom following their exile from Iraq in 1980. Imam Hassan Qazwini is the founding cleric and central public face of IIofA, with younger Qazwini family members, including Ahmed Qazwini, Baqer Qazwini, and Haider Qazwini, leading additional sermons, seminary classes, youth programming, and serving in other roles.

Qazwini's clerical ideology is rooted in the regime's Qom Seminary environment, giving him direct exposure to, and credibility within, the broader Khomeinist political-religious ecosystem that Tehran has exported across diaspora spaces.
This family-centered model matters because it reduces internal pluralism. When leadership is concentrated in one lineage, the center can function more like a disciplined ideological transmitter and less like a community mosque.
IIofA's sermons, seen via the Institute's online channels, provide a platform for political framing, including on Israel, Islamophobia in the United States, and the supposed illegitimacy of protest movements against the Islamic Republic in Iran.



Hadi Institute and Light of Guidance (LoG)

Founded in 2015, the **Hadi Institute** represents a more rhetorically aggressive node within the Dearborn ecosystem. The institute is led by Usama Abdulghani, a United States–born Shia convert who studied for more than twenty years at the Islamic seminary in Qom. In the regime's Michigan toolset, The Hadi Institute functions as a more narrow and rhetorically radical community center node than IHW, with a more concentrated emphasis on youth "education," publication services, and the production of provocative pro-Islamic Republic content for Abdulghani's platform, Light of Guidance, which serves as an avenue for adult outreach and radicalization via social media. This culminated in the creation of Hadi's subsidiary organizations the **Hadi Islamic Montessori**, **Hadi Publications**, and the previously referenced **Light of Guidance.**



In Dearborn Michigan, Sheikh Usama Abulghani's most prolific sermons feature the US born, Qom educated cleric seated next to portraits of regime symbols, like slain Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, underlining the deep-rooted connections between Dearborn and Tehran.

In 2019, the Hadi Institute moved into its new location, replacing Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, which had been located at that address since 1952.

The **Hadi Islamic Montessori** offers full-time classes for children from preschool through 5th grade. The school is led by Abdulghani, with Tarek Bazzi, a self-described "activist," working as one of the school's instructors. On the school's own "Our Story" page, Bazzi is pictured teaching young children in a classroom where a Palestinian flag hangs on the wall, making the school's political symbolism visible in the educational environments of children as young as four years old.

Bazzi's dual role as a public provocateur and classroom instructor illustrates how Hadi's ecosystem fuses early-childhood education with the broader radical messaging of the Hadi Institute. Several of Bazzi's social media profiles include:

- In June of 2025, Bazzi posted a video to Instagram in which he says, "Let us not forget that the Resistance right now is fighting on behalf of all of humanity. Because, God forbid, if the arrogant and tyrannical forces of U.S. imperialism and Zionist colonialism win this battle, then a precedent would be set for the rest of the world that anybody who would step out of line could expect the same genocide to be brought to them."

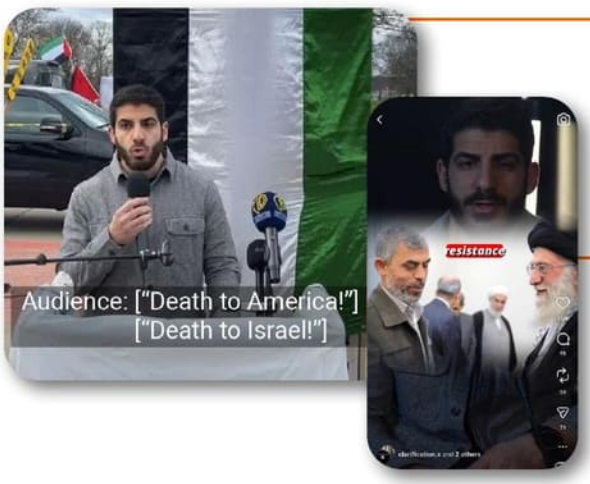
- In April of 2024, while leading an Al-Quds Day rally in Dearborn, Bazzi said, "We have been asked in the past, 'Why are our protests on the International Al-Quds Day so anti-America? Why don't we just focus more on Israel and not talk so much about America?' Gaza has shown the entire world why these protests are so anti-America. Because it's the United States government that provides the funds for all of these atrocities…This is why Imam Khomeini, who declared the International Al-Quds Day, would say to pour all of your chants and shouts upon the head of America." The crowd then broke into chants of "Death to America!"

