

Know Your Rights: Targeting of British Iranians

Anti-Iranian government dissidents have launched a series of violent attacks and intimidation against people they accuse of failing to actively and visibly support their opposition. These attacks appear intended to intimidate British Iranians into silence, so they do not criticise violent tactics used by some Pahlavi-supporting groups.

Individuals have attended legitimate demonstrations, with the sole aim of intimidating, harassing, and physically assaulting those calling for peace and an end to the war in the Middle East. This has extended to attacks and harassment of British Iranian businesses, organisations and places of worship.

Their actions appear to be coordinated, with clear evidence of premeditated violence that is promoted and shared via social media. Attacks are filmed and then posted on social media platforms. The videos make it clear that they oppose any expression of Islam within the Iranian diaspora community. Practising British Iranian Muslims are often automatically — and wrongly — linked to the Iranian government.

These attacks against Iranian Muslims are Islamophobic and amount to hate crimes.

Hate Crime

Hate crime is motivated by prejudice against a person's based on protected characteristics, such as race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Hate crime could include property damage, threats, theft, verbal abuse, assault, harassment and online abuse. Anyone can be affected by hate crime, and it can be a very frightening and traumatic experience. It can feel particularly personal as someone has targeted you because of who they think you are.

What you can do

The attacker(s) made the choice to commit a hate crime so it is their fault, not yours, that it happened. However, there are some things you can do that may make you feel safer and be safer:

- Avoid engaging with the attackers to avoid escalation
- Keep a note of all incidents: times, dates and details of what happened
 - Record the incident – make contemporaneous notes, record with your smartphone ONLY if it safe to do so (video and/or audio)
 - Witnesses – if there are any, take down names and details if they are happy to provide details to contact after
- Ask someone to go with you if you decide to report the crime to the police.
- If you come into contact with the person responsible, move away safely or go to a more public place. Ask for help if you need it.
- Remove your number and profile from any public directories / lists if you think you will be “doxed”.

- Change your email address if needed and block abusive senders.
- Improve basic home security—for example, add locks and bolts to doors and windows, and consider installing a security camera.

How we can help

- Putting you in touch with other specialist help, services or support
- Information about reporting to the police, the criminal justice system and courts procedures.
- Support on making complaints and follow up.

Reporting hate crime

We understand that some people may not want to report hate crimes to the police and that's fine. However, if you did want to report you can do so in the following ways:

- Direct reporting to the police (101 or 999). Please ensure you record the **crime reference number** you will be provided with by the police.
- Using of third party reporting centres – reporting to a third party organisation who will communicate with the police and other agencies on your behalf, such as our Advocacy department
- Anonymous reporting on the internet www.report-it.org.uk

If you do report the crime and the offender is tried and convicted, courts can take their hate motivation into account during sentencing. This means a stronger sentence could be imposed. Victim Support teams can provide you with further information regarding reporting if you would like to do this.

Confidentiality

Our service is confidential, and unless we believe there's a risk of harm or it's a legal requirement, we will always protect your confidentiality and not pass on your personal details or any other information that could identify you without your permission.

For information contact us by emailing at: advocacy@ihrc.org