This handbook and the associated resources were developed as a result of independent research undertaken by Griffith University researchers.

You can read more about the project and access resources at www.reportingislam.org

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WELCOME to the Reporting Islam Reportage Handbook, designed to offer reporters, editors and journalism students some basic guidance about the mindful coverage of stories about Islam or involving Muslim people.

No ethical journalist or editor ever intends to get it wrong— but it can be difficult to use the right terms or emphasis if you are not familiar with Islam and its teachings.

This handbook is meant to take much of the guesswork out of the reporting process for you. We’ve done the research and talked to the experts including journalists, academics and Muslims so you can get it right. And getting it right is really important because misreporting of Islam and Muslim people risks endangering or damaging people’s lives.

Research has found inaccurate or sensationalised reporting can lead to a sense of isolation and despair among Muslim community members. This, in turn, has been identified as an important factor which might make people susceptible to turning to violent extremism.

News media coverage that stigmatises Muslims has also been identified as a contributor to mental illness and even suicide. Inaccurate and unethical reporting can inflame community tensions and lead to random acts of violence against Muslim people by other citizens. Australian Muslim often point to unfair media coverage being responsible for creating social divisions between them and other citizens. Research also shows that the news media and journalists have a crucial role to play in social inclusion and exclusion. To that end this handbook and the associated resources are designed to encourage more mindful reporting of Islam and Muslims.

This Reportage Handbook aims to help you learn more about Islam and Muslim people and suggests some strategies to help you report upon news and current affairs fairly, accurately, and ethically to help you avoid unintended and harmful consequences.

It is meant to be used in conjunction with the Reporting Islam app for your mobile devices, the companion website (www.reportingislam.org) and its associated training curricula and materials.

They draw upon international best practice—backed by the latest research—to give you the toolkit to report news and events in an informative and inclusive way.

We hope you find the Reporting Islam Reportage Handbook useful. By following best practice you can contribute to social cohesion and help protect the lives and safety of your fellow Australians.

Associate Professor Jacqui Ewart and Professor Mark Pearson
- Project Leaders

Mr Abdi Hersi
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- Research identifying key approaches to reporting Muslims and Islam
- Case studies and analysis of good and poor reportage
- Distilling best practice from international research

Developing resources for mindful approaches to reportage

Training media practitioners

Refining the resources after feedback
BACKGROUND AND FACTS
The Reporting Islam website

The Reporting Islam website is designed to offer reporters, editors, journalism educators and journalism students some basic guidance to the mindful coverage of stories about Islam or involving Muslim people.

www.reportingislam.org
Islam in Australia fact sheet

Islam is a monotheistic religion that belongs to the Abrahamic religions. The Qur’an is a religious text considered by Muslims to be the verbatim word of God (Allâh). Sunni Muslims accept the teachings and normative example (called the sunnah composed of accounts called hadith) of Prophet Muhammad (c.570-8 June 632 CE), (PBUH—’Peace Be Upon Him’) who is considered by all Muslims (Sunnii or Shia) to be the last prophet of God. Those who don’t believe Muhammad to be the last prophet are not deemed Muslims by mainstream Islam. An adherent of Islam is called a Muslim (sometimes spelled “Moslem”). [Spellings of key words in Islam will vary according to your media organisation’s Style Guide because there is no single method of translation from the original Arabic.]

Islam is based around five pillars that each adult Muslim (male or female) is obligated to follow, including declaration of faith (shahada), five times daily prayer (salat), charity (zakat), fasting (sawm) and pilgrimage (hajj). These basic obligations are found across almost all sects of Islam. Some may, however, undertake other acts of worship as well. Islam is considered a code of living that covers every aspect of life and society, providing guidance on multifarious topics from banking and welfare, to family life and the environment.
Dress code

Islam is a religion of modesty and requires both men and women to be modest in how they present themselves. (Muslim men are required to be modest and have their own dress code.) Media outlets and sources often mistake the names of Muslim women's head dress. Remember, not all Muslim women cover, and not all covered women are Muslim. Muslim communities around the globe refer to the veil by different names including jalbab, hijab, burqa (burka), niqab, khimar, abaya, chador and dupatta.

