

QUARTER 2 - 2024 NEWSLETTER

# SISTERHOOD IN ACTION



ISLAMIC WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND



# IWCNZ

2024 | ISSUE NO. 2



## 2024 BIG PLANS

Welcome to our second-quarter newsletter! In this edition, we're excited to share glimpses of our upcoming events and initiatives, giving you a preview of what's in store. We'll also reflect on the past few months, celebrating our collective achievements and activities. This quarter, we're proud to spotlight Muslim sisters in business, highlighting their successes and contributions across various industries. Be sure to read the inspiring message from our National Coordinator. Join us as we explore the dynamic and inspiring world of our community and the mahi being done here at IWCNZ.

WITH LOVE,  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM



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# A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR

ALIYA DANZEISEN

## **We Are All Marked “Return to Sender”**

### **Remember to Anchor Your Actions with Istirja**

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh my dear sisters  
May the blessings of health and iman be upon you.

As we face the busyness and chaos of this world and our own lives, I ask you to take a moment, pause and reflect. Specifically, reflect upon the concept of Istirja'—the phrase “To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return” (Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un). These simple words that we often offer to others at times of loss or hardship are actually words that should remind us daily of what our purpose is and the direction we should be moving.

Ultimately, we will all be returning to Allah with a record to defend. By having Istirja' in focus as we go about our daily lives, we will be making wiser, more conscious decisions and I sincerely believe we will be in a better position to recognise all our blessings and be prepared to tackle all challenges.

Islam teaches us that what's inside, like being fair and kind, is more important than how we look or what we have (i.e moral and ethical qualities trump our physical appearances and our material possessions). Our actions speak louder than words, so each of us need to ask ourselves (myself included): Are we walking the talk?

“Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you” (Qur'an 49:13). Traits like honesty, humility, and compassion are far better markers of a person's worth, than the new handbag, how you looked in a photo, or how many views you got on Instagram. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified these qualities, leading a life of simplicity and integrity. As Muslim women, we need to bring these values in our daily interactions and focus on developing inner qualities that will please Allah.

We must check our intentions and how we carry them out. Allah says in the Qur'an, “Say, ‘Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds’” (Qur'an 6:162).



Let us be sincere. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned against performing good deeds for the sake of showing off.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Shall I not inform you of what I fear for you more than the Masih ad-Dajjal? It is the hidden shirk. It is when a man stands up for prayer, then beautifies his prayer for another to look at." (Ibn Majah 2604) and "What I fear for you the most is the minor shirk, that is ar-riya. Allah will say on the Day of Judgement when He is rewarding the people for their actions: Go to those for whom you did riya for in the world then see if you find the reward with them." (Muslim)

It is easy to watch others and to fall into the trap of comparing what they have or what they do. Their achievement, their possessions may seem brighter, but to whom? Is it to other people or will it be brighter for Allah? Islam encourages us to focus on our own spiritual path. Reminding us not to be envious, we are reminded "Do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others" (Qur'an 4:32). Be content with what Allah has decreed.

By focusing on our own path, our own development, our own connection with Allah (SWT) one avoids comparison and competition. Success in Islam is measured not by these worldly standards, but rather by our closeness to Allah and adherence to His guidance. As Muslims, we are accountable for all our actions. The Qur'an states, "And whatever good you put forward for yourselves—you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward" (73:20). This verse emphasizes the importance of considering the impact of our actions and striving to do good in all aspects of life.

Every day, we are presented with choices—choices that will shape our character and will influence those around us. Act with integrity, kindness, and responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Actions are [judged] by motives (niyyah), so each man will have what he intended" (Sahih Bukhari). Whether we are caring for our families, working, or engaging in community service, every action has power and can earn Allah's pleasure when done with the intention to please Him.

By remembering and Incorporating Istirja' into our daily lives, we can live with purpose and sincerity. By focusing on our inner values, maintaining privacy in our deeds, resisting unhealthy comparisons, embracing responsibility, and keeping our intentions pure, we will lead lives centred in our in our faith. May Allah grant us the wisdom to live according to His guidance and to always remember that to Him we belong, and to Him we shall return.

