



## How not to treat Muslims after the Paris attacks

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My younger sister just experienced her first brush with anti-Muslim backlash in Mississauga. Fatema, like me, was born and raised in Toronto and wears hijab.

"I was at Loblaws in the produce section and patiently waiting for a lady to move her cart so I could get some green pepper," Fatema wrote about the incident on Facebook.

"She suddenly turned around and saw me waiting and said, 'Oh, my God. I'm sorry. Please don't blow me up,' and then quickly moved away from me. Seriously?! #neverthoughtthiscouldhappenincanada."

My sister was flabbergasted. Later, when checking out, she realized no one was behind her in the checkout line. "I looked at all the other lines... They each had a long line with five to six people waiting. I was next to pay and no one was behind me, but they were all staring at me."

This was a minor incident with no real ramifications. Nor is racism something we, all Canadian visible ethnic minorities, haven't experienced at some point in our lives. But in Mississauga?

The most diverse city in the province -- and where a Muslim Arab MP had just been elected [8]?

Are there people out there who really believe the random Muslim woman in hijab standing in front of them at the checkout line at their local grocery store could be hiding a bomb?

Apparently so.

My sister's Facebook post [9] received a flood of sympathetic responses from non-Muslims and Muslims, some of whom said they had experienced similar encounters. Which makes me wonder -- and fear -- for the Muslims who live in less diverse areas of Canada. If this kind mentality exists in Mississauga, how much worse will it be for those

living in Parry Sound or Winnipeg?

A mosque in Peterborough has already been set alight [10] by suspected arsonists late on Saturday night. No one was injured but about 70 families were inside just half an hour before, celebrating the birth of a couple's baby.

And then there's the Toronto couple who put a sign [11] on their lawn asking Muslims if they were sorry for the attacks in Paris.

Here's a response for them: I am not apologizing for the attacks in Paris. I had nothing to do with them.

But I am utterly disgusted at the terrorists responsible and deeply despair for all the innocent lives lost.

Yes, France is launching air strikes inside Syria that are indiscriminately killing innocent civilians.

Yes, Western foreign policy continues to be a driving factor towards the bloody, chaotic mess the Middle East lies in today.

But the Islamic State needs to hear this loud and clear: No country's actions are worse than yours. What you choose to carry out is infinitely more reprehensible -- because whenever you do something horrific you have the audacity to invoke God's name first.

The only comfort Muslims in Canada can take is knowing that no one will face God's wrath more than hypocrites -- and that's a promise coming from the one book and God that ISIS claims to follow.

The fear of all Muslims is unnecessary and cruel -- in our grocery stores, in our neighbourhoods. We are all mourning, we are all angry. And as long as we are all united, ISIS will never win.