- Hadi Publications aims "to publish quality books for children and adults alike" and "to create a community of visionaries by appealing to a reader's sense of wonder, discovery, and innate nature of seeking truth." The publisher's own "About Us" page continues, "In the vast world of literature, we deliver an unfiltered message in promoting an Islamic worldview in preparation of the Mahdi."

HADI MONTESSORI

24931 Union St, Dearborn, MI 48128

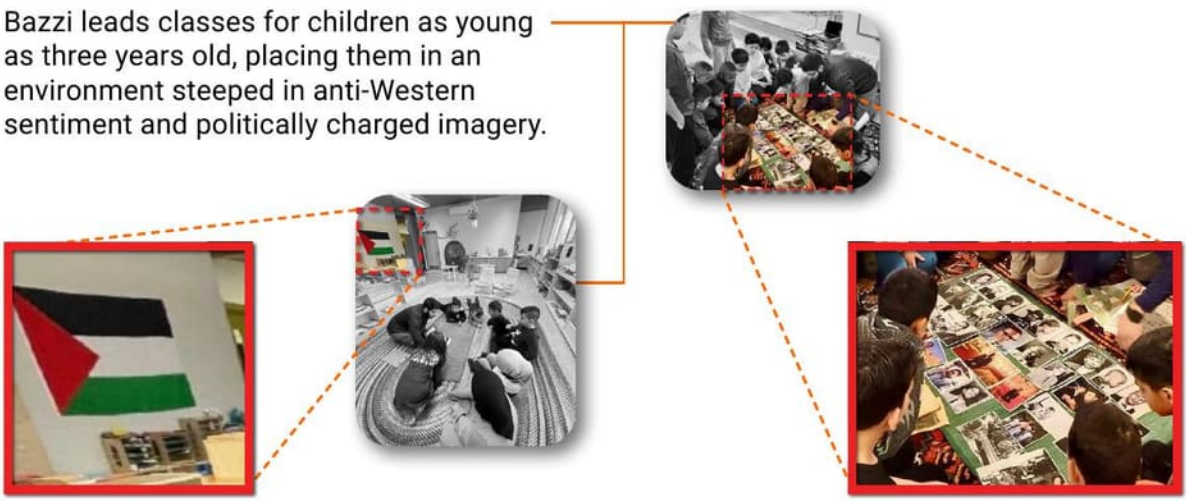
Enrolling children aged 3–11 | Classes led by Tarek Bazzi



In April of 2024, Bazzi can be seen inciting chants of "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel" while speaking at a Dearborn "Al-Quds Day" rally in support of the Islamic Republic.

Bazzi regularly posts provocative content on social media in which he praises the Islamic Republic and denounced what he characterizes as the "U.S.–Zionist imperial world order."

Bazzi leads classes for children as young as three years old, placing them in an environment steeped in anti-Western sentiment and politically charged imagery.





Hadi Montessori regularly posts images of its students, some as young as three years old, attending rallies in support of the Islamic Republic, showing that the messaging embedded in Bazzi's classes extends beyond the classroom.

Examples of Hadi Publications' books, with descriptions quoted from Hadi's website, are listed below:

- "The Echoes of Stones highlights the injustices carried out by the Israeli government and the history that continues to repeat itself today. We want the cause of Palestine to remain in the hearts of our youth and to ignite a fire of resistance that will see the land liberated by the will of Allah (swt) and alongside our awaited Imam Al-Mahdi (ajtf)." The cover of this children's book features an illustration of a young boy, who is wearing a Palestinian flag as a cape, throwing a rock at a tank.

- "Karbala's Greatest Heroes Coloring Book is the perfect introduction to the tragic story of Karbala. Become familiar with the story of Imam Hussain (as) and His companions with each page you turn."

Light of Guidance social media channels serve as intense vehicles of Islamic Republic propaganda, regularly posting clips of Abdulghani's fiery sermons overlaid with graphics and images glorifying Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Quotes from these sermons include:

- "The more you're able to explain why this war (referring to the Islamic Republic's attacks on Israel during the 12-Day War) is completely justified, why Iran is doing a favor to mankind, the more you are able to do that job...the harder Iran is going to be able to hit. Iran can finish the job [of annihilating Israel]. So, brothers and sisters, part of our job is to explain why this war is completely justified." Posted to Instagram on June 14, 2025, one day into the 12-Day War.