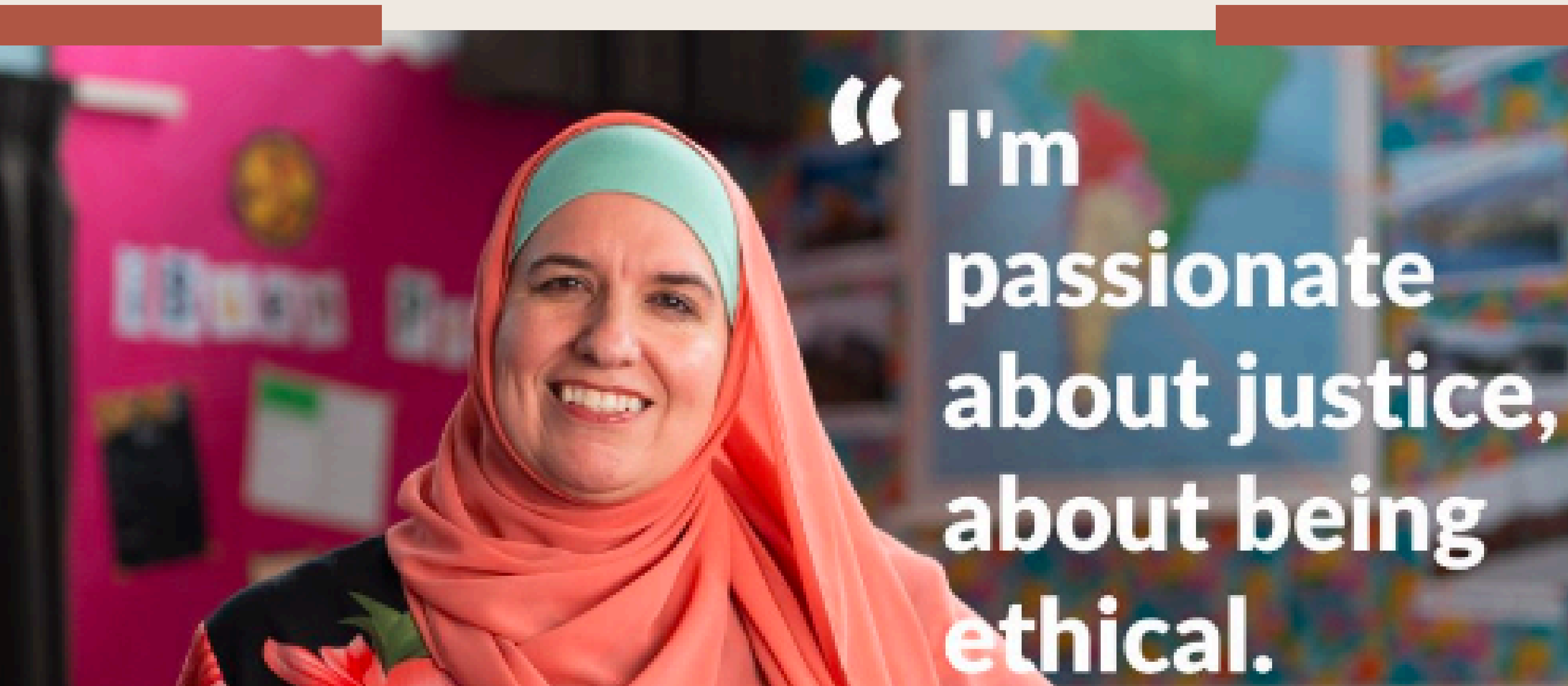
Wasalam,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aliya" in a cursive script.



# KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand National Coordinator Included



## TOP NEWS OF THE QUARTER

Our very own Aliya Danzeisen, National Coordinator of the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWCNZ) and leader of the Women's Organisation of the Waikato Muslim Association (WOWMA), has been included on the King's Birthday Honours List. Specifically, her honours state: To be an Honorary Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit: DANZEISEN, Ms Allyn Sue (Aliya) For services to the Muslim community and women.

Ms Aliya Danzeisen is a teacher, mentor, community leader, spokesperson and advocate for New Zealand's Muslim community. Ms Danzeisen has been National Coordinator of the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWCNZ) since 2020, having been an active member for more than 10 years and Assistant National coordinator for five years. She currently holds the IWCNZ government engagement portfolio. She helped found and has been Coordinator of the Women's Organisation of the Waikato Muslim Association (WOWMA) since 2008. She established a programme for Muslim girls and women aged 14 to 25 to help them integrate into New Zealand society and culture, while also preserving their own identity and faith. She organised various activities including camps, sports, outdoor adventures, and educational sessions and initiated a leadership group for the girls to run the programme themselves.

She has provided support to the community following the 2019 Christchurch mosques terror attacks and is a member of Kāpuia, the Ministerial Advisory group on the Government's Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry. She has represented New Zealand and Muslim women at global events including the United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism and the Global Summit of Women 2023—Abu Dhabi. Ms Danzeisen has been a bridge between Muslim parents and schools to advocate for students' cultural needs.

**We at the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand are pleased to see Aliya's recognition.**





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I W C N Z

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## THE PATH TO PURITY

Sister Eman Bsisou's recent Zoom talk focused on the significance of Arafah and its preparation for Eid al-Adha. She emphasised the spiritual importance of maximizing devotion through increased prayers, Quranic recitation, and seeking forgiveness during these days. Arafah was highlighted as a day of immense blessing and forgiveness, with Sister Eman encouraging sincere supplication (dua) due to its spiritual significance. The talk underscored the continuity of spiritual growth from Arafah to Eid al-Adha, urging attendees to reflect on their actions and maintain closeness to Allah beyond these sacred times.

