

Islamophobia

March 15: International Day to Combat Islamophobia

The United Nations has described Islamophobia as “a fear, prejudice and hatred of Muslims that leads to provocation, hostility and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims and non-Muslims. Motivated by institutional, ideological, political and religious hostility that transcends into structural and cultural racism, it targets the symbols and markers of being a Muslim.”¹

According to [the Bridge Initiative](#), a research project on Islamophobia housed at Georgetown University, “Islamophobia has been present in Western discourse since the Middle Ages, when negative stereotypes about Muslims helped build popular support for the Crusades. Descriptions of Muslims as uncivilized and violent also helped rationalize European colonial domination of most of the Muslim majority world. American scholar Edward Said (d. 2003) used the term ‘orientalism’ to describe the pattern of negatively stereotyping Muslims and other colonized peoples.”²

The Bridge Initiative also lists the following [Anti-Muslim tropes](#) that are based on stereotypes and prejudice often found in media:³

- “Inherently violent”
- “Oppressive to women”
- “Intolerant toward other religions”
- “Islam is a political ideology or totalitarian regime, not a religion”
- “In the West, Muslims are using non-violent, stealth jihad with the goal of implementing sharia law”
- “Islam is medieval, foreign, and [at] odds with Western modernity”
- “Islam is a monolith”
- “All Muslims are Arab and/or ‘Brown’”
- “Islam needs to be reformed.”

Anti-Arab Racism and Islamophobia

Islamophobia can at times manifest as Anti-Arab Racism. The Canadian Arab Institute explains Anti-Arab racism as: “Discrimination, profiling,

¹ <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k12/k128gbad1k>

² <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/about-us/what-is-islamophobia/>

³ <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-common-anti-muslim-tropes-2/>

surveillance, stereotyping, prejudice and violence against people of Arab origin that is based on their ethnicity, national origin, language, name, culture, or appearance. Anti-Arab racism can be seen today as over-representation of negative stories about Arabs in the news; dehumanising stereotypes about Arabs in film and educational curricula; surveillance of Arab communities and organisations; significantly high rates of unemployment and poverty in comparison to other racial groups; lower average income levels than other racial groups; and support for imperialist foreign policies.”⁴

Islamophobia in Canada

An Angus Reid Poll conducted in March 2023 found that 39% of Canadians outside of Quebec hold an unfavourable view of Islam (with the number being higher in Quebec) and in general, Canadians were more negative towards Islam than other faiths.⁵

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights released a report in November 2023 on *Combatting Hate: Islamophobia and its impact on Muslims in Canada*. The report states that “incidents of Islamophobia are a daily reality for many Muslims”.⁶ The report also referenced a National Council of Canadian Muslims statistic that, between 2016 and 2021 in Canada, more Muslims were killed in targeted “hate-attacks” due to Islamophobia than in any other G7 country.⁷ Most notably, the 2017 attack at the Islamic Cultural Centre⁸ in Québec City where a gunman killed 6 Muslim men, and the 2020 attack⁹ in London, Ontario where a driver intentionally drove his truck into a Muslim family, killing four of the five members, stand out as two of the worst hate crime incidents in recent Canadian history.

The 2017 attack in Québec City led the federal government to declare January 29th as the National Day of Remembrance of the Québec City

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e09162ecf041b5662cf6fc4/t/6423a2003385d02dbc5c6fcd/1680056869315/Anti-Arab+Racism+Brief.pdf>

⁵ <https://angusreid.org/islamophobia-canada-quebec/>

⁶ https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/441/RIDR/reports/Islamophobia_FINAL_e.pdf

⁷ <https://www.nccm.ca/oneyearreport/>

⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/topic/Tag/Quebec%20City%20mosque%20attack>

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/veltman-muslim-family-conviction-killing-1.7121217>

Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia.¹⁰ Queen's University held [multiple events](#) in January 2024 to honour the victims of the attack and to learn more about Islamophobia including the promotion of the [Green Square Campaign](#) derived from the colour of the carpet inside the mosque where the shooting took place.