Three main types of Muslim women's head dress (hijab) are the hijab, niqab and burka. The term 'hijab' can refer to the headscarf, but is also used as the general term for dressing modestly.

Hijab
Head scarf, and the general term for dressing modestly.

Photo: Cory Wright

Niqab
Garment covering the face leaving the area around eyes visible.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Burqa (Burka)
Covers entire face and body, with vision through a mesh screen.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

An identification, understanding and appreciation of these names and different forms of veils is crucial for practising journalists and editors.
Branches and movements

Most Muslims are of two denominations: Sunni (75-90%) or Shia (10-20%). Islamic spirituality is commonly known by the term ‘Sufism’ - a traditional label more appropriately known today as ‘Islamic psychology’. It has a spectrum of definitions. Essentially, Sufism or Islamic spirituality is concerned with the purification of the self. Sufis are to be found in all Islamic sects. Terms such as Salafi and Wahabi are not different sects of Islam - they are Sunnis, but their adherents are considered to follow a very conservative form of Islam. 

[Note: Sikhism, followed by Sikh people, is not part of Islam. It is a monotheistic religion which originated in South Asia in the 15th century.]

Religious leaders

There is no direct equivalent of ‘priesthood’ in Islam. Muslim religious leaders go by a range of titles including imam, mullah, mufti (Sunni), and ayatollah (Shia). They are also often described in the news media using the term ‘cleric’. Although the use of the term ‘cleric’ is not offensive, many Muslims disagree with the use of the term because they do not see it as applicable to the role and function of such individuals in Islam.

Festivals and pilgrimage

Muslims have two major celebrations throughout the year, known as Eid. The first is Eid Al-Fitr (“festival of breaking of the fast”) which comes at the end of Ramadan (the month of fasting). The second is Eid-Al-Adha (also called the Feast of Sacrifice or Bakr-Eid) which honors the willingness of Abraham (Ibrahim) to sacrifice his son, as an act of submission to God’s command, before God then intervened. The celebration of Eid Al-Adha starts on the tenth day of the month of the pilgrimage – the hajj. The hajj is an annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia and a mandatory religious duty that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey and who can support their family during their absence.
Prophets

Many journalists do not realise that Islam acknowledges and reveres Jesus Christ and the Old Testament prophets. Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable and that the purpose of existence is to worship God. Muslims also believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ.

Cultural practices

Journalists can find themselves in a range of culturally sensitive situations when covering stories involving Muslim people. Most matters of cultural or religious sensitivity also apply to other religions, including:

- sensitivities over diet including fasting during Ramadan, and abstinence from the eating of pork and consumption of alcohol
- less physical contact between genders in social situations, such as a male extending his hand to a female on introduction or greeting
- modesty in clothing, particularly with the covering of the shoulders and limbs when visiting a place of worship.

The visual portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in illustrations or cartoons is also offensive to most Muslims.

Law and ethics

As further detailed on the Reporting Islam website, a range of laws or ethical codes might apply to a story about Islam or involving Muslim people, including discrimination and vilification laws (with some qualifications), the MEAA Australian Journalists' Code of Ethics, national security laws, contempt of court and defamation laws.

Reportage

Stories about divisive issues like proposals to build mosques are best handled by stating simply the nature of the dispute, reporting fairly and accurately, avoiding discriminatory and inflammatory material, by ensuring the views of all key stakeholders and legitimate experts have been sought, and by fact-checking the claims made by those sources.

