



CANADIAN MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

CMPAC Policy Brief: December 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the months following the October 2025 ceasefire, Palestinians continue to face profound humanitarian, political, and structural challenges. Although the termination of large-scale hostilities has brought relief, it has not ended the crisis. Gaza's infrastructure remains collapsed, families remain separated, and people continue to endure the compounded effects of displacement, oppression, and systemic deprivation. Over [400](#) Palestinians have been killed by Israel since the October 2025 ceasefire. This moment requires more than emergency aid, it demands a coherent, principled Canadian foreign policy that supports long-term recovery, justice, and accountability.

Canada's obligations do not end with the recognition of the state of Palestine. As a state committed to the *UN Charter* and international humanitarian law, Canada has a moral and a legal responsibility to help redevelop and rebuild Gaza. Canada is also responsible for upholding human rights, and ensuring that accountability mechanisms address war crimes and human rights violations. This includes supporting redevelopment, restoring essential services, and investing in community-driven reconstruction for the purpose of enabling Palestinians to rebuild their lives with dignity.

Domestically, the Muslim community expects stronger and more consistent federal leadership. This includes policies that protect civil liberties, address structural Islamophobia, and uphold freedom of expression. The Muslim community, among all other Canadians, need to be reassured that they can advocate for justice without fear of criminalization. Recent legislations and proposed amendments have revealed gaps that undermine public trust and disproportionately harm racialized and faith-based communities. These legislations and amendments are rushed and are done with minimal consultations despite their complexity.

CMPAC urges Members of Parliament to:

- **Reject Bill C-9**, protecting freedom of expression, religion, and peaceful assembly.
- **Reject Bill C-12**, protecting refugees, ensuring family reunification, and upholding international law.
- **Support and second the “No More Loopholes Act”**, closing export control gaps and upholding Canada's international obligations

- **Fix and Facilitate the *Gaza TRV Reunification Program***, ensuring safe and timely family reunification
- **Grant accepted Palestinian students and scholars visas** to enter Canada and complete their studies.
- **Support a comprehensive long-term strategy to rebuild and develop Gaza** beyond emergency aid

KEY ISSUES & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Defending Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights

a) Opposition to Bill C-9: The Combatting Hate Act

Although [Bill C-9](#) is framed as combatting hate, it expands the Criminal Code in ways that threaten Charter-protected freedoms of expression, religion, association and peaceful assembly. CMPAC's [initial](#) and [secondary](#) analyses of committee proceedings demonstrate the Bill's vague and overly broad provisions risk criminalizing lawful speech, peaceful protest, or religious teaching. This particularly impacts Muslim, Palestinians, and other faith and minority communities.

Broad language on "properties primarily used by identifiable groups" and unclear application to digital religious speech, including online sermons, duaa/supplications, and webinars, further endangers faith-based expression. Additional concerns include the removal of Attorney General oversight on the introduced offences, expanded police powers, and the creation of a new "hate crime" offence that duplicates existing law. Vague definitions of "intimidation" and "obstruction" could also misinterpret peaceful advocacy as criminal.

In addition to these serious structural issues, the Justice Committee agreed on the proposed [amendment](#) to repeal the "good-faith religious text defence" in s. 319(b) of the Criminal Code. Currently, this protection ensures that persons expressing opinions on religious subjects or based on belief in sacred texts in good faith cannot be convicted for wilfully promoting hatred. Legal and constitutional analysis finds no evidence that this defence has impeded legitimate hate-propaganda prosecutions. Instead, this protection is an important safeguard that aligns hate-speech provision with Charter protections for freedom of religion and expression. Removing it would risk state or law-enforcement intrusion into religious interpretation.

The amendment disproportionately impacts minority faith communities whose scripture are more often politicized or scrutinized, increasing the risk of misinterpretation, complaints, and chilling effect on everyday religious teachings, online religious content, and community education. In contexts of heightened Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism, these developments deepen structural inequalities and raise serious equality concerns.

Recommendations:

- Publicly reject Bill C-9 in its entirety.
- Maintain AG oversight for all hate related offences.
- Remove the offence associated with religious symbols.

