



PRESS RELEASE

Reports of Islamophobia continuing to increase at staggering rate - now ten-fold post Israel-Palestine escalations

23 October 2023

In the two-week period immediately following Saturday October 7 2023, when the latest escalations in the Israel-Palestine situation began, reports of Islamophobic incidents to the Islamophobia Register Australia (the Register) have increased ten-fold. In some of these incidents, direct references were made to the current Israel-Palestine situation.

The Register previously reported on 13 October 2023 that reports of Islamophobia had increased four-fold. Regrettably, since then the number of incidents reported to the Register have continued to spike at an alarming rate. The period between 14 October and 21 October (which represents week 2 of the post Israel-Palestine escalation period) constituted the highest reporting period in the Register's history of operations with respect to reporting of offline incidents, with the Register receiving by far the largest number of reports of real-life incidents it has ever received in a single one-week period.

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

Executive Director of the Register, Sharara Attai, stated:

"The staggering rate at which reports of offline Islamophobia have increased in the last week is unprecedented in the Register's 9 year history of operation and is deeply troubling. What makes it even more concerning is that we know that the majority of incidents of Islamophobia are never reported."

The Register has also heard anecdotal reports about increased Islamophobia from several individuals and Muslim community organisations, including threats to Muslim community organisations and property damage.

Moreover, the Register was deeply troubled to learn of the horrific murder of a 6 year old Palestinian boy and attempted murder of his mother, in the United States last Monday, in what US police have labelled a hate crime that US law enforcement have said was directly related to the current situation in Palestine.

Unfortunately, there is a direct correlation between violence in the Middle East and increased Islamophobia. It is also known that divisive political rhetoric can lead to increased Islamophobia and the Register encourages leaders and commentators to exercise caution when making public comments.

The Register again echoes the comments of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) chief, Mike Burgess, who previously stated that: "It is important that all parties consider the implications for social cohesion when making public statements." Burgess also stated: "As I have said previously, words matter," and "ASIO has seen direct connections between inflamed language and inflamed community tensions.



Additionally, the Register notes that media framing that dehumanises Palestinians can have devastating consequences. Ms Attai stated:

“Irresponsible, one-sided and dehumanising language and framing of Palestinians by media can have dangerous consequences not only for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, but also for Muslims and Arabs who live on the other side of the world. We call on media outlets to refrain from reporting in a manner that is sensationalist, dehumanising or unsubstantiated.”

The Register also acknowledges that there have been reports of anti-semitism in recent weeks, such as the widely reported anti-semitic chants that were made by a small number of people at Monday night’s pro-Palestine protest. The Register notes that the organisers of that protest have publicly stated that those people were asked to leave the protest and that those views were not shared by either the organisers or the vast majority of the protestors, demonstrating that anti-semitic views are rejected by the majority of people irrespective of their views on the Israel-Palestine situation. The Register understands that subsequent pro-Palestinian protests have been peaceful and without incident. As an anti-racism organisation, the Register completely rejects racism of any kind, including anti-semitism and stands in solidarity with all impacted communities. Racism, whether Islamophobia or anti-semitism, is completely unacceptable.

In this particularly tense time, the Register encourages Australian Muslims to remain alert and vigilant against Islamophobia. The Register also thanks the Australian Muslim community, as well as non-Muslim bystanders, who have reported incidents to the Register.

The Register continues to urge anyone who has experienced or witnessed Islamophobia, whether in real life or online, to report to both the Register and the police. The Register is able to offer victim support services such as pro bono legal support, culturally sensitive mental health referrals and advocacy in certain circumstances.

It is crucial that these incidents are reported so that victims 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 significant impact the current events in the Middle East are having on many Australians, and urges any Australians struggling 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

For media enquiries please contact:
contact@islamophobia.com.au