[See the reporting tips and key questions for journalists in this handbook.]
Statistics

With about 1.62 billion followers or 23% of the global population, Islam is the world’s second largest religion by number of adherents and, according to many sources, the fastest-growing major religion in the world. About 13% of Muslims live in Indonesia which has the largest Muslim population of any nation and is the largest Muslim-majority country, followed by Pakistan. India, a non-Muslim country, has the third largest Muslim population in the world. The fourth largest is in Bangladesh. South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa have large Muslim populations. Sizable Muslim communities are also found in Europe, China, Russia, and the Americas. Converts and immigrant communities are found in almost every part of the world. At the 2011 Census Muslims constituted 2.2% of the Australian population, Islam was Australia’s third largest religion, and Australian Muslims came from 183 different countries. Australia’s oldest permanent mosque was built in Adelaide in 1888.

“In the next four decades the… proportions of all religions in the world population will remain the same or decline except Islam.”

- The Muslim population is expected to increase from 1.6 billion or 23% of the world population, to 2.76 billion or 30% of all people in 2050. …

- Twenty years later in 2070 Islam will be the largest religion in the world…

- At 47% Christianity will still be the largest religion in Australia… Islam with 4.9% of the population will be the second largest religious community.

- This will mean that there will be almost one million more Muslims in Australia in 2050 than in 2010.

- Contact between Muslim Indonesian fishermen from Southern Sulawesi and Indigenous people in northern Australia from around the 1750s is the earliest evidence of a Muslim connection in Australia.

- However, it was not until the 1860s with the arrival of Afghan cameleers that Muslims settled in greater numbers in Australia. At the peak of exploration and settlement of central Australia, around 3000 Afghans worked as camel drivers carting water and goods in the difficult terrain…

- In the postwar period, mainly due to migration from Turkey and Lebanon, the Muslim population increased markedly, rising to 200,885 in 1996.

- According to the 2011 Australian Census there were 476,290 Muslims in Australia, of whom about 40% were Australian-born.

- Muslims constitute 2.2% of the Australian population, making Islam Australia’s third largest religion.

- Australian Muslims come from 183 different countries, making them one of Australia’s most ethnically and nationally heterogeneous communities.

- About two fifths of Australian Muslims are of North African or Middle Eastern origin and about a quarter are of South and Central Asian origin.

- Australian Muslims are overwhelmingly urban dwellers. In fact, three quarters of them live in Sydney and Melbourne.

- The Muslim population is increasing more rapidly in the other major Australian cities, though, with the highest rate of increase in Adelaide.

- There are concentrations of Muslims in certain state and federal electorates, giving them noticeable political influence in some parts of Australia.
• Muslims tend to be younger than the Australian population as a whole.

• Muslim women also tend to have more babies than the average Australian woman.

• In the 2011 Census, almost three-quarters of Australian Muslims nominated ‘Australian’ as their national identity. This figure would probably be higher if weren’t for the large number of recent migrants in the Muslim population.

• Muslims overwhelmingly agree that it is possible to be a good Muslim and a good Australian. Studies consistently show, though, that Australian citizenship and identifying as an Australian aren’t protection from stereotypes and prejudice.

• About 70% of Australian Muslims report good or very good proficiency in the English language. This is significant in light of a recent study which shows that, for the great majority of Australians, being able to speak English is a more important marker of being Australian than being born in Australia.

• The evidence presented in this report shows that Australian Muslims in general are young city dwellers who are optimistic about life in Australia. They are bringing up children, enrolling in higher education, and embracing the English language and an Australian identity.

• Muslims are more likely to be unemployed, living in poverty or in prison than other Australians.

• Despite their high levels of education, Muslims are less likely to work in the professions and less likely to be granted a job interview than the average Australian.

• They are more likely to have completed Year 12 and Muslim men are more likely to have a bachelors or postgraduate degree.

• A larger proportion of Muslims are in full-time education compared with all Australians mainly due to their younger age structure.

• Muslims are less likely to be employed than Australians in general and this labour market disadvantage is worse for younger Muslims.

