


A Simple Guide for Parents during Islamophobia Awareness Month

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This Islamophobia Awareness Month, empower yourself with the knowledge to tackle Islamophobia and navigate the PREVENT strategy in schools. Equip your children to stand against prejudice and embrace diversity

Islamophobia Awareness Month provides a timely opportunity for reflection and action against the backdrop of increasing Islamophobia and racism. Many parents may fear repression or victimisation of their child based on their faith or in the event they should they speak up for the oppressed in Palestine or show solidarity with their plight. This comprehensive exploration defines some complex issues within UK law, examines freedom of

expression, and delves into navigating the PREVENT strategy. It also offers practical guidance for parents to empower their children and effectively challenge Islamophobia in educational settings.

Racism in UK law is recognised as prejudice or discrimination against individuals based on race. Islamophobia, while intersecting with racism, specifically refers to the targeting of Muslims or those perceived to be Muslim, based on a prejudiced stance against Islam. It manifests in various forms, including verbal abuse, social exclusion, and physical violence.

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UK legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Order Act 1986, offers protections against racial and religious discrimination. These laws are pivotal in providing a legal framework to challenge and address Islamophobia.

The Human Rights Act 1998 upholds freedom of expression, yet this right is not absolute. It is bounded by responsibilities and limitations, particularly when it infringes upon others' rights. Having an opinion which may offend others does not make it illegal or racist, however the incitement of hate or discrimination of a protected group based on their race or faith is not acceptable. Therefore the criticism of a particular leader or regime does not constitute racism. Schools, as key educational institutions, bear the responsibility to ensure freedom of expression does not create a breeding ground for hate speech, including Islamophobia.

The PREVENT strategy, part of the UK's counter-terrorism measures, aims to reduce the threat of terrorism by stopping individuals from supporting or becoming terrorists. However, its implementation has raised concerns about potential stigmatisation, especially among Muslim communities. It's crucial for parents to understand how this strategy might impact their children in educational settings.

Awareness and education are essential in empowering both children and parents to recognise and challenge Islamophobia. This includes understanding their rights, the nuances of the PREVENT strategy, and ways to address potential concerns with school authorities.

Five Tips for Parents to Tackle Conversations with School Staff:

Be Informed About PREVENT: Understand the basics of the PREVENT strategy and its implications in schools. Educate yourself and your child about what constitutes discrimination. Understand the legal definitions and manifestations of Islamophobia. Educate your child about their rights and how to recognise discriminatory behavior. This knowledge is essential to advocate effectively for your child's rights.

Open Dialogue with School Authorities: Initiate conversations with teachers and school leadership about Islamophobia. Express your concerns and ask about the school's policies and measures to address it. Aim to engage with school staff about how the PREVENT strategy is implemented and its impact on Muslim students. Discuss any concerns and seek clarity on the school's policies.

Promote a Balanced Narrative: Advocate for an inclusive curriculum that represents diverse cultures and religions, including Islam, to foster understanding and respect among all students.

Encourage Critical Thinking and Analytical Discussions: Suggest that schools incorporate activities that encourage critical thinking and analytical discussions about social issues, including Islamophobia. This helps build a more informed and empathetic student body. Speak to leaders about how they handle concerns related to extremism and ensure that policies are applied fairly and without bias.

Report and Follow Up: If your child experiences Islamophobia, report it to the school immediately. Follow up to ensure appropriate action is taken and offer to collaborate on preventive measures. Connect with local and national groups that offer support and guidance on navigating the PREVENT strategy. They can provide valuable resources and assistance. One such organisation is TELL MAMA and another is Islamic Human Rights Commission Islamophobia – IHRC

Navigating PREVENT in Schools:

Schools should be safe zones that nurture free thought and inquiry, not places where young minds are repressed. They play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes and can either perpetuate stereotypes or break them down. It's essential that schools encourage open and respectful discussions, fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints are heard and valued.

Navigating the PREVENT strategy in schools requires a nuanced approach. It's important for parents to:

Stay informed about how the strategy is applied in their child's school. Communicate any concerns or incidents to school authorities. Ensure that their child understands their rights and the importance of speaking up.

For Primary School Children:

For younger children in primary school, the approach needs to be tailored to their level of understanding. They should be positively guided towards social cohesion and respect. Activities that promote empathy, understanding different cultures, and the value of diversity can be instrumental in combating early seeds of prejudice and Islamophobia.

Conclusion:

During Islamophobia Awareness Month, and beyond, it's imperative for parents to be proactive in addressing Islamophobia and understanding strategies like PREVENT. By equipping themselves with knowledge,

engaging in constructive dialogue with educational institutions, and advocating for a balanced and fair approach, parents can play a crucial role in creating a safer, more inclusive environment for their children.

Resources:

Report anti-Muslim incidents: Report in Anti-Muslim Hate or Islamophobia (tellmamauk.org)

Islamic Human Rights Commission – Islamophobia – IHRC

Recommended webinar for parents: Children’s Rights to Express Solidarity with Palestine – YouTube

National Education Union’s guide to teaching about Israel/Palestine in schools: NEU_Israel_Palestine_guidance.pptx (live.com)



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