- "[Khamenei] laid out the blueprint. Well, what is the blueprint? How is this going to end? So, one of the main points is that there is no retreat and no concessions from the Resistance (referring to the Islamic Republic's 'Axis of Resistance'). There are only two ways this ends: either the Resistance will continue to batter them until Israel is annihilated or Israel will put its hands up and they will decide that they will allow the Resistance in Palestine to win." Posted to Instagram on October 14, 2024, following the Islamic Republic's "True Promise II" attacks on Israel that same month.

- "What Imam Khomeini said was that the true victory is training the youth. The victory of all victories is training the youth. Individuals like Shahid Qassem Soleimani, Shahid Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, these people were the true miracle of Imam Khomeini...The students of Imam Khomeini, one of them Hassan Nasrallah, trained people to become giant killers. The legacy of Imam Khomeini, brothers and sisters, is that we, his sons and daughters, should, wherever we are, build resistance communities." Posted to the Light of Guidance YouTube channel in 2022, although this video has since been deleted.

Texas: A Maturing Influence Hub

HOUSTON

Islamic Education Center of Houston (IEC-H) and Affiliated Entities

The Houston metropolitan area provides the most complete illustration of this scaled model in operation. At its center is **the Islamic Education Center of Houston (IEC-H)**, an anchor property funded by the Alavi Foundation. IEC-H operates a full-time K–12 private school, Al-Hadi School, alongside youth programming, coordinated ritual performances, and media production oriented toward Islamic Republic state outlets. A separate mobilization arm, **Rise Against Oppression (RISE)**, extends this activity into street-level political activism.

Within this ecosystem, ideological formation begins during the school week and continues through mosque programming on weekends and commemorative events. Children participate in structured recitations, speeches, and performances that carry explicit political content. These activities are filmed and edited for broadcast on Islamic Republic state media, where they are presented as evidence of ideological support for the Islamic Republic inside the United States. The same materials circulate domestically through networks tied to events such as Al-Quds Day.

Key components of the Texas ecosystem include:

- IEC-H as the primary site for religious services, social programming, and political messaging;
- Al-Hadi School as a full-time educational pipeline reinforcing ideological content;
- Rise Against Oppression (RISE) as an outward-facing mobilization arm targeting non-Muslim audiences.

IEC-H founding imam Hujjat al-Islam Nasser Saghaye-Biria personified the bridge between Houston and the Islamic Republic's core power centers. A close confidant and advisor of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Saghaye-Biria later became a senior figure in the hardline Front of Islamic Revolution and Resistance (Jebhe-ye Paydari) political party, deputy head of research at the Imam Khomeini Education Institute in Qom, and a parliamentary candidate. Upon his death in 2025, Khamenei issued a formal condolence message, in English and Persian, praising his "extensive efforts... inside and outside the country in propagating Islam and in education," a rare public benediction for a U.S. mosque leader.

His successor, Hujjat al-Islam Maulana Ghulam Hurr Shabbiri (resident imam ~2005–2015), was directly appointed by Khamenei. Shabbiri studied in Qom for a decade, served as resident alim at multiple Islamic Republic-aligned centers in Britain, helped establish new mosques there, and later moved on to the Islamic

Center of England, another node documented in NUFDI's UK network report, underscoring how personnel rotate through a transatlantic ecosystem.

The most blatant example of Tehran's connection to the Houston-based center was on July 27, 2022, where IEC-H released a video of children from its various in-house programs performing "Salam Farmandeh" ("Salute, Commander"), a now-famous Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) anthem. Dressed in coordinated outfits, the children sing in Farsi and English about being the "soldiers" of Seyyed Ali Khamenei, pledging: "I will be your army's commander... I will sacrifice everything for you... I make an oath to be your martyr." The video spread widely across Islamic Republic state media, which trumpeted it as evidence of grassroots support for the Islamic Republic inside the United States. Moreover, there has been a consistent practice of indoctrinating their youth worshipers into believing the United States is their enemy, as seen on February 20, 2019, IEC-H celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution with a program featuring Al-Hadi teenagers giving speeches about U.S. sanctions and the "enemy" role of America and its allies.