• Muslims are also under-represented in high-status professional occupations and overrepresented in other occupational categories, which tend to have lower status.

• Applicants with Middle Eastern names are less likely to be given an interview than applicants with identical resumes but Anglo-Saxon names.

Poor Practice Harms

There is ample evidence, both empirical and anecdotal, of the negative impact of current news media reporting on the attitudes and feelings within the Australian Muslim community and its potential role as a motivating factor encouraging foreign fighters and the news media’s role as a factor inspiring violence against law-abiding Muslim citizens.

“We are profoundly concerned that violent religious extremism is malignant and metastasizing. Every religiously related hostility—every attack, every hate crime, every insult, every humiliation—is amplified in the media and sends out a polarizing wave that is fueling a rise in social hostility, that—in turn—can add to the seductions of violent religious extremism. New forms of social media are being widely and skillfully used to recruit youth to violent religious extremism.” (UN Alliance of Civilisations, 2014).

Tahiri and Grossman in their Commonwealth funded research project, Community Radicalisation: An examination of perceptions, ideas, beliefs and solutions throughout Australia (2013), acknowledge this issue. This frustration and anger typically leads to community tension and feelings of isolation and victimisation—widely agreed causal factors of radicalisation (further reinforced by Veldhuis and Staun in their 2009 paper, ‘Islamist Radicalisation; A Root Cause Model’).

In their ARC funded, 2015 paper, “Avoiding Community Backlash in the Fight against Terrorism: Research Report”, Murphy, K, Cherney, A and Barkworth, J found “there was a strong belief across the focus groups that media reporting exacerbated the stigmatisation and negative labelling of the Muslim community” and “Muslims carry the burden of stigmatisation and experience a form of collective attribution by the constant conflation of Islam with terrorism”. Murphy et al stated “there is a real risk that the types of experience… play into the hands of Islamic violent-extremist by providing fuel for a key narrative they use to justify their actions: that Muslims are a suppressed and victimised minority”.

Awan (2008) highlighted a range of factors that could lead to “a predisposition for TREs (Transitional Religiosity Experiences)”. In particular these included “Diverse socio-economic factors are most often-cited and typically include high levels of unemployment, poor job prospects, low educational attainment, adisproportionately high prison population, and poor housing facilities, compounded by the presence of endemic and often institutionalised racism and Islamophobia” (2008, p. 14). News media stereotyping of Muslims is one form of institutional racism.

Brown et al’s (2015) study showed that their study participants categorised their perceptions of news media representations of Islam in three ways: 1. Muslims are terrorists, 2. Muslim countries are strict and conservative, and 3. Muslim countries are dirty, backward and uneducated. The power of the media to influence people’s views and behaviour was underlined by all of their study participants, who felt that they experienced a direct impact of media representations through their (mis)
treatment by members of the host society (England). According to participants in this study, such misrepresentations have led to Muslims being treated with suspicion by the non-Muslim community, and to occasional acts of physical and verbal abuse. Misrepresentations also negatively impact on collective self-esteem and cultural identity. The evidence of this study supports the call for news media organisations to be sensitive to the impact of their portraits of cultural and faith groups on public perceptions and attitudes, and to therefore monitor and correct bias and pejorative association (2015, p. 57). Another important factor raised by this study was whether the sojourner’s wellbeing and mental health are compromised by their perceptions of media representations of Islam.

Research has highlighted that news media representations have impacts on the way Muslims construct themselves. For example, Güney (2010) undertook fieldwork from 2002 to 2004 in Bradford, an impoverished northern ‘milltown’ in Britain that witnessed violent protests known as ‘race riots’ in 2001. Güney explored ‘how Asian youths perceive the news media coverage of the wars in the Middle East and how this influences their identification as Muslims and their sense of belonging to an imagined global Muslim community’. He found a correlation between news media reports about wars in the Middle East and the ‘construction of a global Muslim community with which youths associate themselves’ (Güney, 2010; p. 168). The youths noted that ‘the mass media’s biased reports about Muslims and terrorism – as experienced by the informants – cause a backlash, reinforcing identification with Muslim identity. “It can therefore be argued that the Western mass media have an impact on the youths, alienating them from Britishness and encouraging the Othering process through their way of ‘covering Islam’ and Muslims. One could even say that, through their reporting of the wars, the mass media actually induce and support the establishment of Muslim identity as a primary marker” (Güney, 2010; p. 179).

