

TOWARDS ANTI-RACISM: ACTIVE ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

A GUIDE BY MUSLIMS AGAINST FASCISM



Introduction

In light of the most recent wave of racist violence spreading across the UK targeting Muslims, migrants, and/or Black people and People of Colour, a small group of activists pulled together this short guide for anti-racist allies who are committed to actively supporting the people and communities affected. It has been written particularly for third sector organisations including trade unions on how they can support their staff, but we hope it will be useful to organisations across sectors.

We hope the information, ideas and tools in this guide will lead to better allyship and forge stronger solidarity at a time when we need it more than ever.

This guide has been written by people who have been and continue to be directly impacted by the anti-migrant, racist and Islamophobic narratives, policies, and actions by successive UK governments and far-right violence. Our experiences brought us to movement work, where we further developed our political understanding; we write this guide as we see a desperate need for greater support from employers for affected communities whilst maintaining our deep held belief that none of us are free until all of us are free.

This guide is not exhaustive (nor perfect!), and we will be considering writing further iterations. Please let us know what else you might find useful to be included in a future version. Details on how to get in touch with us are at the end of this guide.

Note on language: throughout this guide we use 'affected people/communities' to refer to Muslims, migrants, and/or Black people and People of Colour.

Be led and informed by the experience of affected communities through meaningful and proactive listening and consultation

- Acknowledge the work affected communities have already done to prepare and respond to racist violence both in the current context and beyond. Consider how this can be identified, centred and brought into any wider shaping of a response.
- Don't tone-police or minimise what affected communities feel, fear or actions they want to take.
- Don't ask affected communities to be 'compassionate' towards racists, racism or Islamophobia. Don't justify the actions of these racist groups by saying there are ['genuine or legitimate' concerns](#). What is important to consider is the real and direct threat that these communities are [facing at the moment and have been in the past decades](#).
- Always ask the person affected what or how they want any action taken. Do not assume they want to resort to the police to deal with racist violence and abuse. Many affected communities have more [negative experiences](#) with the police even when reporting crimes. Increased police involvement also continues to [lead to the introduction of policies](#) that particularly impact communities affected as seen, for example, in increased stop and search that disproportionately targets young Black people in the name of 'addressing youth violence'.
- Don't expect affected communities to do all of the calling out.
- Solidarity must be acting with or alongside others, it is not about leading the way or dictating to communities on what they should do. People live this day in day out - they don't need your analysis to tell them how they feel or what possible strategy they should adopt.

Supporting staff from affected communities

- Swift communication from the top/senior management and the board to staff, explicitly addressing affected staff. The communication should include: an acknowledgement of the impact, an update on what the organisation is doing to prioritise safeguarding and a duty of care response for staff, and an opportunity to get in touch with any specific concerns.
- You could hold wider team meetings to talk about the issue, but ensure that this doesn't have negative consequences for the impact on the people who are most impacted by what we are witnessing. Racism isn't confined to particular spaces, racist workplaces often having these discussions can trigger negative feelings and emotions based on what people may have experienced in the past or by perpetrators that are so-called team mates who are now having a discussion about the attacks we are seeing. Therefore it is important to set up spaces where affected communities can talk about these issues, in a space with themselves.
- Managers and board of organisations should not put the onus on the affected groups to contact their line managers, this effort needs to be both ways. Employers should get their line managers and leaders to reach out to particular staff individually on how they are feeling - but most importantly how they can support them. This could look like paid time away, or space to care for their mental health. And make arrangements which ensure that any work commitments can be delayed or delegated to other colleagues.
- Ensure regular check-ins are taking place.
- If you have a recognised union in your workplace - work with them - create spaces where reps, especially in specific roles like equality and health and safety can support their members in the workplace. Check if the recognised union has issued any guidance for employers and members in areas of racism and fascism. Find out if there are

branches and Black self-organised groups through the unions that workers could join, if not already active.

- You may have an outsourced employee assistance helpline for any concerns to be disseminated to your workers again - however remember that solidarity has to be about human, empathetic and compassionate interactions. Don't outsource it. Work to build healthy and positive relationships with your staff.
- Ask affected staff if they want their names, bios and contact details removed or amended on public facing communications.

Who is at increased risk?

- Think about your workplace and think about what support would look like for your affected co-workers, what does safeguarding look like to them? How will you support and safeguard them accordingly? If they are working on particular events, can you pay for their taxis and ensure that they feel safe on work journeys?
- Depending on context, immediately limiting front-facing work until adequate risk assessments and contingency plans are in place and conducted in liaison with health and safety union reps where present. Ensure clear timelines and roles around this process are communicated.
- The nature of the different roles in the organisation should be factored in. Frontline work often includes answering calls received via a helpline and managing social media. It is important that risk assessments are adapted to the different jobs and created in consultation with staff in these roles. As part of this, consider where staff who are not from affected communities can temporarily take on responsibilities in frontline work that minimises exposure to abuse or violence.

- We know that often workers who are in cleaning and maintenance - often lower waged jobs - can be invisible and left out of any conversations and support. We also know that most of the workers that are in these jobs are often from affected communities. You should be making sure to extend these discussions to them, ensuring that the time you slot in these discussions work for them. A lot of them might be coming in to do their shifts in the morning or evening, outside of usual office hours working - think about how you can support them as they are travelling at more riskier and quiet times. If you could offer a fund for them to be able to get home safely that should be provided.
- While putting together risk assessments and contingency plans, consider the safety of staff not just while working but also on their way to work (e.g. on public transport) and on any breaks. If workers are working in a front-facing role, consider how you would deal with racial abuse from customers and other stakeholders. What policies do you have in place to ensure that any situation will be dealt with safely and adequately?
- Pay particular attention to staff who tend to do lots of lone working, or who might work in more rural settings, or other regions with smaller teams. What support can you offer them? Map out where your staff are geographically located and how you can support them with issues that might arise in their locality and setting.

Organisational public-facing statements and communications

- A statement, petitions or signatures on joint statements is never a sufficient response, it could be part of an initial response however there has to be much more concrete actions to help the conditions of people in these affected communities.
- Note that it is vital that staff who are from affected people/communities are communicated with (as per the above) before this goes out and are consulted with on the statement.

- Do not use gaslighting language such as ‘we are shocked’ that separates the current attacks from the ongoing experience of staff of Islamophobia and racism.
- Talk to your affected staff about what you plan to publish, when and most importantly why. How does this help in contributing to the discussion already? Listen to what your staff have got to say and maybe find certain ways of consulting such as if you already have staff networks groups set up.
- If there aren't these groups already set up, work with staff and unions to set up a safe space for consultation.
- If your organisation has the capacity, it is important to show support and solidarity to Mosques, asylum accommodation centres, and other sites that have been affected by recent racist violence. This could involve offering direct assistance, helping to repair damage, or simply standing with these communities to show that they are not alone. Acts of solidarity not only provide practical support but also send a powerful message of strength and unity. [Some unions have called their members to show support.](#)

Additional resources:

- National organisation for women, men, youth and children- [Muslim Community Helpline](#)
- Reporting incidents of Islamophobia- [Islamophobia Response Unit](#)
- Reporting discrimination and racism at work- [Acas helpline](#)
- Know Your Rights- [Hate crime](#)

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