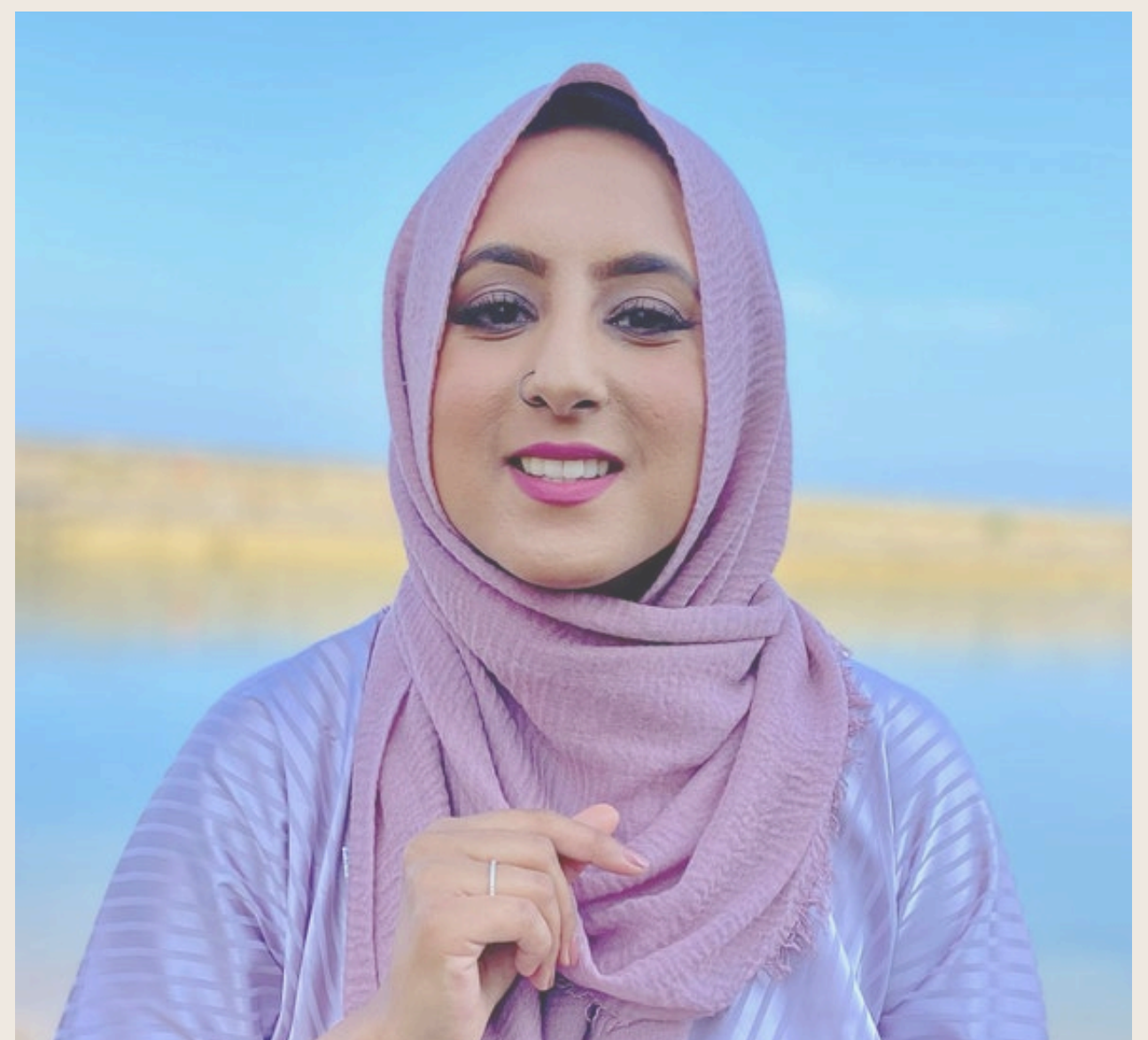


## HOW FAITH HEALS

This session offered a dual perspective on anxiety, blending psychological insights with Islamic teachings to equip participants with practical tools for overall mental well-being. Anxiety being is as a natural response to fear, hence attendees explored strategies like lifestyle adjustments and supplement use as a solution. Spiritual practices such as prayer and Quranic recitations along with traditional remedies and mindfulness techniques were emphasised for their role in promoting resilience and peace. The integration of mental health within an Islamic context highlights a holistic approach to effectively managing anxiety.

## INTEGRATING ISLAMIC VALUES IN MODERN LIVING

We launched the "Lean into Your Deen" series with Ustada Iffet Rafeeq. The event featured engaging discussions on how Islam enriches culture, the impact of personal traits on religious practice, and the misalignment of modern egoistic traits with Islamic ethics. Ustada Iffet emphasised the importance of spiritual practices like Salah and Dhikr and pursuing self-knowledge.







## MUMS AND KIDS BRUNCH

Experience a heartwarming Mums and Bubs Brunch High Tea at Hamilton's Veerandgh Cafe, where attendees enjoyed a serene Islamic gathering in a private setting. Mothers and their little ones gathered for a morning of connection and community, surrounded by the cafe's inviting atmosphere. The event featured a delightful selection of high tea treats, appealing to both adults and children, sparking engaging conversations on parenthood and shared Islamic experiences. It was a cherished opportunity for attendees to bond and enjoy quality time together, sharing stories and laughter in a warm and welcoming environment that celebrated their faith and built sisterhood.



