

Islamophobic Incidents in US Rose by 70% Amid Conflict Between Israel and Hamas

By [Ahmed Adel](#)

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In the first six months of 2024 alone, nearly 5,000 complaints were filed with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), marking a sharp increase from the same period in the previous year. This comes as it was recently revealed that Islamophobia, as well as the situation in Gaza, are among the top issues for Muslim American voters in 2024.

CAIR reported that it had received 4,951 complaints of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian acts in the first half of 2024, compared to 2,937 reported in the same period in 2023. The rise in anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian discrimination and harassment comes amid a global wave of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, which has intensified since the start of the conflict between Israel and Hamas following the militant group's attack on the Jewish state on October 7 and Israel's subsequent response on Gaza, which numerous countries and international organizations have described as "genocide."

The report by CAIR reveals that there was a significant increase in complaints of Islamophobia in the educational field in May during protests on university campuses across the US over the Israeli military's operation in Gaza. Student protests, which called for an end to economic and military support for Israel, received extensive media coverage during that period.

In that regard, Corey Saylor, the CAIR's director of research and advocacy, said,

"Too many places of higher education, which have historically permitted Islamophobic speakers to poison their campus in the name of academic freedom, apparently find anti-genocide speech intolerable. Since last fall university administrators have been a primary perpetrator of anti-Muslim racism."

"Our data shows that as student protests dominated media coverage of the movement opposing the Gaza genocide, employers also continued punishing their employees for their viewpoints. We are also seeing Federal Agencies like Customs and Border Protection and the FBI interpreting being Muslim or anti-genocide as suspicious activity," Saylor added.

The complaints filed, the report notes, also included hate crimes and discrimination in immigration, asylum and employment processes. CAIR said it received 8,061 complaints throughout 2023, with nearly half—3,578—in the last three months of 2023, after the conflict between Israel and Hamas broke out.

At the same time, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an organization that watches over the human rights of Jewish people around the world, reported that anti-Semitic incidents in the

US increased by 140% in 2023 compared to the previous year.

The ADL stated in April,

“8,873 incidents of assault, harassment, and vandalism across the country. The total represents a 140-percent increase from 2022 – already a record-setting year – and the highest level recorded since ADL started tracking this data in 1979.”

Given that Islamophobia has increased in the US, it is unsurprising that Islamophobia, along with the situation in Gaza, are among the top issues for Muslim American voters in 2024. A new poll conducted by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) in partnership with Change Research and Emgage Foundation shortly before President Joe Biden Biden dropped out of the 2024 US presidential election found Muslim American disillusionment with the Democrats on the war in Gaza and rising issues of Islamophobia.

According to the poll, the majority of Muslim Americans who voted for Biden in 2020 said before his departure that they would not vote for him in 2024 because of his policies on Gaza.

In 2020, 65% of Muslim voters chose Biden over Trump. Muslim American votes could have played a pivotal role in the results of three swing states — Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania — that Biden won and ensured his ultimate victory. However, the 2024 poll found that only 12% of Muslim Americans said they intended to vote for Biden.

In regards to Kamala Harris, expected to be the Democrat candidate to challenge Donald Trump, Muslim Americans might be enticed by her if she carries out their main demand – a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. Although she has vowed not to “look away” or “be silent” towards the suffering in Gaza, she has made no effort to secure a ceasefire. Harris will not be able to win back the Muslim American vote Biden lost without supporting the end of arms transfers to Israel, restoration of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to help Palestinians, and ensuring humanitarian aid reaches Gaza.

However, Muslim Americans will be disappointed if they expect Kamala Harris or Donald Trump to openly endorse a ceasefire, end arms transfers to Israel, or ensure humanitarian aid reaches Gaza. Rather, it is likely that empty promises will be made whilst Islamophobia is allowed to fester as the conflict in the Middle East deepens.

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Ahmed Adel is a Cairo-based geopolitics and political economy researcher. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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