

Definition of Islamophobia

Islamophobia is fear or hatred of Islam and Muslims. It has existed for centuries, but has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks.

This phenomenon promotes and perpetuates anti-Muslim stereotyping, discrimination, harassment, and even violence. It negatively impacts the participation of American Muslims in public life.

CAIR publishes guides explaining Muslim religious practices for educators, employers, journalists, medical professionals, and law enforcement and correctional officials. Other CAIR publications include *a Civic Participation Handbook*, *a Muslim Community Safety Kit* and *a Know Your Rights and Responsibilities* pocket guide.

They are all available at www.cair.com

Features of Islamophobia

- Muslim cultures and Islam are seen as monolithic and unchanging.
- Muslim cultures are viewed as wholly different from other cultures.
- Islam is perceived as inherently threatening.
- Muslims are seen as using their faith mainly for political or military advantage.
- Muslim criticisms of Western societies are rejected out of hand.
- Fear of Islam is mixed with racist hostility to immigration.
- Islamophobia is assumed to be natural and unproblematic.

Source: The Runnymede Trust
"Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All"

Get Involved in Your Local Community

By being an active member in your community, you are more likely to earn the respect and support of your neighbors. Some incidents of Islamophobia can be contained or prevented by involving coalitions and rallying support from other communities. Giving accurate information on Islam is key to building relationships and mutual understanding.

- **Respond to acts of Islamophobia** with a show of unity. Put differences aside and establish good community relationships so Islamophobia is rejected.
- **Organize events** that provide a positive community outlet for concerns related to Islamophobia or other forms of intolerance. Form community groups that promote mutual understanding.
- **Leverage social media** (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) to network and promote a positive and accurate image of Islam and Muslims.
- **Introduce yourself** to your neighbors of all faiths, races and ethnicities.
- **Join your children's school** Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and other local organizations.
- **Donate books**, DVDs and other materials about Islam to your local public and school libraries.
- **Make sure that you are registered to vote** and vote in local, state and national elections.
- **Join** or start a local CAIR chapter.
- **Attend school board meetings** and city council meetings.
- **Put together a Ramadan or Hajj** display at a local school or library.
- **Submit an opinion piece** to your newspaper about an issue of local importance.
- **Invite local community leaders** and the public to a mosque open house. (Contact CAIR for tips on the steps necessary to hold a mosque open house and to obtain "Welcome to Our Mosque" brochure text.)
- **Host civic events** such as blood drives and health fairs at your local mosque.
- **Get yourself and your community center involved** in local issues affecting all Americans.

- **Invite local and national officials** to speak about community issues at your local mosques (members of Congress, police chief, mayor, city council members)

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Steps to Challenging Islamophobia

When you encounter Islamophobia in your daily life, it is important to document it, report it and take action yourself. This guide is intended to show you ways to effectively challenge Islamophobia:

- in news and entertainment media
- on the Internet
- from public officials
- in schools and universities
- in the workplace

News and Entertainment Media

1. Document

- a. Note the date and time, channel or program, and the person who made the Islamophobic comments. (Was it the host or a guest?)
- b. Try to obtain a podcast or recording of the incident.
- c. Note advertisers whose ads aired during the program.
- d. If you are tracking a pattern of Islamophobic discourse, begin recording the program every time it airs.

2. Report to CAIR

To help us respond effectively, include as much of the above documentation as possible.

3. Act

- a. Contact the editor, station manager, or other official from the media outlet to express your concerns. Always be polite, but clear and assertive. See "Writing a Letter to the Editor."
- b. Organize a coalition to join a community meeting with the outlet's management.
- c. Contact CAIR to obtain copies of "American Muslims: A Journalist's Guide to Understanding Islam and Muslims" and distribute to local media.
- d. If these meetings do not yield a satisfactory result, consider launching an advertiser campaign. Contact CAIR for more detailed guidance on this step.

Writing a Letter to the Editor

To increase your chances of publication, follow these guidelines:

- React quickly to the news of the day, negative coverage or views you support. If possible, have the letter in the hands of an editor on the same day.
- Check online letter submission guidelines for that particular publication.
- Address the letter to the organization's opinion editor.
- Keep your letter to no more than 150 to 250 words.
- State the purpose of the letter in 25 words or less.
- Pick one main topic and focus only on that one issue.
- Be authoritative. If possible, speak on behalf of a local organization in which you are involved.
- Give background information on the issue or misconception. Cite impartial and objective sources.
- Offer a reasonable and fair solution to the problem you are addressing in your letter.
- Be passionate or even controversial, but avoid rhetoric and defamation.

Make Your Voice Heard

You can use the information below to contact media outlets with feedback, either to compliment balanced programs or criticize unbalanced coverage. Please, always be polite.

ABC News | 212-456-7583 | abcnews.go.com
CBS News | 212-975-3691 | cbsnews.com
NBC News | 212-664-7403 | nbc.com/news-sports
CNN | 404-827-1511 | www.cnn.com
Fox News | 212-301-3300 | foxnews.com
MSNBC | 201-583-5222 | www.msnbc.msn.com
PBS | 202-806-3200 | pbs.org
NPR | 202-414-2200 | npr.org
NY Times | 212-556-1234 | nytimes.com
USA Today | 703-276-3400 | usatoday.com
WS Journal | 212-416-2000 | wsj.com
Washington Post | 202-334-6000 | washingtonpost.com
Newsweek | 212-445-4000 | newsweek.com
Time | 212-522-1212 | time.com/time
Associated Press | 212-621-1600 | ap.org
Congress | 202-224-3121 | house.gov | senate.gov
White House | 202-456-1414 | whitehouse.gov

The Internet

1. Gauge the influence of the source. Many obscure individuals or organizations are desperate to get the publicity a controversy would bring them. We should try not to give them more publicity than they can get on their own. In many such cases, the best response is not to react at all.