## NAVIGATING BIG EMOTIONS

The recent Zoom talk, "Managing Big Emotions," tailored for Muslimah mamas and featuring Nisreen El-Saidi from Parenting on Purpose, was a resounding success. The session provided attendees with invaluable insights into practical tools and psychological strategies for navigating complex emotions. Nisreen, a Certified NLP Practitioner, expertly shared her knowledge in emotional regulation and conscious parenting coaching, offering actionable advice based on her extensive experience in childcare and personal parenting journeys.

Participants engaged deeply with the material, benefiting from a focused 15-minute Q&A session that addressed specific concerns and queries. The talk also included the distribution of a comprehensive workbook, empowering attendees to implement what they learned in their daily lives. The event was a testament to our commitment to supporting emotional well-being within our community, providing a platform for meaningful dialogue and growth.

## WANDER N SIP

Local mums and bubs gathered for a relaxed afternoon at Wander & Sip in Auckland. The event offered a chance to explore one tree hill while connecting over shared experiences and sharing new motherhood tips aswell enjoying quality time together. It was a delightful blend of discovery, conversation, and enjoying and enjoying nature. Stay tuned for future events and community gatherings!





## SPLASH N SLICE EVENT

On April 28th, IWCNZ hosted a successful pool event and pizza party for Muslimah youth, emphasising physical wellbeing and deen. The event showcased a sense of community, promoted physical activity, and provided a safe, inclusive environment. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees appreciating the chance to unwind, make new friends, and enjoy a women-friendly space.



## BARISTA COURSE

The barista course on July 6th was a huge success, with all spots filled within an hour. Led by instructor Isabelle, the six-hour session covered espresso fundamentals, milk frothing, and latte art, combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on practice. The event received praise for its supportive, inclusive atmosphere. Feedback highlighted the course's effectiveness in equipping Muslimah youth with valuable employment skills as well delving into the Islamic principle of sabr and seeking knowledge

## ART WELLNESS WORKSHOP- DUNEDIN

The Art Wellness Workshop integrated Tazkiyah, the Islamic concept of spiritual purification, in a therapeutic setting for Youth Muslimahs. Participants expressed themselves creatively, relieving stress and developing artistic skills. Icebreakers led to meaningful connections, while creative activities facilitated self-reflection and mindfulness. Attendees learnt skills such as blending, screen printing, and painting techniques, enhancing their artistic skills within a mere two hours. The workshop promoted social interaction, allowing participants to bond over shared creative experiences and personal stories.







## PAINT YOUR HEART- INVERCARGILL

Participants were encouraged to creatively express themselves in any way they wished, fostering self-expression and creativity. They were even urged to use their hands and a variety of tools to paint. These art sessions served as therapeutic outlets, enabling attendees to express emotions and cultivate mindfulness and inner peace through focused painting. Guided activities aimed at enhancing artistic skills also encouraged participants to interpret their artwork creatively, emphasising the notion that things can be seen differently to gain a deeper artistic perspective.



## CLAY CREATIONS- NELSON

The youth pottery event in Nelson centered around creating tea light houses from clay, where participants designed windows and learned clay molding techniques to ensure the structures stood. Led by our instructor, the interactive workshop guided each participant through the process, transforming clay into personalised tea light houses. It offered a hands-on experience where attendees learned pottery techniques, explored their artistic talents, and expressed themselves creatively. Many found the activity therapeutic and enjoyable.



## PALETTES & POTTERY- PALMERSTON NORTH

The class aimed to provide a creative outlet for participants to express themselves through ceramic art, promoting stress relief, skill development, and social interaction. The diverse group, spanning ages and backgrounds, enhanced the event with shared learning and connections. Participants explored painting techniques, expressing their artistic abilities and finding therapeutic value in the creative process.







## STELLAR MORNING

The Stellar Discovery event at Stardome was a thrilling experience for attendees across two age groups. New mums with children aged 0-5 and older kids aged 5-12 participated in an interactive session centered around the adventures of Ibn Battuta. The event featured storytelling sessions that brought Ibn Battuta's journeys to life, followed by a quiz to test the children's understanding. Excitement filled the air as prizes were awarded to those who answered questions correctly, adding a competitive edge to the learning experience. The atmosphere at Stardome provided a perfect backdrop for exploring astronomy and cultural history together. Participants left with newfound knowledge and memorable experiences, fostering a love for learning and discovery among both children and parents.



## STARRY SERENITY

The IWCNZ Glamahs Night was a delightful evening tailored for the over 50 sisters, combining sophistication with celestial wonders. Set against Auckland's virtual skylines, attendees enjoyed an session of virtual stargazing paired with a delightful dinner. The event also featured engaging craft activities that offered creativity and building sisterhood among participants. A standout feature was the "speed mating" session, facilitating lively conversations and the formation of new connections. It was a memorable occasion where guests mingled under the stars, shared stories, and celebrated friendship in a glamorous and enriching atmosphere.



