

Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are the most serious form of discrimination: **violence against you or your property, or threats of harm, based on your religion, race, or national origin.**¹

If you experience a hate crime:

- **Report** – Tell both campus police (if the incident was on campus) and local police what happened.
- **Document** – Take photos of injuries or vandalism. Write down what happened, time/date, and witnesses' contact information.
- **Call CAIR-MA!** We can explain your options and act as your advocate when dealing with the police and criminal courts.

For more information, see our flyer on hate crimes and harassment.

FBI & Police Visits

The police or other law enforcement officers **cannot enter your home** unless they have a warrant (court order). In addition, you have no legal obligation to answer their questions.

If the FBI or police show up, **don't invite them into your home or agree to meet them elsewhere.** Instead, ask for their business card, tell them you plan to speak with a lawyer, and then call CAIR-MA. *For more information, see our FBI flyer.*

¹ Massachusetts' hate crime laws also apply to violence/threats/vandalism based on other categories, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.



Voting

College students can **register to vote** using either their college address or their home/permanent address (but not both).

Employment Discrimination

An employer **cannot discriminate based on religion, race or national origin.**² Your employer must also take action if other workers harass or intimidate you.

Your employer must allow your religious practices – prayer breaks, wearing hijab/kufi, time off for Jumma, Eid or Hajj – unless it creates an “undue hardship” for the employer. *For more information, see our flyer on employment discrimination.*

Housing Discrimination

Off-campus landlords **cannot discriminate on the basis of religion, race or national origin**³ when it comes to renting an apartment, the amount of rent, making repairs, or evictions. *For more information, see our flyer on housing discrimination.*

² In Massachusetts, it is also illegal for an employer to discriminate based on gender, pregnancy, and other categories.

³ In Massachusetts, you are also protected from housing discrimination based on marital status, children, rental subsidy, and other categories.

Public Accommodations

You have the right to **patronize and be treated like other customers** in any store, business, theater, park, or transportation system that is open to the general public. *For more information, see our flyer on discrimination in places of public accommodation.*

Please Note

This information describes a college student's rights in Massachusetts. It may not be accurate in other states. In addition, this brochure is for **informational purposes only**; it is not legal advice. Please call CAIR-MA or another attorney if you have specific questions about how a law applies to you.



Council on American-Islamic Relations – Massachusetts

Legal Department

P.O. Box 28

Arlington, MA 02476

Phone: **(617) 862-9156**

Website: **www.cairma.org**

E-mail: **info@ma.cair.com**



know
YOUR RIGHTS
as a
MUSLIM
college student





CAIR-Massachusetts is your local chapter of America's largest Muslim civil rights organization. With over 100 colleges & universities in the state, we want to make sure that Muslim college students know their rights.

Religious Discrimination

You have the right to be **free from religious discrimination in the classroom and on campus.** Very generally, your college or university:

- **Cannot deny you the same opportunities and privileges** provided to students of other faiths, such as discouraging you from applying for internships, refusing to write letters of recommendation, or denying equitable funding for student organizations;
- **Must enforce existing policies on religious harassment** by other students or staff, such as graffiti on dorm doors, slurs, or vandalizing flyers for Muslim events;
- **Must allow you to express your religious beliefs**, including praying and discussing your faith, as long as you're not disruptive.

Religious Accommodations

Public and private non-religious colleges and universities must **do more than just not discriminate.** They must also *make exceptions to their policies* if needed to accommodate your religious practices and beliefs.

You have the right to be excused from classes for religious observances and holidays. Notify your instructor in writing in advance. Check your college's policies for specific requirements.

Islamic Clothing

At almost all colleges, **you have the right to wear Islamic clothing**, including hijab, niqab, or kufi. (The only exceptions are a few religious colleges that don't accept any federal funds. However, they still might allow it.)

School officials are required to take action to stop bullying by other students or staff based on your clothing.

Halal Food

Unfortunately, **you do not have a right to Halal food at your college.** However, many schools have added Halal or Kosher options based on student demand, and most schools have vegetarian options. Consider working with other students to encourage your school to provide more on-campus Halal meals.



Student Activism

- **Off campus:** Generally, you have the right to take part in demonstrations to express your views in public places, such as parks or in front of buildings, as long as you don't block other people from entering or exiting. A permit is often needed for marches in public streets or for bullhorns.
- **On campus:** Demonstrations on campus can be restricted. If you are organizing an event, check your college's rules on free speech (usually found in the Student Handbook or Code of Conduct).
- **You have the right to film public demonstrations**, either on campus or off campus, if it's clear to everyone involved that you are recording them. You also have the right to record law enforcement officers carrying out their duties in public. However, secretly recording an in-person or phone conversation is illegal in Massachusetts.

Free Speech & Hate Speech

- **Hate speech, no matter how ugly, racist, or Islamophobic, is rarely a crime** – unless it includes threats of harm or the speaker is physically menacing you.
- **But certain speech may violate your college's Code of Conduct.** In the current political climate, college campuses have become a testing ground for deciding what's political (protected) speech and what's hate speech, with activists on both sides of issues pushing back at one another. Activists should be mindful of the language and imagery used in their efforts.
- **Beyond the political arena, hate speech may violate laws against discrimination** in the workplace (such as when a co-worker's harassment creates a "hostile environment"), housing, or places of public accommodation (stores and businesses).