The Houston network's outward-facing posture has brought it into direct contact with United States law enforcement. In August 2020, RISE-affiliated cleric Muzzamil Husnain Zaidi was arrested in Houston and later pleaded guilty to acting as an unregistered agent of the Government of Iran. Court filings described Zaidi's involvement with Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps personnel, participation in activities consistent with foreign intelligence tradecraft, and the organization of structured cash transfers to Iran via third countries.

FBI affidavits describe Zaidi joining IRGC commanders aboard military aircraft in active combat zones, receiving training consistent with foreign intelligence tradecraft, and organizing teams of travelers to carry tens of thousands of dollars

in structured cash transfers via third countries. He and his co-defendants ultimately pleaded guilty in May 2024.

Despite these developments, RISE continued hosting the "Imam Khomeini Conference" featuring Zaidi himself and other Houston-area clerics, and in June 2025 helped organize a series of rallies across the United States, with a major focus on Texas, where regime flags and "No War With Iran" placards mixed seamlessly with anti-Israel and anti-U.S. messaging.

In 2026, following the death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, RISE uploaded a commemoration of the "martyred" leader, writing, "It is a moment of immense pride for Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and the wider Islamic world that its leader has attained the magnificent status of martyrdom."

The Muslim Congress

The Muslim Congress, founded in 2005 by Shabbiri, operates as a national platform promoting Islamic Revolution-aligned ideology to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. The organization hosts annual conferences that have featured Islamic Republic officials and clerics aligned with Tehran.

Unlike IEC-H, which anchors a geographically concentrated ecosystem, Muslim Congress functions primarily as a connective and amplification node. It emphasizes youth engagement, ideological education, and narrative framing rather than direct financial operations. Speakers associated with the organization have drawn scrutiny for antisemitic rhetoric and explicit alignment with the Islamic Republic. Imam Muhammad Al-Asi is a prominent scholar/Imam frequently speaking at Muslim Congress events, typically the conference itself. Al-Asi was labeled by the Anti-Defamation League as an anti-Semite who "has made numerous antisemitic speeches around the country for several years, with the LA Times writing that the Muslim Congress is a Houston-based group that largely looked to Khamenei and the Islamic Republic as its religious authority. On Feb 8, 2023, Ali Danial Hemani, a Pakistani-American who has spoken at Muslim Congress events from a young age, was indicted for possession of a firearm as an unlawful user of a controlled substance. Within the subsequent Petition for a Writ of Certiorari of his appeal, the following quote can be found: "A search of [Hemani's] phone...revealed communications suggesting that he was poised to commit fraud at the direction of suspected affiliates of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps...[Hemani's] mother was captured on video telling an Iranian news agency that she prayed that her two sons, including [Hemani], would become martyrs like Soleimani."

Annually, the Muslim Congress hosts a major conference in which senior Iranian officials are given a platform to address both Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the United States. Notably, the event has featured opening remarks from Islamic Republic senior official, Grand Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli.

On March 1, 2026, the Muslim Congress posted condolences for Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei across their social media channels.

DALLAS–FORT WORTH

Metroplex Organization of Muslims in North Texas (MOMIN)

The Metroplex Organization of Muslims in North Texas (MOMIN) is "the oldest Shia institution in the Dallas–Fort Worth area," founded in 1988 "by a handful of families who realized the need for an Islamic center." Today, it boasts that it serves more than 600 families from the site of a former church at 2945 Frankford Rd in Dallas.

Within this ecosystem, religious services form only one layer of engagement. Under the same organizational umbrella operate weekend schools, youth clubs, summer camps, and formal conversion tracks aimed at both Sunni Muslims and non-Muslims. These programs deepen social ties and position the institution as a primary community environment for participants.

Key elements of the MOMIN structure include:
- An anchor property serving as a permanent institutional base;
- A resident imam trained for nearly a decade in Qom;
- Youth and conversion programs extending beyond a legacy Shia population.

MOMIN's explicit focus on their "Reverts Alliance," aiming to convert Sunni Muslims to Shias, and general "Revert Program," aimed at converting non-Muslims, shows that MOMIN is not only serving a legacy Shia population, but is actively recruiting non-Muslims and Sunnis into its ideological orbit, then surrounding them with a ready-made social, educational, and media ecosystem.

