

## Islamophobia and Being an Ally

*Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events*

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### **Topic Summary**

On March 15, 2019, an alleged gunman identified as Brenton Harrison Tarrant, killed 50 people and wounded many others in shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The assault has been identified as the deadliest attack in the country's history. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern called the shooting one of the country's "darkest days." The gunman is an apparent white supremacist who used social media to amplify his attack, streaming a live video of the shooting on Facebook and who appears to have posted a manifesto online prior to the shooting.

In the U.S. in recent years, there has been an increase in expressions and incidents targeting the Muslim community and those who are perceived to be Muslim. This trend is similar to the anti-Muslim bigotry that escalated following the September 11th terrorist attacks. There has also been a surge in the anti-Muslim sentiment in our public discourse, political rhetoric and everyday interactions.

Following the Paris terrorist attack in November 2015, there have been at least seventy-five anti-Muslim [incidents](#) in the United States, including assaults, vandalism and threats. Examples include:

- In Pflugerville, Texas at the Islamic Center of Pflugerville, torn pages of the Quran smeared with feces were found outside the mosque.
- In Ohio, a seventh grade student was accused of getting into an argument with a Muslim sixth grader and threatening to shoot and kill him, calling him a “terrorist” and a “towel head.”
- In Alameda, California, a brick was thrown through the storefront window of the Islamic Center of Alameda. In addition, the store received threatening phone calls including one that said, “Go back home; you’re not welcome here.”

There are a variety of myths, misconceptions and stereotypes about Muslim people that are long-held and reinforced by current day events, public discourse and the media. For example, many believe that all Muslim people are Arab or Middle Eastern. In fact, the Middle East is home to only about 20% of the world’s Muslims. As of 2015, there were 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, which is roughly 24% of the world’s population, according to a Pew Research Center estimate. While many people think that most Muslims are of Middle Eastern descent, in actuality, Indonesia (in Southeast Asia) currently has the single largest Muslim population. Projections into the future estimate that India (in South Asia) will have the world’s largest population of Muslims by the year 2050.

To learn more about myths and facts, read ADL's [Myths and Facts about Muslim People and Islam](#).

## **Age**

11 and up

### **Questions to Start the Conversation**

- How do you feel about what you have seen and heard about the bias against people who are Muslim?
- Why do you think this is happening now?
- What do you think are some of the most common stereotypes and misconceptions about people who are Muslim?
- What's the danger of stereotypes?
- What do you think can be done to stop these incidents from happening?

### **Questions to Dig Deeper**

- Where do you think the myths and stereotypes about Muslim people come from?
- What is one thing you can do to be an ally to a Muslim person who is being targeted?
- How can we prevent stereotypes from taking hold?

(The "Related to this Resource" and Additional Resources section provide articles and information that address these questions.)

### **Ideas for Taking Action**

Ask: What can we do to help? What actions might make a difference?

- Consider how you can [be an ally](#) if you see someone who is Muslim being targeted either in your school, community or online.
- Educate others about what is happening around the recent increase of anti-Muslim bigotry and scapegoating by talking to others, sharing information on social media or helping to organize an education forum in your school.
- Learn more about the bias faced by people who are Muslim and write an article in your school or local newspaper with your thoughts and possible solutions.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Anti-Muslim Bigotry and Being an Ally](#) (ADL Lesson Plan)
- [Children's Books about Muslims and Muslim-Americans](#) (ADL Books Matter)
- [The 'Muslim Ban' and the Power of Protest](#) (ADL Lesson Plan)
- [In schools, on streets and TV, children feel Muslim backlash](#) (AP)
- [Vernon Hills students join their Muslim peers in wearing hijabs](#) (YouTube)