



PRESS RELEASE

Vicious attack on Muslim girl in Melbourne demonstrates the urgent need to activate bystanders

7 April 2023

Reports surfaced last night that a 17-year-old Muslim student was subjected to a violent Islamophobic attack by a 50-year-old woman in a bus in Melbourne's Eastern Suburbs, after the Muslim student tried to assist two Asian girls who were being abused by the woman. The girl was reportedly punched, slapped, kicked, had her hijab pulled and "called...all the Muslim slurs you can ever imagine".

The Islamophobia Register Australia's (Register) work highlights that these types of incidents are not isolated. Islamophobia is far too common in Australia. The latest Islamophobia in Australia report authored by Dr Derya Iner and published last month in partnership with Charles Sturt University and the Islamic Sciences Research Academy provides a glimpse of this sobering reality. While the report is confronting, it is widely recognised that Islamophobia is underreported and that reports only scratch the surface. The Register's Executive Director, Sharara Attai said the following with respect to the incident:

"The bus was reportedly full of people and yet no one stepped in to help a 17-year-old child who was being viciously attacked and targeted because of her Islamic faith. Our latest report highlights exactly this reality – that Islamophobia is gendered and disproportionately affects Muslim women and girls, and that it persists in a climate of bystander inaction. The report reveals that bystander reporting to the Register has halved, and we believe that this indicates an urgent need to activate bystanders.

We urge bystanders to step in where it is safe to do so, to call on key figures in the relevant situation for assistance, such as drivers and shopkeepers, as well as of course police and security guards. We do not want a situation where people become desensitised to Islamophobia and attacks on Muslims, and we urge bystanders as well as victims to report such incidents to the Islamophobia Register Australia.

This kind of racism and bigotry has no place in our society and we need to send a strong message that it will not be tolerated. Perpetrators must face the full force of the law.

We also know the long-term impact and trauma that attacks like this can have on victims, and we have reached out to this young girl and offered her our victim support services so that her healing journey can begin."



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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