



## **CMPAC's Brief on Islamophobia and Anti-Palestinian Racism for Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights**

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The Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC) is committed to addressing and combatting systemic Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, recognizing their profound implications for human rights, social cohesion, and justice within our society. Recent events, notably those surrounding October 7th, have brought renewed urgency to these issues, exposing both longstanding injustices and emerging challenges. This brief aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the complexities surrounding Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, emphasizing their interconnected nature, and proposing actionable recommendations for legislative and policy measures. Drawing on CMPAC's extensive research and advocacy efforts, this submission offers insights and policy recommendations to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as they undertake their study on Islamophobia in Canada.

### **Rising Islamophobia and Anti-Palestinian Racism**

CMPAC has observed a troubling escalation in Islamophobic rhetoric, particularly evident following the events of October 7th, 2023. This period witnessed an increase in verbal and physical assaults targeting visibly Muslim individuals, reminiscent of the post-9/11 climate. Political leaders conflating support for Palestinians with terrorism have exacerbated tensions, creating a chilling effect on humanitarian expressions and fostering heightened discrimination against Muslim communities.

Islamophobia encompasses prejudice, hostility, or discrimination directed at Islam or Muslims, manifesting in forms such as hate speech, violence, exclusionary practices, and institutional bias. Concurrently, anti-Palestinian racism targets individuals of Palestinian descent based on their ethnicity or national origin, often intertwining with Islamophobic sentiments due to the majority of Palestinians being Muslim.

CMPAC has identified instances where media coverage and political discourse have amplified Islamophobic sentiments, highlighting the lethal consequences of such rhetoric. For example, the tragic attacks on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the Quebec City mosque shooting demonstrate how extremist narratives can incite violence against Muslim communities globally. Additionally, incidents such as the devastating attack on the Afzaal family in London, Ontario, where four members of the Muslim family were killed in a targeted vehicle attack, underscore the profound impacts of Islamophobia on individuals and communities worldwide. These events underscore the critical importance of addressing systemic discrimination serving as a catalyst for raising awareness and ought to compel the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to prioritize combatting Islamophobia and addressing anti-Palestinian racism in a robust and proactive manner.



## **Historical Context and Systemic Issues**

Examining the historical context and systemic issues surrounding Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism reveals several pivotal factors. Historically, colonial powers propagated Orientalist stereotypes portraying Islam and Muslims as inherently inferior or threatening, which continue to influence contemporary public perceptions and policies. Negative portrayals in Canadian and global media, coupled with political discourse, further normalize these prejudices, fostering an environment of fear and suspicion. Moreover, Muslims and Palestinians frequently encounter systemic discrimination across crucial sectors such as employment, education, housing, and law enforcement. These challenges are compounded by policies that disproportionately impact these communities, exposing deep-rooted societal inequities that demand urgent attention from policymakers.

## **Intersection of Islamophobia and Anti-Palestinian Racism**

The intersection of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism reveals shared challenges and implications for affected communities. Both phenomena rely on stereotypes portraying Muslims and Palestinians as inherently violent, extremist, and 'other,' perpetuating their marginalization and exclusion from broader society. This perpetuates heightened levels of anxiety, discrimination, and barriers to social and economic integration among affected communities, undermining their well-being and sense of belonging. Addressing these interconnected forms of discrimination requires the implementation of comprehensive policies that prioritize diversity, inclusion, and uphold human rights across all societal spheres. Through concerted efforts, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights can foster an equitable and supportive environment for Muslim and Palestinian communities, thereby promoting social cohesion and justice for all Canadians.

## **Policy Struggles**

Following the discussion on the lethal consequences of amplified Islamophobic sentiments, it is crucial to address policy struggles and CMPAC's advocacy within the context of combating Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism.

CMPAC has been at the forefront of advocating against biased practices targeting Muslim charities by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The Review and Analysis Division (RAD) has disproportionately audited Muslim-led charities under the guise of anti-terrorism financing, despite a lack of evidence linking these organizations to such activities. CMPAC's submissions to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Department of Finance have called for an independent review of these practices and proposed the establishment of a new Canada Financial Crimes Agency to ensure fair oversight and auditing procedures.