## MATARIKI COMPETITION

IWCNZ hosted a Matariki competition to explore the intersections between Matariki and Islamic teachings. Participants created inspiring resources to help parents and educators teach children about both traditions. The competition featured three categories, with Muslimah from across New Zealand submitting impressive entries. Winners included Farah Khan, Zaynah Ahmad, and Amira Rashid for Artistic Input; Ku Masliza, Nuzha Saleem, and Amira Rashid for Core Content; and Hanna Yaqoob, Weaam Bassiouni, and Hana Darwish for the Educational Resource category. Stay tuned for the upcoming Matariki resource!







# EDUCATION OUTREACH PROGRAMME



The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWCNZ) has continued its education outreach programme, meeting with leadership from seven secondary schools to discuss the support IWCNZ can provide for Muslim students and to share our youth programming.

We have also completed four school awareness lunches, where we met with Muslimah students, provided lunch, and discussed the support available at IWCNZ. These lunches also allowed us to listen to the barriers and challenges they face at school, which we aim to address through our programming. We are now reaching out to leadership at the next five secondary schools to continue this programme.

This programme was developed in response to statistics in the ERO report. IWCNZ recognizes that Muslim youth face unique challenges and may require additional support to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Therefore, we believe that our organisation can provide valuable resources and support for your staff and the Muslim students at your school.





# YOUTH SUMMIT

# 2024

The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand hosted its inaugural Youth Summit from May 3rd to 5th, 2024. This event, held at Waikato's Lake Karapiro and graciously hosted by the Women's Organisation of Waikato Muslim Association, aimed to foster dialogue and empowerment among young Muslimah nationwide.



Featuring diverse speakers, interactive sessions, and workshops, the summit focused on identifying barriers, crafting solutions, and celebrating diversity within New Zealand's Muslim youth community. Discussions centered on youth leadership, spiritual engagement, and the development of inclusive programs tailored to contemporary youth needs.

Government representatives also shared insights into job opportunities and progress for Muslim youth on the first night. A relaxed movie night on Saturday provided a chance for attendees to unwind and foster sisterhood.





## ACTIVITIES AT THE SUMMIT

The summit offered a variety of activities catering to diverse interests, ensuring a memorable experience for all attendees. Participants could choose from engaging workshops and excursions, such as an Arabic calligraphy workshop with Deccan Arts, a guided hike at Mount Maungatautari mountain sanctuary, or a painting workshop with a "butterfly effect" theme. An Islamic workshop with Sister Sarah Qader delved deeper into Islamic teachings, while a Pilates, yoga, and wellbeing session at Flourish Wellness Studio provided self-care and relaxation. There was also the option to simply relax and recharge, ensuring flexibility for everyone.



## MOVIE NIGHT

Dressed in their comfiest pyjamas, attendees gathered after a buffet dinner for a movie night. They captured memories at the photobooth and listened to inspiring talks by documentary maker Paula Jones and guest speaker Shadi, who shared his journey in pursuing a creative lifestyle. After dinner, attendees grabbed popcorn, cotton candy, or snacks from the grazing table and settled into bean bags for a relaxed movie session. The film, "Marcel the Shell with Shoes On," highlighted themes of friendship, family, and community, leaving attendees inspired by the potential for positive change.

## THANK YOU!

We extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported the Youth Summit. Special thanks to our 'aunties' for their invaluable assistance and to our generous sponsors for their crucial support. Thank you all for contributing to this memorable and empowering event!







# CHILL CAMPAIGN LAUNCH



**Auckland CHILL Launch:** This event was a resounding success, bringing together our seven remarkable featured sisters and their families to celebrate their achievements. The event showcased the inspirational videos of these talented sisters, highlighting their stories and successes. The community's response was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees expressing appreciation and support for the initiative.

The event brought a sense of pride and unity, demonstrating the power of community in uplifting and empowering Muslim women. Also it paved a way for networking among the community members.

**Wellington CHILL Launch:** This event was attended by public servants and representatives from various agencies, along with one of our featured sister who is based in Wellington. The event provided an opportunity to honour our Wellington talent, share all the campaign videos, and engage in meaningful discussions over morning tea. The conversations centered around the diversity and contributions of the Muslimah community in New Zealand. The positive feedback and meaningful discussions showed how important the campaign is and why we need to keep supporting it.





# CHILL

CHALLENGE ISLAMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE & LOATHING

# CAMPAIGN

Have you seen our  
social media  
CHILL Campaign yet?