Aly (2007) sought to examine a gap in the research by examining the way in which Australian Muslims interpret and respond to the discourse of terrorism in the media, in which their religion is increasingly being implicated. She found that the most common perception of the media among participants was the identification of Australian Muslim as ‘other’, which creates fear within the broader community by equating Islam with terrorism. Participants expressed an intense distrust of the media and a propaganda view of its influence on public opinion. Aly suggested that the construction of the news media as anti-Muslim has become the lens through which Australian Muslims interpret news media discourse.
What Australian and New Zealand Muslims say about news media coverage

They young people will not be scared as such, but they would be angry, frustrated, annoyed, and the negative portrayal of Muslims further marginalises them, and those who are extremely vulnerable among the young people become more frustrated, angry, especially if they are also not working, and can’t find a job because they happen to be a Muslim, and unfortunately, that sometimes makes them susceptible to radical ideology.

- Associate Professor Mohamad Abdalla, Founding Director, Griffith University Islamic Research Unit

I can’t imagine what it would be like for young, often disenfranchised Muslim men who feel bombarded and attacked by the media constantly... There’s this real feeling of wanting to declare your faith a lot more strongly. And, I wouldn’t say radicalisation but yeah the real strengthening (of faith). This isn’t just an issue of faith, it’s political. And Islam is already a very political sort of religion.

- “Maya”, Australian Muslim journalist

“They’re a threat to our way of life. They have only recently started coming along.” Even the popular narrative about how Muslims are meant to be foreign and trying to change the Australian way of life, in reality out of the 500,000 Muslims in Australia at least a third of them were born here. That notion of Islam as foreign to Australia is something that should be questioned but it’s not going to be questioned in the day to day run of newsrooms across Australia.

- Dr Nasya Bahfen, senior lecturer in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University
There are some elements of positive reporting in Australian media about Muslim community or Muslim issues. (But) there is a tendency of easily and quickly accepting that terrorism or terrorists (applies to a story). In many instances, journalists don’t use their critical faculty, their self-conscious agency to justify whether the very use of the term terrorists or terrorism is justified or not.

- Dr Akhteruz Zaman, University of Technology, Sydney

As long as the textbooks teach that conflict makes news, and peace doesn’t, you will have the same conditioning of the people. That perception needs to be changed. But sometimes a nice headline for a story might result in something far more serious. How do the semantics and how do the words play a role—a very important role? So the use of words can actually be provocative that they can disrupt social harmony.

- Rukhsana Aslam, NZ journalist and PhD candidate
IN PRACTICE
The Reporting Islam website

The Reporting Islam website is designed to offer reporters, editors, journalism educators and journalism students some basic guidance to the mindful coverage of stories about Islam or involving Muslim people.

www.reportingislam.org
Newsroom Audit

Reflect carefully on your answers to each of these questions and consider whether your news organisation could show more diversity and be more inclusive in its recruiting, research, reporting and news selection.