Additionally, CMPAC has actively contributed to discussions surrounding oversight reforms within the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). During the deliberations on Bill C-20, CMPAC advocated for amendments to enhance the effectiveness



and independence of the Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC). These efforts included recommendations to facilitate third-party complaints, address systemic issues, and ensure impartial investigations to combat biases within law enforcement and border security operations.

Legislatively, CMPAC has engaged in extensive advocacy efforts to safeguard the rights and freedoms of the Muslim community. For instance, in response to Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, CMPAC expressed concerns over provisions that could potentially stigmatize Muslim Canadians while addressing national security concerns. Similarly, CMPAC has scrutinized Bill 166, focusing on safeguarding academic freedom in Ontario's post-secondary institutions to ensure it respects diverse viewpoints, including those of Muslim scholars and students.

Furthermore, CMPAC has provided substantial feedback on Bill C-63, the Online Harms Act, emphasizing the importance of combatting online extremism without compromising legitimate dissenting voices, especially those from marginalized communities such as Muslims and Palestinians. CMPAC's advocacy underscores the need for balanced legislative measures that protect against hate speech and discrimination while upholding fundamental freedoms and civil liberties.

The aforementioned policy struggles highlighted by CMPAC underscore critical systemic issues that perpetuate discrimination against Muslim and Palestinian communities in Canada. From biased audits of Muslim charities by the CRA to advocacy for oversight reforms within the CBSA and RCMP, CMPAC's efforts reveal persistent barriers to fairness and equity. These examples illustrate the urgent need for legislative and procedural reforms that enhance transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights within government agencies. CMPAC urges the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to recognize the discriminatory impact of these practices and to recommend comprehensive measures that promote inclusivity, combat Islamophobia, and address anti-Palestinian racism.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the preceding discussions and CMPAC's advocacy efforts, CMPAC puts forth several key recommendations for the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to incorporate into their study on Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism in Canada:

### **1. Addressing Systemic Islamophobia:**

- Implement independent oversight mechanisms to ensure fairness in CRA audits of Muslim charities, addressing disproportionate scrutiny and bias.
- Advocate for the using the Canada Financial Crimes Agency to replace the Review and Analysis Division (RAD), promoting transparency and equitable treatment in financial regulatory practices.



- Amend Bill C-20 to enhance the effectiveness of oversight bodies like the Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC), enabling third-party complaints and independent investigations into allegations of misconduct within the CBSA and RCMP.

## **2. Combatting Anti-Palestinian Racism:**

- Encourage responsible and non-inflammatory rhetoric among media and political leaders to mitigate the spread of anti-Palestinian sentiment and Islamophobic stereotypes.
- Recognize the interconnectedness of anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia in policy-making, advocating for policies that address both forms of discrimination holistically.
- Abandon the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism in Canada's anti-racism strategy and other policies. The broad and ambiguous nature of this definition can inadvertently suppress legitimate criticism of Israel and conflate it with anti-Semitism. Abandoning its use will help ensure that policies do not unintentionally stifle free speech or exacerbate anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia.

## **3. Enhancing Community Engagement:**

- Promote meaningful engagement between government bodies and Muslim communities throughout the legislative process, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered in policy formulation. Ensure true representation and engagement of the mainstream Muslim community.
- Support initiatives that document and report incidents of Islamophobia and discrimination, leveraging data to inform evidence-based policy decisions and resource allocation.
- Engage and support expert scholars and research centres from the Muslim community on policy matters that impact the Muslim community. They will be able to provide informed expert and research based recommendations that are culturally sensitive and more relevant to our community needs.

## **4. Legislative Measures:**

- Enact and strengthen hate crime legislation specifically targeting Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, with provisions for robust penalties and comprehensive support for victims without infringing upon privacy and rights of individuals.



**5. Education and Awareness:**

- Implement educational programs aimed at promoting cultural understanding, challenging stereotypes, and fostering empathy towards Muslim and Palestinian communities.

