

Earlier this week, a 35-year-old woman wearing traditional Muslim attire was window shopping on Fifth Avenue in New York City when a man set her blouse on fire and walked away. The woman was unhurt in the attack and it's being investigated as a potential hate crime by the New York Police Department. Sadly, this attack wasn't an isolated incident. According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2016 is on track to be the second worst year for attacks on mosques (after 2015) in U.S. history. "We are clearly seeing a spike in attacks on individual Muslims and Islamic institutions in New York and around the country, which should be of concern to all Americans," the council said in a statement.

The Donald Trump candidacy has stoked the flames in of Islamophobia in the U.S for the past 18 months, and it's on the rise in many other parts of the world as well. As a response to the hatred and violence, Maeril, a French artist, created a comic on how to assist the victims of Islamophobia when they're being harassed in public. "I'm focusing on protecting Muslims here, as they have been very specific targets lately," she wrote on Tumblr, "and as a French Middle Eastern woman, I wanted to try and do something to raise awareness on how to help when such things happen before our eyes—that way one cannot say they 'didn't know what to do.' "

Here's her full Tumblr post:

Hi everyone!

This is an illustrated guide I made as part of my co-admining work at The Middle Eastern Feminist on Facebook! It will be published there shortly.

The technique that is displayed here is a genuine one used in psychology - I forgot the name and couldn't find it again so if you know about it, feel free to tell me!

Some could say: "Yes but you can use that technique for instances of harassment other than Islamophobic attacks!", and my reply is: Sure! Please do so, it also works for other "types" of harassment of a lone person in a public space!!

However I'm focusing on protecting Muslims here, as they have been very specific targets lately, and as a French Middle Eastern woman, I wanted to try and do something to raise awareness on how to help when such things happen before our eyes - that way one cannot say they "didn't know what to do"!

I'd like to insist on two things:

- 1) Do not, in any way, interact with the attacker. You must absolutely ignore them and focus entirely on the person being attacked!
- 2) Please make sure to always respect the wishes of the person you're helping: whether they want you to leave quickly afterwards, or not! If you're in a hurry escort them to a place where someone else can take over - call one of their friends, or one of yours, or if they want to, the police. It all depends on how they feel!

For my fellow French-speakers: I will translate it in French and post it on my page as soon as I can :)

Please don't hesitate to share this guide as it could push a lot of people to overcome bystander syndrome!!

# What to do if you are witnessing Islamophobic harassment

A bystander's guide to help  
the person who's being targeted



- 1 Engage conversation.**  
Go to them, sit beside them and say hello.  
Try to appear calm, collected and welcoming.  
**IGNORE THE ATTACKER.**



- 2 Pick a random subject and start discussing it.**  
It can be anything: a movie you liked, the weather, saying you like something they wear and asking where they got it...



- 3 Keep building the safe space.**  
Keep eye contact with them and don't acknowledge the attacker's presence: the absence of response from you two will push them to leave the area shortly.



- 4 Continue the conversation until the attacker leaves & escort them to a safe place if necessary.**  
Bring them to a neutral area where they can recollect themselves; respect their wishes if they tell you they're ok and just want to go.