2. If the Islamophobic content comes from an influential source, document it.

a. Save the URL (Internet address) and note the date and time you accessed the Islamophobic content.

b. Take a screen shot/print screen image of the Islamophobic content.

c. Include as much information about the author and source as possible.

d. Note the Internet service provider or website host.

3. Report Islamophobic content from influential sources to CAIR.

4. Leverage social media – Use your talent to start a blog or post on Facebook and Twitter to increase knowledge and familiarity with Islam and Muslims. Produce short educational videos and post them on YouTube. Responding to insulting chain e-mails or online comments with accurate and balanced information about Islam can help stop the cycle of misinformation.

Public Figures

1. Document

a. If you learn of Islamophobic comments made by a public official (elected or appointed official, candidate, school official, etc.), document the source, date and any other pertinent information.

b. If you hear Islamophobic comments from a public figures that are not recorded, write them down as soon as you can and ask others who may have heard them to write what they heard, or at least to act as witnesses to the comments.

c. If allowed by law, record events such as town hall meetings or other public gatherings you attend.

2. Report Islamophobic incidents or comments to CAIR.

3. Organize a local letter-writing or call-in campaign to express community concerns to the person responsible for the Islamophobic statements. Submitting letters for publication in a local newspaper can help make your position known to a broader audience.

4. Get involved. Consider joining or forming community coalitions to meet with your local, state and federal elected officials. While meetings may be a good response to Islamophobic comments by public officials, it is more effective to

establish good relationships prior to an incident. If an elected official knows local Muslims, and has heard their concerns and felt their support, he or she is more likely to stand up for the Muslim community when another public figure makes a bigoted or ill-informed comment. You can find detailed guidelines on CAIR's website, www.cair.com, for how to get a meeting with an elected official, how to make that meeting effective and how to work with congressional offices.

5. Sponsor copies of the Quran to be sent to local public officials and opinion leaders. Visit: www.explorethequran.com

Arranging to Meet Elected Officials

Know Who Represents You

To find out who represents you in the U.S. Congress and how to contact them, call the Capitol Hill Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 (have your zip code ready).

Send a Written Request for a Meeting

Include the following information: the topic you wish to discuss at the meeting; names of those who will attend (if possible limit your group to no more than five) when you would like to meet; and your contact information. Include your address so they can verify that

you are a constituent. Members are generally in their districts on weekends and during congressional recess periods. Members are generally in Washington, D.C., on weekdays.

• Send the request to the congressperson's scheduler by fax and e-mail.

• Wait two business days and then call the scheduler to confirm that your request was received.

• Be patient and flexible. It may take several calls to get a firm meeting time.

• Call the day before your appointment to reconfirm.

If you need more help or advice, call CAIR and talk to someone in our Government Relations Department or visit www.cair.com

Schools, Colleges and Universities

1. Recognize the difference between Islamophobia and incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination or harassment. An act of discrimination is directed specifically at an individual or group of individuals. Islamophobia is directed at Islam or Muslims in general, or a whole Muslim community.

2. If you or someone you know is targeted because of religion, report it to CAIR. See CAIR's *Know Your Rights and Responsibilities*

Pocket Guide for more information about your rights and how to protect them.

3. Document incidents of Islamophobia, false or misleading statements in textbooks, anti-Islam comments by a teacher or professor, or defamatory articles published in a school newspaper.

4. If comments are verbal, write them down as soon as possible and ask others to verify their accuracy and act as witnesses. If the Islamophobic material is in physical form, get a copy or take a photo and note as many details as possible, such as date, source and location.

5. Report the incident to CAIR.

6. Report the incident to school administrators. If school administrators are the source of the Islamophobia, contact CAIR for advice.

7. Arrange meetings with teachers or school administrators to address the issue.

In the Workplace

1. Recognize the difference between Islamophobia and incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination or harassment. An act of discrimination is directed specifically at an individual or a group of individuals. An incident of Islamophobia is directed at Islam

or Muslims in general, or at a whole Muslim community. If you or someone you know is targeted because of religion or ethnicity, report it to CAIR. See CAIR's *Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Pocket Guide* for more information about your rights and how to protect them.

2. Document incidents of Islamophobia, such as supervisors forwarding Islamophobic e-mails, Islamophobic "jokes" posted on bulletin boards or Islamophobic remarks made during company training sessions.

3. If the incidents are serious or form a pattern, report them to a supervisor or human resources officer.

4. Report the incident to CAIR.

What is CAIR?

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is a nonprofit, grassroots membership organization.

CAIR's mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

Become a Part of CAIR's Network

- Join our e-mail list to receive updates on issues impacting Muslims in America and around the world. Go to www.cair.com to sign up.
- Become a fan of CAIR on Facebook.

How Can I Help?

1. Become a CAIR member or renew your membership. Membership is just \$30 per year and is open to individuals and organizations.

2. Help us serve you. Monthly automatic donations, even \$5 a month, help the most. Call 202-646-6045 for an authorization form or visit: www.cair.com/support

3. Take action. Use these tools and your own common sense to challenge Islamophobia. Your activism strengthens our community. Respond to CAIR's action alerts, volunteer at your local CAIR office or help establish a local chapter of CAIR.

For more copies of this pocket guide or other CAIR publications, or to find your local CAIR chapter, contact CAIR at:

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Washington, DC 20003
phone: 202.448.8787 | fax: 202.488.0833
www.cair.com

To give comments or feedback about this guide, e-mail info@cair.com



Council on American-Islamic Relations

Challenging Islamophobia

POCKET GUIDE

Islamophobia can be stopped.
It takes people like *you* to take
action and make a difference.
Be an agent of change.

www.cair.com