[WWW.JUSTCHILL.ORG.NZ](http://WWW.JUSTCHILL.ORG.NZ)



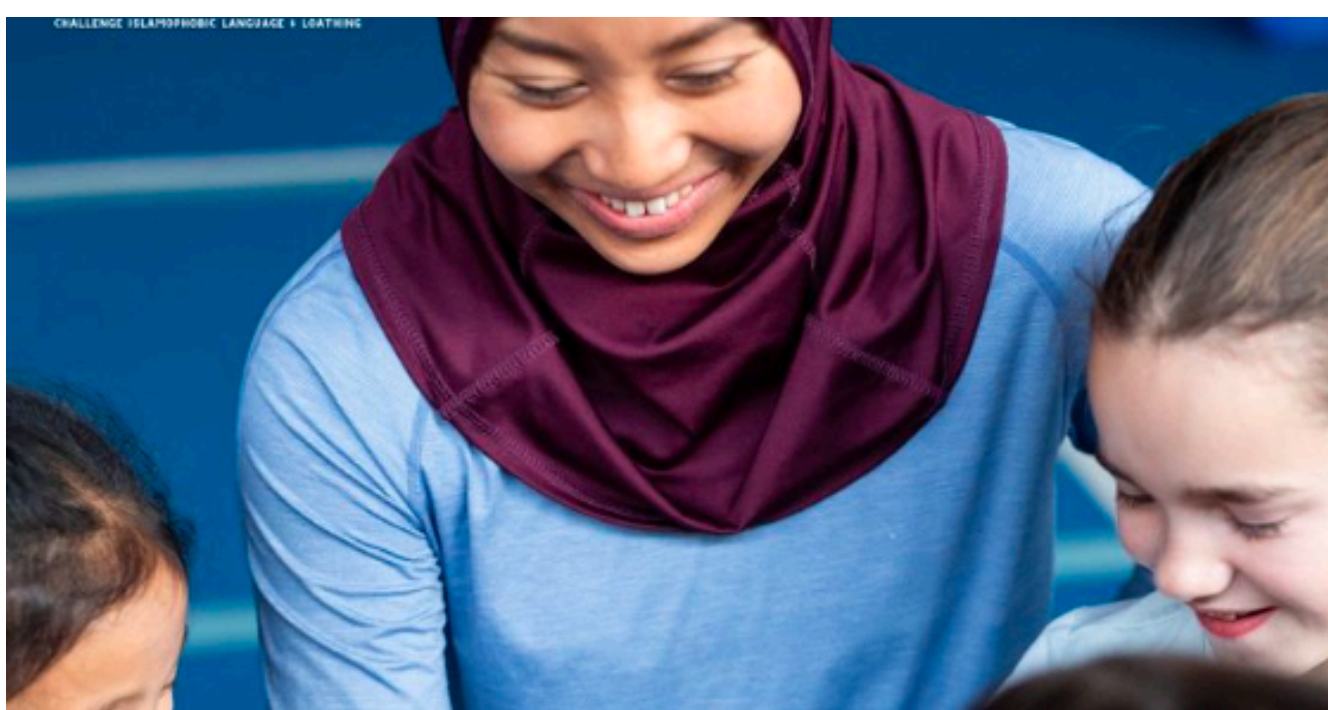
We are on week 5 of this 10 week journey to celebrate the incredible stories of Muslim women in New Zealand!

### What is the CHILL Campaign?

CHILL is an acronym for Challenge Islamophobic Language & Loathing. This inspirational social media initiative is designed to amplify the voices of Muslim women in New Zealand through positive storytelling, while simultaneously countering and debunking the negative tropes and stereotypes used against Muslim Women.

## This 10-week social media campaign has several goals:

- 1) To share voices that often go unheard
- 2) To promote understanding
- 3) To challenge stereotypes
- 4) To Influence Mainstream Media
- 5) To Highlight NZ Muslimah Diversity
- 6) To promote empowerment and Inspire other Muslimah women in the community



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# Sisters In Business

## SWEETALIA

My name is Alia. I am an accountant by profession, and I have a 6-year-old boy who keeps me busy and brings a lot of joy into my life. We have been living in New Zealand for the past year and a half, and it's been an exciting journey adapting to a new country and culture.

In my free time, I enjoy playing basketball socially. It's a great way to stay active and meet new people. I also love swimming, which I find both relaxing and invigorating. These activities help me balance my professional life with physical fitness and social interaction.

I own a business called Sweetalia, where I create homemade sweets. What makes my business special is the emphasis on using fresh and high-quality ingredients. I believe that the best desserts come from the best ingredients, and I take pride in offering treats that are not only delicious but also made with care and attention to detail.

My journey into the world of sweets started in my own kitchen. I used to bake desserts for our guests, family, and friends. The positive feedback I received from them was overwhelming, and it made me realise that I had a talent for creating delightful treats. My family and friends were very supportive and encouraged me to turn my hobby into a business. Their belief in my skills and their encouragement were the driving forces behind the creation of Sweetalia.

Sweetalia is a very new venture, having been open for just a month and a half. Although it's still in its early stages, the response so far has been very encouraging. I'm excited about the future and looking forward to growing my business and sharing my passion for sweets with more people.

### CONTACT DETAILS

INSTAGRAM: [@SWEETALIAD7](#)





# Sisters In Business

## SHAFNAZ.GALLERY

My name is Shafnaz and I was born in Sri Lanka but raised in New Zealand and have always had a passion for the arts. It had always touched a part of my life that didn't turn into anything up until recently where it is now a passion of mine and part time hobby.

