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## **ACCESSCAL ANNUAL GALA SET TO ‘HELP REFUGEES THRIVE’**

*Community and Civil Rights Activist Linda Sarsour to Deliver Gala Keynote*

**ANAHEIM, Calif. (January 1, 2016)** – [Access California Services \(AccessCal\)](#), a health and human services nonprofit organization that supports 10,000 underserved refugees and immigrants annually, will hold its annual gala to raise funds for programs and operations that empower, train and support in-need immigrant and refugee families in southern California. The gala will be held at the Hilton Anaheim on Saturday, February 6, 2016. Registration begins at 5:00 p.m.

“Refugees are forced to flee their countries and many linger in refugee camps for years with uncertainty, lack of basic needs, and many lost dreams,” said AccessCal Founder and Executive Director Nahla Kayali. “When refugees resettle in the United States, they face even more challenges, including language, economic and cultural barriers they never imagined they would face, and that is why AccessCal is here: To integrate, empower and provide them access to resources that help them become contributing and successful citizens.”

Linda Sarsour, a Community and Civil Rights Activist and the Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York (AAANY) will deliver the AccessCal gala keynote speech. Sarsour speaks on the significance of social services catering to less represented communities. Her presence at our gala demonstrates the incredible value and meaning of our work. Her [“Ferguson Protests Remain After Night of Violence”](#) is Sarsour’s interview with Al Jazeera America.

During the gala, AccessCal will honor three community leaders who have dedicated their lives to human services. Honorees are:

- *Extraordinary Impact Award*
- Fiza Shah, Chief Executive Officer, Developments in Literacy (DIL)
- *Public Service Achievement Award*
- Mahboob Akhter, Board Member, 2-1-1 Orange County
- *Unsung Hero Award*
- Lamis Hashem, Dedicated Community Supporter

AccessCal provides support to individuals and families, 85 percent of whom arrive from Arab and Muslim countries. Over 30 percent of AccessCal support is dedicated to refugees through

various programs, including a Refugee Social Services program and a Refugee Health Assessment program.

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The gala will include a silent auction, a dinner, an awards ceremony, a keynote speech, and entertainment featuring Folkloric Dabke Group. Watch the gala 2016 [teaser](#). Individual tickets are sold for \$100 and may be purchased online at <http://www.accesscal.org/gala-2016/>. Opportunities for gala [sponsorship](#) are also available.

#### **About Access California Services**

Founded in 1989, [Access California Services \(AccessCal\)](#) is a culturally and linguistically sensitive health and human services nonprofit organization, which provides social and economic services to local Arab- and Muslim-Americans, refugees, and immigrants; however, AccessCal is nonsectarian. Anyone who needs support in the community will receive it regardless of race, religion or ethnicity. In 2015, AccessCal served over 9,000 community members, providing over \$40,000 units of service. Services include: Vocational English training, case management and advocacy in 16 languages, citizenship and immigration services, employment and tax services, emergency financial assistance, educational services, healthcare access services, counseling and support, community service and civic engagement, refugee services, and refugee health assessments.

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