**6. Community Empowerment:**

- Support community-driven initiatives that empower affected communities, enhance civic participation, and amplify their voices in shaping policies that affect their well-being.

**7. Media and Public Discourse:**

- Develop guidelines for responsible media reporting to counteract harmful narratives, promote accurate portrayals of Islam and Palestinians, and contribute to a more informed public discourse.

**8. International Advocacy:**

- Advocate for international human rights standards and collaboration to address global manifestations of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, ensuring a coordinated approach to combatting these issues on a global scale.
- Track and counter the impact of global Islamophobia and foreign interference in Canada within security agencies, media sector, and local collaborators.

By adopting these recommendations, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society in Canada, where all individuals, including Muslim and Palestinian communities, are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect under the law. These measures not only aim to address immediate challenges but also lay the groundwork for long-term systemic change to combat structural Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism effectively.

## **Conclusion**

CMPAC's persistent advocacy and detailed submissions underscore the pressing need for comprehensive reforms to combat Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism across Canada. The recommendations outlined in this brief offer a strategic framework to address systemic discrimination and promote inclusive policies that uphold the rights and dignity of Muslim and Palestinian communities. By implementing these recommendations, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights can play a pivotal role in fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for all Canadians.



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We sincerely thank the Committee for its attention to these critical issues and reaffirm CMPAC's commitment to supporting legislative and policy measures that advance a society free from discrimination and bigotry. We stand ready to collaborate further to ensure that these recommendations translate into meaningful change for all Canadians.



## References and Resources

1. Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council. (2024). Various documents on CRA, CBSA, Islamophobia, bills, and Palestine. Retrieved from [Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council](#).

### Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

- *Financial Action Task Force preventing unintended regulatory consequences* - August 18, 2023. [Link](#)
- *Charter Challenge Acknowledges Bias in Auditing Muslim Charity, Fails to Act* - September 14, 2023. [Link](#)
- *Consultation Submission addressing the financial targeting of Muslim Communities and Charities* - August 1, 2023. [Link](#)
- *Sarah Mushtaq: Review into Canada Revenue Agency bias has let down Canadian Muslims* - April 6, 2023. [Link](#)
- *The consequences of falling behind our allies on combatting terrorist financing* - January 17, 2023. [Link](#)

### Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA)

- *Civil Society Coalition Outlines Bill C-20 Amendment Recommendations* - September 28, 2023. [Link](#)
- *Submission to Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-20* - June 7, 2023. [Link](#)
- *Ukrainian refugee crisis reveals double standard?* - March 8, 2022. [Link](#)

### Islamophobia

- *CMPAC Statement on Rising Islamophobia* - October 18, 2023. [Link](#)

### Bills

- *CMPAC's Consultation Submission Brief on the Proposed Nakba Bill* - June 5, 2024. [Link](#)
- *CMPAC's Analysis of Bill C-70 (Countering Foreign Interference Act): Safeguarding Democracy Amidst Security Measures* - June 19, 2024. [Link](#)
- *CMPAC's Assessment of Bill 166: Safeguarding Academic Freedom in Ontario's Post-Secondary Institutions* - June 17, 2024. [Link](#)
- *Voices United: CMPAC and Coalition Express Concerns about Bill C-63, the Online Harms Act* - May 8, 2024. [Link](#)



Palestine

- *CMPAC's Comprehensive Political Advocacy Strategy for Palestine* - January 10, 2024. [Link](#)
- *Open Letter – RE: Postponement and Consultation on Proposed By-Law to Protect Vaughan's Vulnerable Social Infrastructure* - June 17, 2024. [Link](#)
- *Remembering Nakba Day: Standing in Solidarity with Palestine* - May 15, 2024. [Link](#)
- *War on Gaza: Why campus protests are seen as a threat to the global order* - May 14, 2024. [Link](#)
- *Joint Statement Condemning Police Brutality at the University of Calgary & the University of Alberta* - May 11, 2024. [Link](#)
- *Arms Embargo Now* - May 7, 2024. [Link](#)