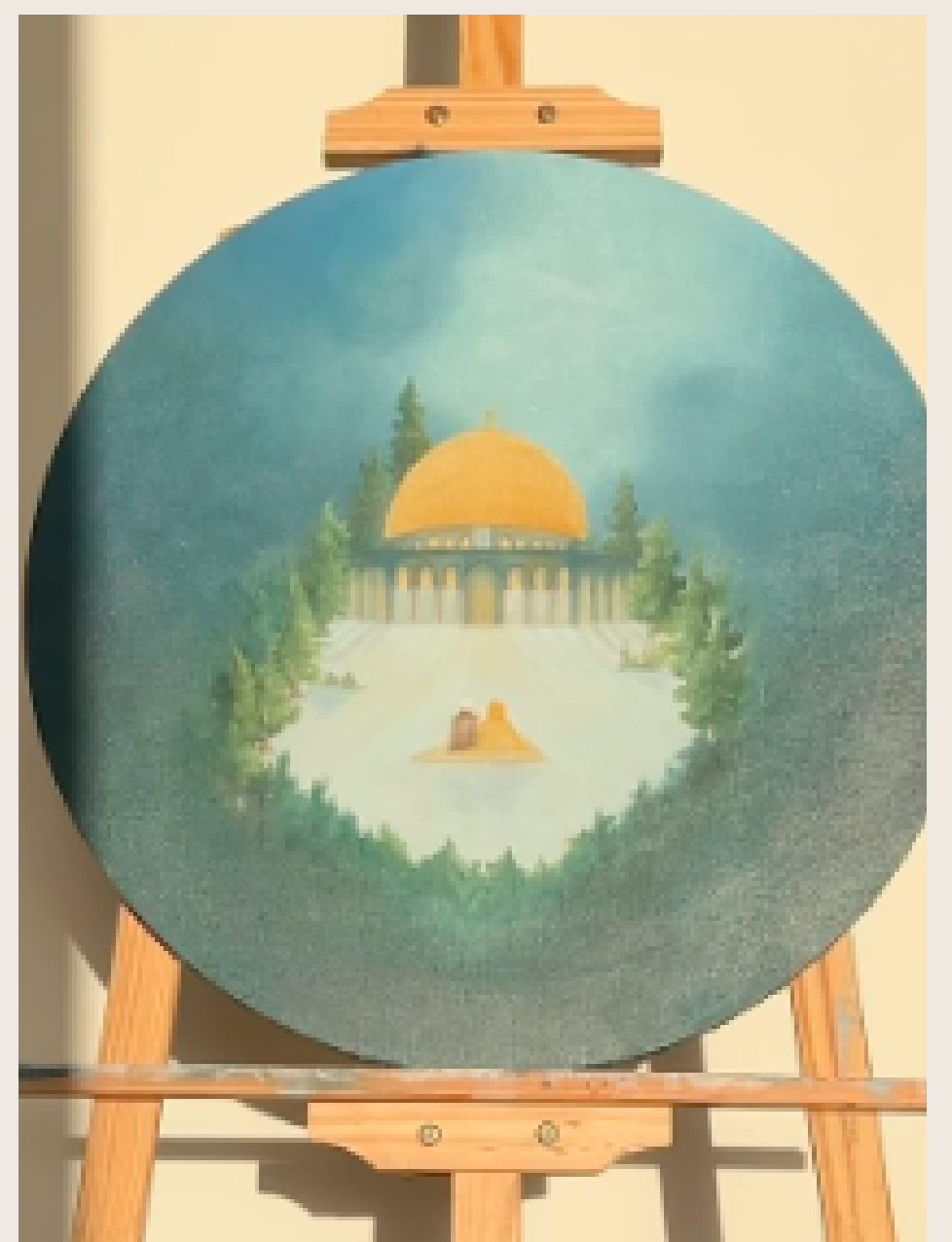
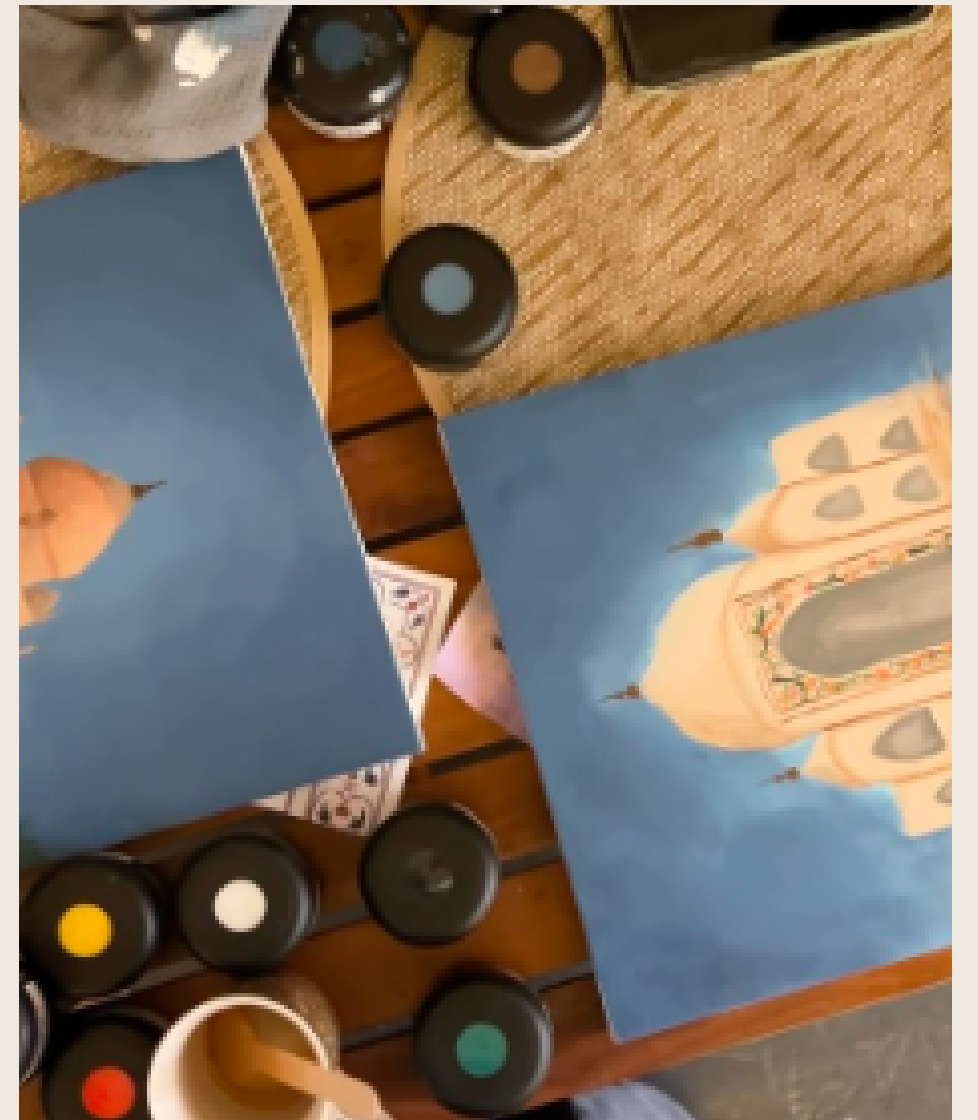
I love being surrounded by nature, mountains in particular. There's something about how it makes you feel so humble and serene that I really enjoy. It creating a sense of profoundness and feeling alive which alone is a blessing from Allah and a key reminder of him. Going on hikes and exploring New Zealand was what got me into taking painting for seriously. As most may notice, a large portion of my paintings are landscapes of locations I want to explore and find beauty in.

