



PRESS RELEASE

Reports of Islamophobia coming in at unprecedented rate – now thirteen-fold post Israel-Palestine escalations

28 November 2023

In the seven-week period from October 7 when the latest escalations in the Israel-Palestine situation began, to 24 November inclusive, the Islamophobia Register Australia ('the Register') received 230 reports of Islamophobia. This constitutes an unprecedented number of reports within a 7 week period.

The Register previously reported on 23 October 2023 that reports of Islamophobia had increased ten-fold. Unfortunately, since then the number of incidents reported to the Register have continued to spike and are now at an average of a thirteen-fold increase when compared to pre-October 7 levels in 2023.

At no time in the Register's 9-year history of operations, has the Register received such a large number of incident reports within such a short space of time, including during 'peak' reporting periods such as in the aftermath of the Christchurch terror attacks which saw the Register receive a four-fold increase of reports. Reports of Islamophobia are continuing to come in.

The Register also notes that at times of heightened community awareness of Islamophobia, reports tend to increase.

Some of the reported incidents include arson at mosques, death threats, videos inciting violence and intimidation on the road. The Register's Executive Director Sharara Attai said:

"We are seeing an alarming level of Islamophobia at the moment and many members of the Australian Muslim community are feeling very scared and anxious for their safety. It is devastating that at a time when many members of the Australian Muslim community are already deeply affected by the horrors of what is occurring in Gaza, they are also having to deal with increasing hostility here at home."

On Saturday 25 November, three young Palestinian Muslim college students in Vermont, USA were shot. Two of the students was wearing the Kaffiyeh - the traditional Palestinian scarf – at the time of the shooting. Authorities in the US are investigating the incident as a possible hate crime.

On 10 November, it was widely reported that a burger restaurant 'Burgertory' in Caulfield, Melbourne, owned by a Muslim man who was a vocal advocate for Palestine, was set ablaze. CCTV footage circulated in the media showing two people setting the restaurant on fire. On the day of the arson attack, Victoria police stated that they did not believe the arson attack was religiously or politically motivated. To date, no arrests have been made in relation to the fire.

Prior to the arson attack, Islamophobic comments were directed at Burgertory's owner Hash Tayeh, and at his staff. Additionally, in the aftermath of the fire, Mr Tayeh was subjected to Islamophobic threats. The Register has also seen a video of a group of pro-Israel supporters who claimed the space near the burnt Burgertory store on the day of the arson attack holding Israel flags. Ms Attai stated:



“Irrespective of whether the arson attack itself was or was not religiously motivated, and we’re eagerly waiting to see when arrests will be made with respect to that incident, it is clear that there were a number of Islamophobic incidents that occurred both in the lead up and in the aftermath of the arson attack. And showing up to the burnt burger site on the day of the attack with Israel flags is clearly deliberately antagonistic and intimidating behaviour.”

A number of Islamophobic comments have also been made by a number of prominent political and media personalities in recent days, particularly with respect to the issuance of visitor visas to Palestinians fleeing Israel’s brutal assault on the Occupied Territories. Ms Attai stated:

“It is very concerning to see a number of prominent people not only openly making Islamophobic remarks, but in some cases to see those comments going unchallenged. People of influence have a responsibility to ensure that their comments do not work to undermine social cohesion. When we let Islamophobia, racism and hate fester as a society, we are all worse off.”

The Register urges Australian Muslims as well as non-Muslim bystanders to remain alert and vigilant against Islamophobia, and to continue reporting incidents of Islamophobia both to the Register and to the Police.

The Register has partnered with a range of law firms who are able to offer pro bono legal advice to victims of Islamophobic incidents in the context of current events in Gaza, including in employment law and other legal matters. Free mental health support is also available to those affected by recent events.

It is crucial that these incidents are reported so that those affected by Islamophobic incidents are able to get the critical support that they need, and so that the Register can better track Islamophobia in Australia, particularly at this challenging time.

The Register recognises the tremendous impact that current events in the Middle East are having on many Australians and stands against both Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Any Australians struggling at this time are urged to seek mental health support. Relevant services include Lifeline: 13 11 14 and Hayat Line (service for Australian Muslims): 1300 993 398.

About the Islamophobia Register Australia

The Register is a not-for-profit organisation that has been leading the tracking and tackling of Islamophobia across Australia since its launch in 2014. It provides a secure and reliable online reporting platform that captures nation-wide data and offers first-hand support to victims of Islamophobia. Having recently expanded its board and appointed an inaugural Executive Director, the Register has grown its operations to take its work and influence to the next level.

Its operating model has been commended and replicated by multiple other marginalised groups who have approached the Register to support them in the establishment of their own reporting models. This includes the First Nations Racism Register, ‘Call it Out’ founded by the National Justice Project and the Jumbunna Institute. The Register was also recently invited to provide evidence at the Disability Royal Commission who are looking to make formal recommendations to create a similar organisation to track and tackle disability hate

Media Enquiries

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