1. How many of your routine sources are Muslim or from a Muslim family?
2. How often do you and your colleagues use Muslims as sources in stories about Muslims?
3. How many of your newsroom colleagues are Muslim or from a Muslim family?
4. How many of your newsroom colleagues are NOT of an Anglo-Saxon / Anglo-Celtic cultural background?
5. How well are offensive racial or religious comments on your news organisation’s social media sites or website moderated or deleted?
6. How many stories in your news outlet that mentioned Islam or Muslim people this past week did NOT involve a point of conflict or disharmony?
7. How regularly do you attend community functions involving Muslims to extend your networks and develop contacts even if these events do not lead directly to published news stories?
8. What steps do your colleagues and your news organisation’s management take to allow for the diet and customs of diverse religious groups? (For example, do staff functions feature halal or vegetarian food options?)
9. How often has your editorial and other staff undertaken training in issues related to culture or discrimination?
10. How familiar are you and your colleagues with the anti-discrimination clauses in your industry ethical codes and the regulations related to discrimination in the workplace?
Law and Ethics of Reporting Islam

Laws

A host of laws might apply to your coverage of issues related to Islam and Muslim people. General media laws such as defamation, contempt of court, breach of confidence and national security laws might be relevant, depending on the story you are covering.

Of special significance are the various hate speech, vilification and racial discrimination laws which might apply.

Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Offensive behaviour because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin

18C (1) It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:

(a) the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and

(b) the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or some or all of the people in the group.

There is some debate over whether it applies to Muslim people, given the ethnic and national diversity of the religion, but it has been held to apply to discriminatory publications about Jewish people: [Jones v Scully [2002] FCA 1080; Toben v Jones [2003] FCAFC 137/ (2003) 129 FCR 515].
State and Territory anti-discrimination and vilification laws also apply. Some list religious discrimination.

- New South Wales: Anti-Discrimination Act (1977)
- Western Australia: Equal Opportunity Act (1984) and Criminal Code
- Northern Territory: Anti-Discrimination Act (1992)

Ethics

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) Code of Ethics makes a general call for fairness and accuracy in reporting. On discrimination, it states at Clause 2: “Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.

Industry-based and in-house media codes of practice and guidelines such as those administered by the ABC, SBS, Free TV Australia and the Australian Press Council contain similar clauses.

For example, Commercial Radio Australia’s Code of Practice (2011, p. 5) states:

“A licensee must not broadcast a program which in all of the circumstances…

(e) is likely to incite hatred against, or serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, any person or group of persons because of age, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preferences, religion, transgender status or disability.”
Tips and Questions

Ten Reporting Islam tips for journalists

1. Get the basics right. Be fair and accurate, attribute opinion, verify facts and assertions, behave ethically, and seek out a range of sources. If in doubt, check it out. If still in doubt, leave it out. Ensure the images, vision and audio also tell the story without perpetuating stereotypes.

2. Find the best sources. Consider using sources informed about the issue—experts with credibility and Muslims from a variety of cultures and demographics who might have a different perspective.

3. Be legal, ethical and respectful. A host of laws and ethical codes might be relevant to your story. Anti-discrimination and vilification laws and codes, defamation, contempt and national security laws might apply to some stories. Be respectful of people's cultural and religious customs when approaching and interviewing.

4. Watch your language. Avoid using inaccurate or misleading terminology. Be wary of "Us versus Them" terminology which separates Muslims from other Australians and language that homogenizes Muslims.

5. Stick to the facts. State the basic facts of the matter if a topic has the potential to inflame passions and tensions in the community. Sometimes this means fact-checking an assertion someone is making rather than just quoting them and spreading a falsity or a rumour with painful consequences.

6. Select your stats. Cite an authoritative source like the Australian Bureau of Statistics rather than using a figure peddled by someone with a vested interest or an agenda.

7. Reflect on your angle. Decide on your story angle after canvassing a range of views and accounts. Remain flexible about adjusting your story angle, especially to help reduce conflict and community tensions.

8. Acknowledge diversity. Include a host of perspectives from Muslims and those with other backgrounds and views. Acknowledge that there are extreme and unrepresentative beliefs and actions to be found in many sections of society.

9. Direct the debate. Consider whether to open web and social media comment streams and only do so if you have the resources to moderate them. Intervene to correct errors and encourage online civility.

