

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

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## Muslim women start firm with a sense of 'hope'

*By Pat Milhizer*  
*Law Bulletin staff writer*

A law firm consisting only of Muslim women has opened in Palos Heights, and the founders believe that it's the largest firm of its kind in the country.

Amal Law Group LLC handles a wide range of practices, including business law, real estate, criminal defense, family law and general litigation matters.

The firm's name, which means "hope" in Arabic, doesn't follow the traditional way of using attorneys' last names, and that's intentional.

"It seemed like we are paving new paths, why follow tradition with our last names? We were looking for something that Americans can pronounce easily enough and has an Arab and Islamic connection," said partner [S. Janaan Hashim](#).

The partners chose to open shop in Palos Heights because there's a large pocket of Arabs and Muslims in the area, and two of the attorneys can speak Arabic.

"It's easier for the client to come to us if we're here, rather than downtown where it can be intimidating," Hashim said.

The Muslim community is an obvious market for clients, but the firm will listen to anybody with potential cases. Some examples of the legal issues that Muslims face involve immigration, employment discrimination, civil rights and wrongful arrest, Hashim said.

In addition to that, the community is facing issues out of court that stem from various media accounts or the fact that the faith has been used as a way to attack Sen. [Barack H. Obama](#) in his campaign for president, and Obama is not a Muslim.

"There's this incredible amount of demoralization right now. When our community hears what we're doing, we get a lot of support and a lot of eyebrows raised. Because you open up the newspaper and you see your faith constantly being painted in a portrait that's inconsistent with what the faith is," Hashim said.

Hashim handles civil rights law and criminal defense. She previously worked at the state appellate defender's office as an assistant defender, filing criminal defense appeals ranging from

simple theft to first-degree murder.

In addition to Hashim, the firm has five other lawyers.

Nikia Marie Bilal handles family law and civil litigation. She clerked for two semesters at the Cook County public guardian's office while at DePaul University College of Law. She was admitted to the Illinois bar last year.

[Maryam Khan](#)'s practice areas include family law and real estate. Khan previously worked at Chicago Title and managed the real estate practice at Leeders & Associates Ltd.

[Rima N. Kapitan](#) focuses her practice on employment law, estate planning and probate. Prior to joining the firm, she was as a sole practitioner and a staff attorney at the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Chicago.

[Majdel S. Musa](#) concentrates her practice in business and commercial real estate law. She previously worked as a sole practitioner in La Grange.

[Heena A. Musabji](#) specializes in civil rights and immigration law. She previously was the first staff attorney at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, directing the citizenship delay program where she represented and assisted clients experiencing delays in becoming naturalized U.S. citizens.

The firm opened late last year to serve the attorneys' existing clients, and it is now trying to attract new clients. It will host an open house on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at its office, 7804 W. College Drive, Palos Heights.

"We're a new firm, we can't pick and choose [clients]. We don't market specifically to the Muslim or Arab niche. We can identify with them, but we'll take in whoever," Hashim said.

"We can't tell who's Muslim or who's not. And we're not going to ask," Hashim said. "You cannot tell a person's faith based only on their name."

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