Gendered Islamophobia

The Standing Senate Committee's report highlighted the gendered element of Islamophobia and Anti-Arab racism. Muslim women are often targets of violence and intimidation. Recognized by their attire, some Muslim women and girls are afraid to leave their homes for work or school.¹¹

The committee also emphasized the systemic nature of Islamophobia in the workplace and its impact on women. According to studies conducted by the Canadian Arab Institute, "Arab women have the highest unemployment and underemployment rates of any demographic group in Canada."¹² Some visibly Muslim women considered removing their hijab to secure employment. Others spoke of condescending questions about education level, marital status and their upbringing.¹³

Maryam Khan (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Dr Sarah Shah (University of Toronto) have also highlighted the need for further research on the impact of Islamophobia on sexually and gender diverse (SGD) Muslims, noting that SGD Muslims in Canada face intersectional discrimination.¹⁴

Islamophobia at Queen's

Closer to home, Islamophobia has also impacted the Queen's community:

- In August 1990, shortly after Iraq invaded Kuwait, a sign bearing the words "Muslims Out of Canada" was found in the Technology Centre Building at Queen's.¹⁵

¹⁰ [Statement by Minister Khera on the National Day of Remembrance of the Québec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia - Canada.ca](#)

¹¹ <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/441/RIDR/14EV-55639-E>

¹² <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/441/RIDR/21EV-55663-E>

¹³ <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/Sen/Committee/441/RIDR/14EV-55639-E>

¹⁴ <https://books.scholarsportal.info/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks8/upress8/2023-05-04/1/9781487547738#page=42>

¹⁵ https://www.queensu.ca/hreo/sites/hreowww/files/uploaded_files/Resources/Anti-Racism/RacismTimeline2019.pdf

- In 2006, a banner near the Queen's University Muslim Student Association (QUMSA) was set on fire and in 2008, QUMSA was once again targeted with a break-in to their club space and a vandalized poster in the JDUC.¹⁶
- In 2010, the first hijab-wearing Muslim AMS president, was subject to derogatory slurs at Stauffer Library where she overheard two students referring to her as the “Taliban turban of terror.”¹⁷
- In 2013, six Muslim Queen’s students were attacked in Kingston while walking home.¹⁸

I believe I’ve experienced or witnessed Islamophobia on our campus. What should I do?

We are sorry that you’ve experienced this. We encourage you to make an appointment with a human rights advisor by completing the [Meeting Request Form](#). A human rights advisor will listen to your experience and explain relevant Queen’s policies and procedures, make referrals where appropriate, and offer options for addressing concerns. The service provided by human rights advisors is confidential¹⁹, and it is up to you to decide which actions, if any, to take.

If you prefer to document an incident of hate anonymously, please use the [IN-SIGHT submission form](#).

If you are in immediate danger, please contact Campus Security and Emergency Services at 613-533-6111.

Resources of Interest

- [Combating Islamophobia in Canada](#) (Government of Canada)

¹⁶ https://www.queensu.ca/hreo/sites/hreowww/files/uploaded_files/Resources/Anti-Racism/RacismTimeline2019.pdf

¹⁷ https://www.queensu.ca/hreo/sites/hreowww/files/uploaded_files/Resources/Anti-Racism/RacismTimeline2019.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/muslim-students-attacked-in-apparent-kingston-ont-hate-crime-1.1991230>

¹⁹ Advisors observe the following exceptions to confidentiality: (i) when disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the client or others;(ii) when legal requirements demand that confidential material be revealed;(iii) when a child is in need of protection.” (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, Standards of Practice, 5th Edition)

- [Combatting Hate: Islamophobia and its impact on Muslims in Canada](#) (PDF) (Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, November 2023)
- [The Bridge Initiative](#) (Georgetown University)
- Courses at Queen's: [Muslim Societies, Global Perspectives](#) (Queen's University)
- [National Council of Canadian Muslims](#)
- [Understanding Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes - Addressing the Security Needs of Muslim Communities: A Practical Guide](#) (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, May 2020)