It was only until a few years ago where I took painting seriously. Through support of my family and friends I was able to start having my own platform to share my art which slowly became a way for me to start selling my paintings. This has also slowly taken me to new adventures including competing in live art battles (a competition where you only have 20min to paint!) and hosting workshops to share my techniques and perspective of painting with the community.

It was only when Covid hit when I realised I had so much time and thought why not use it to paint? I've always loved art and painting but only took it serious when I found spare time. It grew into something I wanted to take a bit more seriously and didn't want to limit myself to just a casual hobby so I had to get myself a motivation which was starting to post it online. Through finding a community who also share the love for art it was a means for me to carry on and couldn't see myself with it now. I started painting during 2020 so it's been 4 years now!

### CONTACT DETAILS

INSTAGRAM: [SHAFNAZ.GALLERY](#)





# Sisters In Business

## AMAANI THE LABEL

Asalamu alykoun and kia tau te rangimarie!

Sara, Sarah, and Yasmine came together to create Amaani with a heartfelt mission: to design modest everyday clothing for our beautiful sisters.

Our journey began in early 2024 when we launched our first Eid collection. Though we come from diverse backgrounds and have different career aspirations, our commitment to modesty and love for fashion united us.

As we searched for stylish, modest clothing that avoided slits, low necklines, and revealing backs, we found it challenging to find options that indeed met our needs. This shared struggle inspired us to start Amaani.

Our motivation is simple and profound: we want to make it easier for women to find fashionable clothing that aligns with their values. We believe modest clothing is for anyone who desires it, and we are dedicated to upholding Islamic modesty in our designs. We've also conducted thorough research to ensure our materials are ethical and gentle on the skin, using natural fabrics.

Despite our different paths, our passion for fashion and desire to empower women through modest clothing choices bind us. At Amaani, we are not just creating clothing; we are crafting a way for women to express their values beautifully and confidently.

### CONTACT DETAILS

INSTAGRAM: [@AMAANITHELABEL](#)

FACEBOOK: [AMAANI THE LABEL](#)





**Sisters and fellow adventurers!**  
**Want to be the first in line for all the exciting opportunities coming your way? Join our database and follow us on social media to stay in the loop!**



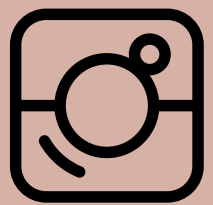
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جاءكم الله خيرا