The current resident imam, Molana Sayed Jawad Wahedi, trained for nine years in Qom, giving him direct roots in the Islamic Republic's seminary system. Before Dallas, he taught at the Islamic Education Center of San Antonio (IEC-SA), another Shia education hub funded directly by the Alavi Foundation.

On March 1, 2026, MOMIN hosted a memorial service for Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Imam Sayed Jawad Wahedi made several posts on social media commemorating Khamenei, including an AI-generated image depicting Khamenei in heaven alongside PMF leader Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis, IRGC Commander Qassem Soleimani, and Secretary General of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this report point to a specific policy gap. United States authorities tend to assess foreign influence activity through isolated violations, discrete actors, or episodic enforcement actions. The evidence presented here demonstrates a different challenge: the long-term construction of institution-based ecosystems that remain formally lawful while advancing the strategic objectives of a foreign state. The recommendations below identify concrete steps policymakers can take, using existing tools, to address that gap.

At the outset, it is essential to distinguish clearly between the Islamic Republic and the Iranian people. The vast majority of Iranian nationals who seek to enter the United States do so to study, work, build professional careers, and live free from the repression imposed by the regime in Tehran. Iranian Americans constitute one of the most highly educated, economically successful, and civically integrated immigrant communities in the country. Conflating those individuals with regime-directed actors undermines both American values and national security by diverting attention away from the structures and personnel the Islamic Republic deliberately exports. The focus of any policy response should remain squarely on foreign state-aligned institutions and operatives, not on individuals fleeing that state.

First, U.S. policymakers should treat coordinated nonprofit, religious, and educational ecosystems as the unit of analysis rather than individual entities in isolation. In practical terms, this analytic approach should be operationalized within existing authorities that already assess foreign influence and malign activity, including the Department of Justice's National Security Division, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Homeland Security's intelligence components, and the Department of State in its visa and accreditation functions. Examining shared property ownership, recurring clerical appointments, overlapping governance structures, and coordinated participation in foreign state-linked programming more accurately reflects how these networks operate and how they persist over time. The recommendations are designed to address foreign state activity conducted through lawful institutions, not religious belief or communal identity, and rely exclusively on existing authorities applied with precision.

Second, disclosure and registration requirements should be applied with explicit attention to sustained foreign-state alignment. Where nonprofit institutions rely on long-term property arrangements, clerical appointments, or governance relationships tied to a foreign government or its affiliated bodies, existing tools should be used in combination rather than in isolation. These include enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act and 18 U.S.C. § 951 (acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign government), sanctions exposure for parent or controlling entities where applicable, visa scrutiny and restrictions for aligned foreign-trained personnel, sustained review of property ownership and financing arrangements, and criminal liability for undeclared agency or material misrepresentation. Recent prosecutions illustrate that U.S. law already treats covert or concealed foreign alignment as an

ongoing condition rather than a discrete act. These include United States v. Bijan Rafiekian, which involved undeclared influence activity conducted on behalf of the Turkish government, and the 2024 indictments of two Russia Today (RT)-linked individuals charged with covertly funding and directing U.S.-based media operations on behalf of the Russian state. Applied together, these measures address structural alignment without altering statutory thresholds.

Third, education oversight bodies should be provided with clearer guidance on how foreign influence risks can manifest through private and religious school environments when those institutions are embedded within foreign state–aligned nonprofit ecosystems. Accrediting organizations and state education authorities already assess governance structures, curricular materials, and external affiliations as part of routine review processes. Precedent exists for applying this scrutiny in foreign influence contexts. Between 2019 and 2023, the Department of Education and multiple state authorities increased oversight of Confucius Institutes and other foreign-funded educational programs after determining that undisclosed foreign government involvement raised transparency and governance concerns. These actions resulted in closures, restructurings, or loss of federal funding eligibility at numerous universities. Importantly, those measures focused on disclosure, governance, and foreign control rather than ideology or protected speech. Applying similar transparency-based review to K–12 schools that are co-located with mosques or integrated into foreign-aligned nonprofit networks would address documented vulnerabilities without expanding regulatory authority or restricting religious instruction.

