

A Mayor's Guide to Countering Islamophobia:
Implementing the U.S.
National Strategy to
Counter Islamophobia and
Anti-Arab Hate



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

A Mayor's Guide to Countering Islamophobia:

Implementing the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate

The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate outlines a whole-of-society effort to address Islamophobia and anti-Arab hate. It defines Islamophobia as hatred, discrimination, or bias directed at Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim.

The Strategy has four priorities, each of which presents opportunities for mayors, who are often on the front lines of combating Islamophobia and anti-Arab hate, protecting impacted communities, and supporting American values. This guide suggests possible actions mayors could take to implement the four priorities.





Priority 1

Increase awareness of hatred against Muslims and Arabs and broaden recognition of these communities' heritages

Actions mayors could take include:

Conduct Trainings

- ✓ Require specific training for all city employees and law enforcement officers to increase awareness about Islamophobia and hatred, discrimination, and bias against Arabs and other religious and ethnic communities and increase understanding of these communities' heritage and culture, including religious practices.
 - This can help reduce bias and ensure that all residents receive public services equitably. These training programs can include workshops on religious diversity, unconscious bias, and effective communication strategies when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. America Indivisible trains elected and appointed officials and career-tracked employees at local, county, and state levels.

Promote Education

- ✓ Support educational initiatives that promote understanding and tolerance among students, such as interfaith clubs, celebrating heritage months, and a curriculum that includes accurate information about Islam and Muslim history.

Recognize Religious and Cultural Events

- ✓ Implement and celebrate heritage months and work with experts to produce appropriate content for these engagements. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has declared July Muslim American Heritage Month in 2024.
- ✓ Work with your local school district to recognize major Islamic holidays, like Eid, and if appropriate for your community, make them official holidays so that all staff, teachers, and students have them off.
- ✓ Host iftar events to bring the Muslim community together and to become better informed about their histories, heritages, and experiences.



Priority 2

Improve safety and security
for Muslims and Arabs

Actions mayors could take include:

Prevent Hate Crimes

- ✓ Ensure that law enforcement agencies are adequately trained to identify and respond to hate crimes targeting Muslims, Arabs, and other marginalized groups.

Promote Law Enforcement Reporting

- ✓ Improve hate crime reporting by fully transitioning to NIBRS so that law enforcement agencies can submit the best possible hate crime data to the FBI.
- ✓ Establish a hate crime reporting hotline and collaborate with community organizations to provide support services to victims, such as counseling and legal assistance.

Ensure Collaboration

- ✓ Create a Mayor's Advisory Council on Muslim Affairs, comprised of representatives from local Muslim organizations and the community. This council would advise the city on issues affecting the Muslim community and collaborate on initiatives to promote inclusion and mutual understanding, which could lead to an increase in trust and reporting of hate crimes.
- ✓ Hold roundtables with communities affected by transnational repression to learn about threats such communities face and better allocate their law enforcement and security efforts.



Priority 3

Tackle discrimination and bias against Muslims and Arabs and appropriately accommodate their religious practice

Actions mayors could take include:

Review Policies to Ensure Nondiscrimination

- ✓ Review, update, establish, and evaluate the city's anti-discrimination laws and other policies to ensure they have tools to prevent and remedy discrimination violations, including those under the Fair Housing Act.
 - This can include anti-discrimination ordinances, language access programs, and initiatives to promote diversity in hiring and procurement. The City Council can pass ordinances prohibiting religious discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

Ensure Nondiscrimination in Education

- ✓ Foster inclusive learning environments for all students through appropriate religious literacy training for educators, administrators, and staff.
- ✓ Diversify the food menu options in the National School Lunch Program, increasing access to halal, kosher, and other foods required to meet religious diets, and proactively working with community partners and parents regarding staff training and input to meal planning.

Engage in Proactive Outreach

- ✓ Strengthen social services and raise awareness to support survivors of hate crimes and their communities by proactively reaching out to Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and members of other ethnic and religious communities in their jurisdiction.
- ✓ Speak out loudly and clearly using your broad reach to affirm that Islamophobia is not just a Muslim problem but an assault on American values.



Priority 4

Continue to build cross-community solidarity and collective action to counter hate

Actions mayors could take include:

Establish Partnerships with Muslim and Arab Organizations

- ✓ Collaborate with local Muslim community organizations and leaders to address issues of mutual concern, promote cultural exchange, and amplify the voices of marginalized communities.

Faciliate Community Engagement

- ✓ Facilitate dialogues and community events that unite people from diverse backgrounds to foster understanding and build relationships. This can include town hall meetings, interfaith gatherings, cultural festivals, and educational workshops. This is a great opportunity to work with community organizations.

Encourage Media Literacy

- ✓ Promote media and digital literacy and critical thinking to identify and combat attacks against Muslims originating on social media.



More Resources

In addition to America Indivisible's programs, several of our partner organizations also have excellent resources that can be of great value to mayors and state and local government officials.

Islamic Networks Group (ING)

Islamic Networks Group (ING) is a peace-building organization dedicated to fostering understanding of Muslims and other marginalized groups to promote harmony and inclusivity. Learn more about their trainings and online resources [here](#).

Institute for Social Policy and Understanding

ISPU has been at the forefront of discovering trends and opportunities that impact American Muslims for almost 20 years. They are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that builds understanding and strengthens communities by laying a foundation of facts. Learn more about their trainings and workshops [here](#).

Muslim Civic Coalition

Muslim Civic Coalition's mission is to educate, collaborate, and amplify social and civic efforts with diverse races, faiths, and communities toward civic justice. Learn how they engage with public officials [here](#).

The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign

The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign: Standing with American Muslims, Advancing American Ideals is a national multifaith coalition of religious denominations and faith-based and community organizations committed to addressing, countering, and preventing anti-Muslim hatred, discrimination, and violence in the United States of America. Learn more about their work and explore their resource [here](#).

AMERICA INDIVISIBLE

America Indivisible (AI) is a non-partisan, non-profit coalition effort to address rising bigotry against members of Muslim communities and those who appear to be Muslim from Black, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian American communities by reinforcing the American values of equality, pluralism, and strength through diversity. AI is proud to have worked alongside many partner organizations in requesting this strategy and providing input on its contents.

A key initiative of the organization is the Public Leaders for Inclusion Council. This leadership development program equips public servants in elected, appointed, and professional positions to explore practices and policies that challenge anti-Muslim racism and other forms of hate while building inclusion and social resilience in their communities. The council provides a platform for public leaders to share best practices, access educational resources, and collaborate on initiatives that strengthen community resilience against discrimination and bias. Through this work, America Indivisible empowers local governments to champion inclusion and equity for all residents.

THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) is the official non-partisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are more than 1,400 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

For decades, the U.S. Conference of Mayors has opposed all forms of discrimination and hate speech based on an individual's religion and country of origin. Beginning in 1993 the Conference began adopting policy opposing violence against Muslims in other countries. In 2016 the organization adopted policy welcoming Muslims as residents of the United States and reaffirming the freedom of religion and the right to live without fear and intimidation. In policy adopted in 2019 the Conference acknowledged the harm suffered by Muslims and others from the harassment, discrimination, and violence that result from anti-Muslim bigotry; condemned anti-Muslim discrimination and bigotry against all minorities as contrary to the values of the United States; and encouraged all public officials to confront the reality of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, and other forms of bigotry. In 2024 the Conference declared July Muslim American Heritage Month in the U.S. and encouraged mayors to do so in their cities. The U.S. Conference of Mayors remains committed to combating Islamophobia, anti-Arab hate and all forms of hate in America's cities.