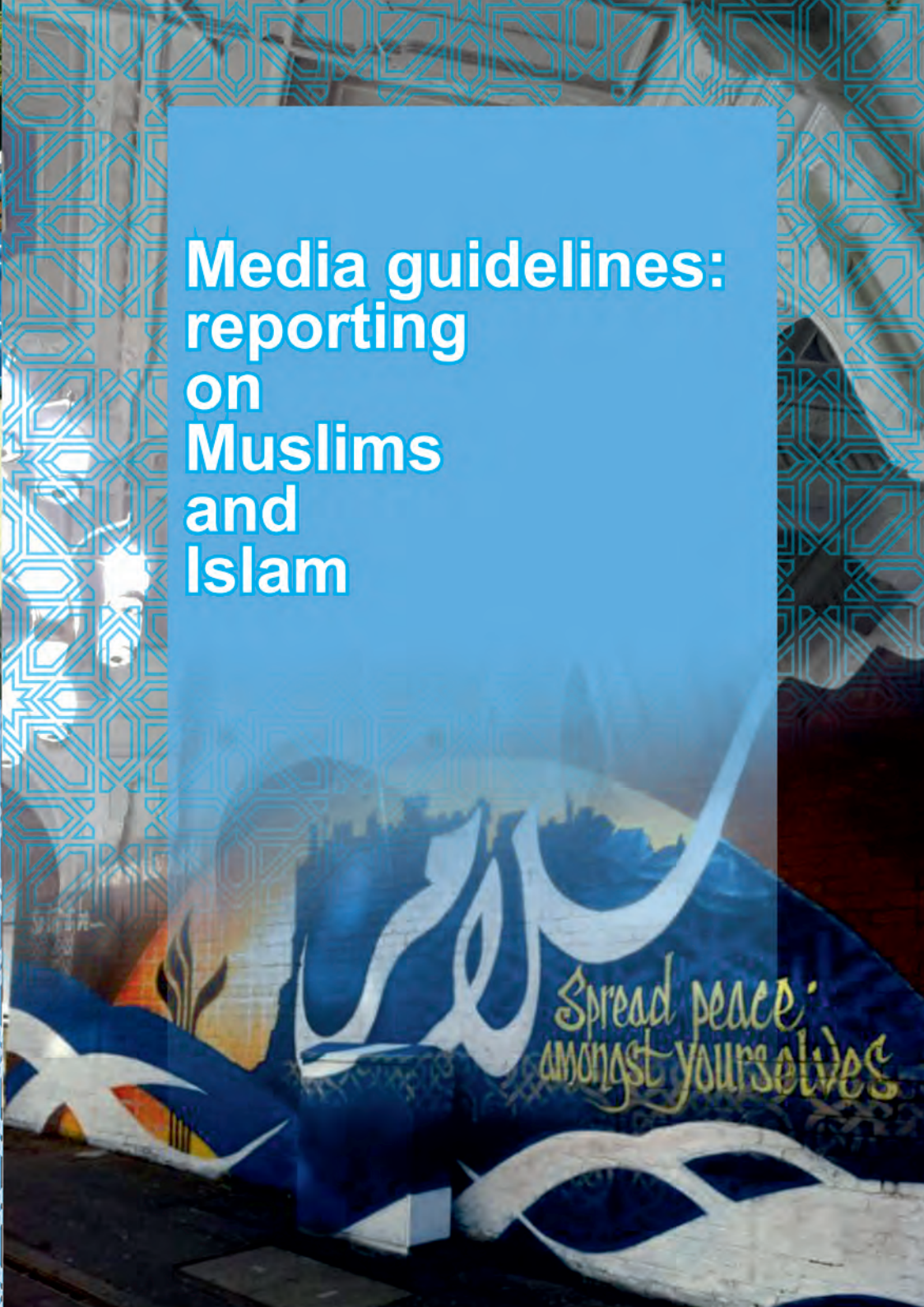




Media guidelines: reporting on Muslims and Islam



Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are intended for those working in any form of media, including print, broadcast and digital. The term 'reporting' relates to the work of any journalist be that a broadcaster, reporter, picture editor, columnist, writer, commentator, blogger, or an editor, correspondent or news presenter.