- Oppose extension to Properties “primarily used in part or in full” by identifiable groups. This may turn colleges, universities, and cultural/ religious centres into effectively restricted protest zones.
- Advocate for explicit legal clarifications to protect religious freedoms, including: maintaining the good-faith religious-text defence under section 319(3)(b) for all faith communities & ensuring that online and digital religious speech, such as streamed sermons, publications, or webinars, is not criminalized.

b) Opposition to Bill C-2/12: The Strong Borders Act

Bill C-12, which was introduced as a legislative response to critiques of Bill C-2, largely replicated the problematic provisions of its previous version without meaningfully addressing the civil liberties and human rights concerns. Civil society and expert coalitions have criticized and rejected C-12 for fast-tracking measures that would expand state surveillance, erode privacy protections, and entrench expansive executive powers over immigration status without adequate procedural safeguards.

Canada has a responsibility to protect refugees, ensure family reunification, and uphold international law. Bill C-12 takes Canada in the opposite direction. The bill grants sweeping executive powers to cancel or suspend immigration documents, restrict access to refugee hearings, and expand surveillance and information-sharing. These measures will disproportionately harm Muslim, racialized, migrants, and refugee communities. The bill undermines due process, violates international refugee law, and threatens Canada’s obligations under the principle of non-refoulement.

Instead of facilitating protection for people fleeing persecution, this bill entrenches a securitized, discriminatory immigration regime. As the bill passes third-reading in Parliament, it is important to understand that it contradicts Canada’s commitments to human rights, refugee protection, and post-ceasefire humanitarian responsibilities.

Recommendations:

- Publicly reject Bill C-12 in its current form and vote against it.
- Address discriminatory impacts and ensure oversight, reporting, and accountability mechanisms in any future immigration or border legislations.
- Uphold Canada’s international obligations, including the right to fair asylum proceedings, non-refoulement, and family reunification for displaced persons.

2. Addressing Canada’s Role in Gaza: Accountability, Protection, and Rebuilding

a) Support the Private Member’s Bill - “No More Loopholes Act”

After the ceasefire, Canada has a critical opportunity to ensure that its policies do not facilitate or enable further violence. The [No More Loopholes Act](#) addresses a long-standing gap in Canada’s export-control framework that has allowed Canadian military goods to reach conflict zones indirectly through the United States or other third-party intermediaries. Closing this loophole would strengthen oversight, transparency, and risk assessment.

This will ensure that Canadian-made weapons are not used in the commission of war crimes or serious human rights violations. Supporting this legislation is essential for Canada to meet its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty, the Genocide Convention, and the Rome Statute, to demonstrate meaningful accountability following the ceasefire.

Recommendations:

- Support the No More Loopholes Act to ensure that all Canadian military exports are subject to comprehensive oversight, risk assessment, and public reporting.
- Revoke existing arms export permits to Israel and close loopholes for indirect transfers through the United States or other intermediaries, and publish full permit details to enhance transparency.
- Implement a comprehensive two-way arms embargo on Israel, consistent with Canada's obligations under international law.
- Strengthen enforcement and reporting mechanisms to ensure the Act's effective implementation and parliamentary accountability.

b) Gaza Temporary Resident Visa (TRV) Family Reunification Program

Nearly two years after the launch of the *Gaza TRV Family Reunification Program*, it continues to fall far short of its stated humanitarian objectives. More than 5,200 Palestinians remain stranded in Gaza and Egypt, including approximately 3,700 individuals in Gaza and over 1,000 in Egypt without status, healthcare access, or education. Fewer than 900 individuals have reached Canada, largely through self-arranged evacuation efforts, and an estimated 500 applicants have died while awaiting processing. Prolonged delays driven by excessive security screening, intrusive biometric requirements, and family separation at points of entry create an inhuman process.

Limited engagement from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Prime Minister's Office, coupled with the absence of regular public reporting, has further eroded transparency and accountability. CMPAC demands that the program be restructured and transformed into a rights-based humanitarian initiative that places family reunification, safe passage, and human dignity at its core. Immediate action, transparency, and sustained political leadership are required to meet Canada's obligations under international law and protect vulnerable civilians.