Fourth, U.S. policy on transnational repression should explicitly include institutional facilitation as a risk factor. In addition to direct threats or harassment by identifiable individuals, authorities should assess whether community institutions are being used to normalize surveillance, intimidation, or ideological enforcement against dissidents. This includes repeated targeting of specific communities, coordination with foreign diplomatic or interest sections, and the use of student or youth organizations to monitor or marginalize opponents of a foreign state. U.S. responses to Iranian and Russian transnational repression campaigns, including sanctions and criminal cases targeting intermediaries rather than overt state officials, provide precedent for examining institutional channels through which intimidation and influence are exercised.

Finally, all enforcement and oversight actions should be anchored in clear public guidance that distinguishes constitutionally protected religious practice from foreign state-directed political activity. Federal law enforcement agencies have repeatedly emphasized this distinction in public materials addressing foreign influence and transnational repression, clarifying that investigative predicates rest on direction or control by foreign governments rather than belief, ethnicity, or political viewpoint. This framing mirrors how the Department of Justice has presented enforcement actions against Russian and Chinese influence operations, where the focus has remained on covert state direction, nondisclosure, and coordination rather than

ideology. Maintaining this clarity is essential to protecting civil liberties while ensuring that foreign governments cannot exploit religious or civic space to establish durable influence infrastructure.

Taken together, the activity documented in this report may warrant review under existing immigration, sanctions, nonprofit oversight, and foreign agent authorities, applied on a case-by-case basis and consistent with constitutional protections.

Effective application of these authorities also requires accurate threat discrimination. The evidence presented here underscores that the principal risk emanates from foreign state-directed personnel, institutions, and financing networks, not from Iranian nationals broadly. The majority of Iranians seeking entry to or residing in the United States do so to pursue education, economic opportunity, or refuge from the Islamic Republic's repression, and Iranian Americans are among the most economically integrated and civically successful immigrant communities in the country. Enforcement approaches that fail to distinguish between regime-linked actors and those fleeing the regime risk misallocating resources while leaving the documented influence infrastructure intact.

CONCLUSION

The Islamic Republic has spent decades constructing a durable and adaptive influence architecture inside the United States. Rather than relying on isolated actors or short-term operations, it has invested in property, institutions, and personnel pipelines designed to persist across generations. This approach mirrors the regime's broader strategy abroad: embedding itself within existing social and legal frameworks to normalize its presence and limit the effectiveness of external pressure.

The cases examined in this report demonstrate that the network does not operate uniformly across regions. In Washington, D.C., early efforts focused on institutional capture and intimidation. In Maryland and Virginia, the model evolved into a replicable school–mosque template. In Michigan, demographic concentration enabled ecosystem saturation and normalization. In Texas, the same structure was adapted for scale, outward-facing activism, and national media exposure. Taken together, these variations show a coherent strategy rather than a series of disconnected incidents.

One defining feature of this network is its emphasis on youth and education. By shaping social environments during formative years, the institutions described here seek to produce ideological alignment that appears organic and community-driven. This long-term investment reduces reliance on direct foreign direction while preserving fidelity to Tehran's worldview.

A second consistent element is the circulation of clerics and administrators trained in Iran's seminaries, particularly in Qom. These personnel transfers reinforce ideological cohesion across geographically dispersed institutions and allow the network to regenerate leadership when individuals depart or face scrutiny.

The durability of this system poses a challenge for policymakers who typically address discrete violations or episodic threats. Legal action against individual actors, while necessary, does not by itself disrupt an ecosystem built around property ownership, educational accreditation, and community normalization. Effective responses must focus on structure as well as behavior.

Any policy response must be carefully calibrated. Overbroad measures risk undermining civil liberties and alienating communities that have no connection to foreign state activity. Precision, transparency, and adherence to existing legal frameworks are essential to maintaining public trust and democratic legitimacy.

The evidence presented in this report points to the need for sustained attention rather than episodic concern. Foreign influence networks of this kind are not dismantled through sporadic scrutiny or broad demographic restrictions, but through precise, sustained application of existing authorities to the institutions and actors aligned with hostile foreign states. Recognizing the structure, scope, and methods of this network is essential to ensuring that openness and pluralism are protected from exploitation by regimes that seek to operate through lawful cover.