We have structured these guidelines around the acronym PART – Portrayal, Accuracy, Representation and Terminology. This short guide should be used in conjunction with the main report.

The guidelines have been put together with the needs of the Muslim community, programme-makers and journalists and the wider community in Scotland in mind. We hope they will encourage thought, discussion and change, and be an effective tool for both the media and Muslims in Scotland to open up to each other. Our main aim in producing these guidelines is to improve the portrayal, accuracy, representation and terminology used about Islam and Muslims, for the benefit of all.

PORTRAYAL

- Journalists and programme-makers should strive to offer more regular coverage of the positive qualities, contributions and successes of the Muslim community.
- It is important to strive for diversity and balance in reporting. Investigate the impact on, and experiences of, Muslims and exercise care, balance and proportionality when covering these stories.

- Picture desks and programme-makers should pay specific attention to the images they choose to use when reporting about Islam and Muslims and consider whether they reinforce stereotypes.
- Read, watch or listen to your piece through the eyes and ears of a member of the Muslim community. Does it still feel like a fair piece of journalism?

What impact might your reporting have on Muslims in society?

- Whilst being mindful of the need to facilitate free and open public debate, journalists should avoid publishing letters, online comments or contributions from phone callers that contain gratuitously racist or offensive hate speech specifically aimed at Muslims.

ACCURACY

- Is the description 'Muslim' relevant to the story? Would you be referencing the faith or ethnicity of any individual in the story if they were of a different faith or ethnicity? If not, then do not use it.
- Journalists should be mindful that some Islamophobic individuals and organisations continue to spread false associations between Muslims and certain crimes. This is extremely offensive and dangerous, as well as inaccurate.
- Journalists should strive not to sensationalise stories involving Muslims, particularly relating to their identity and belonging.

- When quoting a politician or public figure ensure their statements on Muslims or Islam are factual. Check with experts who can help with creating context and check the details of the story with reputable sources.
- There should be due prominence for clarifications, corrections and/or apologies, including online articles, which should be published or broadcast promptly.
- Journalists and programme-makers need to check that headlines and

programme titles accurately reflect the substance of the story.

- While it is important for the media to generate advertising revenue and increase reach, this should not come at the expense of accuracy or encourage disproportionate sensationalism.
- When journalists are promoting their work on social media, they should make sure any summary accurately reflects the substance of the article, interview or programme.

REPRESENTATION

- Newsrooms and other forms of media should prioritise diversifying their workforce so it better reflects our diverse society and further enriches our media industry.
- When reporting on Islamophobic individuals or organisations:
 - Decide whether you have to report on these individuals or organisations.
 - As with any interviewee, check the claims made by these individuals or organisations and seek opposing comments.

- Seek to broadcast or publish information exposing the myths of Islamophobic individuals or organisations.
- If we are going to feature those with extreme views on TV or radio or in our papers, we must strive to have a knowledgeable counterpoint challenging those views. Presenters should carry out research, but the interview should also include a suitable knowledgeable challenger.

- Where false claims are found to have been made an opportunity should be created as soon as possible to correct them.
- Seek the views of Muslims themselves, as well as those of others, consulting their representative organisations where possible. Recognise that there will be varying views, different from those expressed by an individual or an organisation.

TERMINOLOGY

- Headlines and introductions should be attention-grabbing to encourage readers and viewers to continue reading or watching, but this should not come at the expense of accurate terminology.

- Discuss terminology with Muslim colleagues (if you have them). If unsure, contact an organisation or informed individuals for help.
- Muslims are not a homogenous community. They are a diverse group,

religiously, ethnically and culturally. Ensure your description and terminology is correct. Where possible check with the person how they want to be defined. If this is not possible then consult community representatives or organisations.