Recommendations:

- Urge IRCC to expand eligibility and accelerate TRV processing for applicants in Gaza and Egypt.
- Simplify or waive excessive security and biometric requirements.
- Ensure full family unity at the border.
- Ask for a public commitment from the Prime Minister and relevant ministers to address systemic failures in the program.
- Establish ongoing engagement with CMPAC and coalition partners to monitor implementation and accountability.

c) Supporting Students and Scholars at Risk (PSSAR)

The Palestinian Students & Scholars At Risk ([PSSAR](#)) Network facilitates access to graduate education and research opportunities in Canada for Palestinian students and scholars facing systemic barriers. PSSAR's programs, including the graduate matching initiative and Lab Twins Program, provide academic placement, mentorship and research partnerships. These programs strengthen both individual advancement and Palestinian higher education capacity.

PSSAR addresses non-academic barriers, such as visa processing, housing, and mental health support for Palestinian students and scholars at risk. Through the promotion of equitable access to education, PSSAR highlights the need for targeted, rights-respecting immigration policies that prioritize academic freedom.

Recommendations:

- Facilitate expedited visa and study permit processing for eligible students from conflict zones.
- Ensure academic mobility programs remain shielded from securitized immigration measures.
- Support institutional partnerships between Canadian universities and global academic networks.

d) Development and Rebuilding of Gaza: From Relief to Long-Term Recovery

Although large-scale hostilities have been terminated post the ceasefire, Gaza remains in crisis. Its infrastructure is destroyed, leaving Gazans without essential services. Families remain separated and communities are facing ongoing displacement and deprivation. Emergency aid is crucial, yet insufficient. Canada must adopt a principled, long-term policy that supports redevelopment, justice, and accountability.

Gaza requires rebuilding critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water and sanitation systems, housing, and local economic capacity. Canadian assistance should align with multilateral partners such as UNRWA and independent NGOs. Recovery must be accompanied by diplomatic efforts, including lifting the blockade, securing humanitarian access, and upholding international law to prevent repeated cycles of oppression.

Recommendations:

- Support a comprehensive, long-term reconstruction strategy beyond emergency aid.
- Coordinate aid with multilateral and local partners for transparency and sustainability.
- Advocate for the lifting of the blockade and unhindered humanitarian access.
- Promote community-driven economic and educational recovery initiatives.

UPDATES AND RESOURCES

- CMPAC's [Analysis and Position on the Combatting Hate Act \(Bill C-9\)](#) - Comprehensive review outlining how Bill C-9 threatens Charter-protected freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly while disproportionately impacting advocacy.
- ICLMG's ["Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, risks criminalizing dissent and be withdrawn"](#) - A coalition statement warning that Bill C-9's vague provisions could suppress legitimate political expression and advocacy.
- ICLMG's ["Withdraw Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act as it risks criminalising dissent!"](#) - A follow-up appeal calling on Parliament to abandon Bill-C-9 and engage affected communities before advancing similar legislation.
- CCLA - ["Civil Society Groups Demand Federal Government Rethink Bill-C-9"](#) - Joint statement urging the government to reconsider Bill C-9 due to its broad overreach and chilling effect on peaceful protest.
- Canadian Constitution Foundation - ["Liberal hate crimes bill raises free speech concerns"](#) - Legal commentary emphasizing that Bill C-9 could unduly restrict lawful expression and expand police powers beyond constitutional limits.
- Amnesty Canada - ["Joint Letter: Gaza Family Reunification Temporary Resident Visa"](#) - Public letter to the Canadian government calling for urgent action to reunite Palestinian families under the TRV program.
- Amnesty Canada - ["Fix the TRV Program: Reunite Gazans Now"](#) - Advocacy guide outlining steps for Canadian citizens and MPs to support the Gaza TRV program.
- CJPME [No More Loopholes Act](#) - Background and updates on the federal private member's bill that closes loopholes allowing human rights violators to enter and operate in Canada.
- [CMPAC Secondary Analysis of Bill C-9](#): Focused issues for faith-based communities and emerging concerns from committee proceedings.
- [CMPAC Commentary on Bill C-9 Committee Deliberations](#) to reject an out-of-scope amendment to Bill C-9 that would create a new terrorism offence.
- [CMPAC Brief on the Proposed Amendment](#) to Remove the "Good-Faith Religious Text" Defence in s.319 of the Criminal Code (Bill C-9 Amendment)
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- [CMPAC's Joint Statement](#) – Bill C-9 Should Not Be Passed: A Cross-Country Multi Faith Canadian Call to Defend Civil Liberties.
- [CMPAC's Open Letter](#) - Immediate Call for Rejection of Bill C-9 and the Criminal Code Amendment Eliminating the Good Faith Defence