10. Plan your follow-up. Many important stories involving Islam and Muslim people have layers of complexity deserving follow-up coverage. These often involve other perspectives and can shed light on the impacts on people’s lives beyond the immediate news.
Ten questions to ask yourself when covering Islam / Muslim communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Key questions for journalists</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does my story distinguish between Islam as a religion and the radical philosophies that inspire extremists? Or does it conflate/confuse them?</td>
<td>Pintak &amp; Franklin, 2013; Rupar, 2012; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Is the language carefully considered? Does it adopt an alienating tone that is emotive, immoderate, alarmist or abusive? Does it seek to avoid negative labels and stereotypes?</td>
<td>Greater London Authority, 2007; Pintak &amp; Franklin, 2013; Rupar, 2012; Robie, 2011; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Gunaratne, Senarath &amp; Pearson, 2015</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Does my story avoid an ‘us and them’ dichotomy in its coverage?</td>
<td>Greater London Authority, 2007; Rupar, 2012; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Rane &amp; Ewart, 2012; Dreher, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have I ensured my angle is evidence-based and checked I have not leapt to any assumptions based upon someone's name, religion or physical appearance?</td>
<td>Greater London Authority, 2007; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Rane &amp; Ewart, 2012; Dreher, 2003</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Does my proposed angle make the basic error of portraying Islam and Muslims as a threat to national identity and a particular way of life?</td>
<td>Greater London Authority, 2007; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Rane &amp; Ewart, 2012; Dreher, 2003</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Have I reflected carefully and self-critically upon this story: my purpose with it, approaches to it, and the lives it might affect?</td>
<td>Gunaratne, Senarath &amp; Pearson, 2015; Sheridan Burns, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Have I reflected upon and identified my own views, prejudices and positions on the topic?</td>
<td>Pearson, 2014; Sheridan Burns, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Does my research acknowledge the diversity of opinions and practices within Islam as a religion and between Muslim communities and avoid portraying a single Muslim position?</td>
<td>Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Rane &amp; Ewart, 2012</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Do I portray people as human beings or focus unreasonably on their membership of an ethnic or religious group?</td>
<td>Pintak &amp; Franklin, 2013; Rupar, 2012; Robie, 2011; Dreher, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Are the images and/or vision accompanying the story appropriate and in context?</td>
<td>Greater London Authority, 2007; Pintak &amp; Franklin, 2013; Rupar, 2012; Robie, 2011; Rane, Ewart &amp; Martinkus, 2014; Ewart and Rane, 2013</td>
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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES
The Reporting Islam website is designed to offer reporters, editors, journalism educators and journalism students some basic guidance to the mindful coverage of stories about Islam or involving Muslim people.
Basic Glossary of Islamic Terms

Burqa (Burka)
Aburqa(burka)is usually a head-to-toe garment with some opening for the eyes, which may or may not be visible. This type of dress is common in some parts of the world, especially in Afghanistan, but a covering of some sort may also be used in other countries.

Fatwa
A fatwa is a legal pronouncement in Islam, issued by a religious law specialist on a specific issue. Usually a fatwa is issued at the request of an individual or a judge to settle a question where fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) is unclear. A scholar capable of issuing fatwas is known as a mufti.

Hajj
Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, undertaken in the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and is to be undertaken at least once in a lifetime by those who have to capacity and means to do so.

Halal
Halal is the Islamic term for “permissible”, similar to the Jewish “kosher”. The term is most commonly used in the context of Muslim dietary laws, especially where meat and poultry are concerned, to mean the animals have been slaughtered according to religious practice.

Haram
Haram refers to anything prohibited by the faith. A variety of foods are considered haram including: the flesh of swine (pork), blood and animals slaughtered in the name of anyone but God, carrion, carnivorous animals with the exception of all fish and sea animals, all intoxicants (specifically alcohol), and anything derived from non-halal animals such as gelatine and additives in foods.

