



Public Harassment Guide:

Defense and Strategies for Muslim families

By SALAM Project and Security Expert Leon Smith

1. Ensure that you are mindful of escape routes.

Many countries have laws against Public Harassment and/or stalking, which is generally referred to as a course of conduct causing distress or fear for safety. Police can be called.

2. Recording is extremely important as it can immediately stop individuals from behaving more extremely.

If possible and safe to do so, film the perpetrators and notify them that they are causing alarm and distress and will be reported for stalking. That is all that should be said. Example: "You are causing alarm and distress to the children. Please stop your activity immediately or you will be reported for stalking."

It does not need to occur two or more times if the acts are coordinated by a group.

3. Always have 3 people. It's always best to have at least 2 other people with you, 1 to record, 1 to de-escalate, 1 ready to call 999. Aggressors are more likely to back off if there are people ready to support the person they are targeting.



4. Most phones have an SOS feature which will automatically call emergency services like 911 or 999 while sending geolocation and recorded video to 4 pre-selected contacts. This is usually accessible in your settings.

5. De-escalation is important: keep asking questions and keep the individual talking. They are likely to lose steam and you will buy time. Put your body in between the aggressor and victim.

6. If you feel they are about to attack, you can put your hands up and state "I don't want to fight". This creates positive witnesses who saw you tried to de-escalate, but it also puts your hands in a position that allows you to create distance or counter attacks more easily.

7. Post incident, you need to record all details before anyone forgets. Shoes, clothing, height, skin tone, tattoos, beards and time of incident should all be included.

Specify exactly what was said that was threatening violence. This is critical for a police report. Reporting every single incident, no matter how small, is important as police take action on data, especially suspects who have done this before. By reporting, you are protecting others. The report and evidence like pictures/ footage should be shared with others in a group chat so that this data will not be lost if there are issues with the phone (some aggressors may try to destroy the phone to remove evidence).



Law enforcement will adjust their foot patrols, activities, etc. based on reports from the community.

8. If sisters are being harassed in a park, let it be known to law enforcement. For example, if activities are planned for a specific day and time, even by a small group of sisters and their children in the park, alert the police ahead of time that there will be a gathering and of any concerns about a repeat of harassment, stalking, videoing, etc.

9. Appropriate signage needs to be displayed on the exterior of all Muslim associated sites stating that the management, occupants, etc. do not consent to electronic surveillance, harassment, video, etc. There are model signs that meet UK legal requirements available.

10. Carry first aid supplies such as bandages. They can fit in a wallet or purse. Install a first aid app on your phone (there are many available for free such as the Saint John Ambulance or Red Cross apps, choose whichever you feel most comfortable with).

For serious wounds like knife or bullet injuries, remember the "Stop the Bleed" method: take a cloth and apply pressure to stop the wound. Carrying a scarf can be very helpful in this regard as you can immediately apply it on the injured areas.

In the event of a Mass Casualty Incident with multiple serious injuries, ensure that those that can walk move away to the side so that paramedics can treat those with the most severe injuries.



11. It is not out of the question to carry items such as a walking stick, umbrella or steel water bottle, as these can create distance and effective standoff between you and an armed aggressor.

In many countries such as Canada and the UK, while you are allowed to use any item to defend yourself in a hostile situation, it is illegal to carry certain items for self-defense so review local laws first and consult with legal professionals or law enforcement.

12. Consider wearing running shoes and not slippers/sandals if you believe there is a risk. If you need to get away fast you do not want footwear to be a limiting factor.

13. Communities need to invest in self-defence or martial arts, done consistently to improve everyone's capability to protect themselves and others.

14. Every single person has the capacity to help. First responders such as police or paramedics can take 5-15 minutes to arrive on scene. In those crucial minutes, your actions could save a life.

The SALAM Project is a Canadian based group of Muslim emergency management, law enforcement, urban planning and military professionals who help communities with pro bono security planning and training. They have provided over 233 trainings and risk assessments to mosques, charities, schools, churches and temples. Brother Leon Smith is a US-based security expert.