Hijab
Hijab is the word used in the Islamic context for the various practices of dressing modestly. It is often used to refer to a form of headscarf.

Imam
Imam is an Arabic word meaning “leader”, and is usually applied to the leader of prayers in a mosque. The term has different connotations among Shia.

Inshallah
Inshallah (or more correctly in sha’Allah) is a three-word Arabic phrase that literally means “if God wills it” and is used with the same sense as the English “God willing”.

Jihad
Jihad means “struggle” or “striving” (inwardly and outwardly) and is an important concept in Islam. It can be understood as a spiritual struggle to become a better person, living through difficult times, struggling through personal dilemmas and in some contexts it can mean participating in war. However, it is commonly misused by Western media and extremist groups as a direct translation of ‘religious war’. Jihad does not mean ‘holy war’. A jihad of fighting is considered illegitimate if it violates the rules of engagements such as the killing of any innocent person or bystander.

Muharram
Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and is usually a month of mourning, especially for Shia. Sunni Muslims have less of an emphasis on Muharram, however for Shia this is a very holy month and may involve public displays of mourning.

Mufti
During the Ottoman Empire, the term mufti was used to refer to government officials. In present times, it is a Sunni title for a scholar, interpreter and instructor of Islamic law.

Niqab
Garment covering the face leaving the area around eyes visible.

PBUH
“Peace Be Upon Him”, a common blessing recited upon pronouncement of a prophet’s name by Muslims. It is a statement of regard and respect for the prophets, usually stated after the Prophet Muhammad’s name.

Ramadan
Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and is commonly referred to as the month of fasting. This is a time when adult and capable Muslims will fast from sunrise to sunset, abstaining from food, drink, intoxicants and sex. The month can last for 28 to 30 days depending on the visibility of the moon. The evening meal is called Iftar, and at the end of Ramadan there is a major celebration, Eid-ul-Fitr which is celebrated over three days.

Salaam
The word salaam means peace. It is used as part of the traditional Muslim greeting, “Assalamu alaikum”, which means “peace be upon you”.
Sharia
A complete set of guidelines that cover religious, ethical, moral, spiritual, legal, economic and political aspects of a Muslim’s life. Literally it means a “path to a watering place”. It is a combination of laws governing Muslim life and the practice of religion. In day-to-day usage, Sharia may be referred to as an ethical and moral code Muslim live by, but does also govern legal issues such as marriage, inheritance, divorce and business. Sharia law is an aspect of Sharia that is restricted to the legal domain of Islam. Laws of Sharia that pertain to the criminal code are the prerogative of Muslim judiciary and government and not individuals.

Shia
Shia is a sect in Islam, comprising about 15% of the Muslim global population. Whilst Shia follow the same basic tenets of Islam, there are some important theological differences in practice and belief with Sunnis.

Sunni
Sunnis constitute approximately 85% of the global Muslim population. This is the mainstream brand of Islam, with the main differences with Shia evolving from the question as to the succession of next Caliph after Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) death.

Ummah
Ummah is an Arabic and Islamic word that means community or nation. It is correctly used to mean the nation of the believers, or the universal Muslim community.
Resource list

Here we suggest avenues you can use to find people with expertise in stories involving Islam and Muslim people. Rather than listing individual contact details that can become dated very quickly, we suggest key organisational names and search terms you might use.

Experts on Islam and the Media

Experts sometimes change jobs, so please do an online search for these names:

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- Professor Anne Aly
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- Professor Greg Barton
- Associate Professor M. Ishaq Bhatti
- Professor Howard Brasted
- Emeritus Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM
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- Joumanah El Matrah, Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights
- Professor Riaz Hassan, International Centre for Muslim & Non-Muslim Understanding
- Jonathan Holmes, former ABC Media Watch host
- Bryce Johns, Australian Regional Media
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- Griffith Centre for Cultural Research
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- International Centre for Muslim & non-Muslim Understanding
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