

## **JOINT STATEMENT**

### **Bill C-9 Should Not Be Passed: A Cross-Country Multi Faith Canadian Call to Defend Civil Liberties**

**December 1, 2025** - We, the undersigned multi faith, civil liberties and community organizations, collectively reject *Bill C-9 – An Act to amend the Criminal Code*, the so-called “Combatting Hate Act.”

As Bill C-9 proceeds through the Parliamentary process, we emphasize that this bill shouldn't be passed. The risks it poses to protest rights, labour rights, and public accountability are too serious and too far-reaching.

Bill C-9, far from protecting communities, criminalizes protest, suppresses dissent, and expands police discretionary power at a time when over-policing, surveillance, and disproportionate targeting of racialized communities are already well-documented.

We also note with concern that the official opposition party plans to introduce a series of amendments that intensify, rather than mitigate, the bill's most harmful elements, further expanding criminalization. Such amendments must be understood in the broader context of how expanded criminalization can be leveraged beyond their stated intent. Once this precedent is set, governments could build on this to trade away Canadian rights to suit many types of foreign or commercial interest.

#### **Our Demands**

1. Withdraw Bill C-9 in its entirety. The risks to democratic rights, civil liberties, and racial justice are too grave.
2. Affirm the right to protest as a cornerstone of Canadian democracy. Protest is not an inconvenience, it is how communities make change.
3. End the expansion of police powers and discretionary authority. Protect communities, not institutions.
4. Commit to evidence-based approaches to addressing hate, ones that do not criminalize speech, symbolism, or peaceful assembly.

#### **Bill C-9 Criminalizes Dissent Through Vague and Subjective Criteria**

Bill C-9 expands the Criminal Code by introducing vague and subjective offences that can carry penalties of up to 10 years in prison. One of these new provisions relies on one's intent to “provoke a state of fear in another person”. This exposes protestors to criminal liability for having engaged in protests that were peaceful, albeit seen by some as loud, disruptive or offensive.

Research already shows that Black and racialized individuals are disproportionately perceived as threatening and are already subject to disproportionate surveillance, profiling and policing; Bill C-9 effectively codifies these racist perceptions into law.

#### **A Threat to Charter Rights and Public Accountability**

Bill C-9 designates a sweeping set of protected locations including schools, religious institutions, arenas, and community centres where disruptive, yet peaceful protests may result in criminal sanctions. This shields institutions, including those with histories of racism or exclusion, from legitimate public scrutiny. Religious institutions are not neutral spaces. From residential schools, to political events hosted by foreign governments, communities should retain the ability to challenge harmful policies, political events, and discriminatory practices wherever they occur.

### **Labour Rights Are Directly Implicated**

The bill's broad prohibitions raise significant concerns for workers engaged in constitutionally protected strike action and picketing. The Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that striking is a constitutionally protected right. Bill C-9 would make certain forms of labour action a criminal offence punishable by up to 10 years in prison. This is a direct attack on collective bargaining, freedom of association, and the labour movement as a whole.

### **Unchecked Expansion of Police Authority**

Bill C-9 grants police vast authority to determine what constitutes intimidation, obstruction, prohibited symbols, or "hate-motivated" conduct. Critically, the bill removes Attorney General oversight on hate-propaganda charges, eliminating a safeguard that previously constrained overreach.

Civil society organizations have already documented over-enforcement against peaceful protests across Canada, including the dismantling of encampments and charges that fail to hold up in court.

### **Existing Laws Already Provide Protection**

Canada already has laws against riot, mischief, public incitement, intimidation, criminal harassment, threats, and hate-motivated mischief.

Bill C-9 duplicates these protections while dramatically widening police powers and narrowing the space for public protest. The bill's supporters have not demonstrated a single gap in the Criminal Code that this legislation actually fills.

The stakes are clear. Bill C-9 is not a hate-crime bill. It is Canada's most significant attempt in a generation to restrict protest and silence dissent. Bill C-9 does not protect the public from harm. It protects institutions from accountability, expands punitive policing, and criminalizes the democratic expression of communities across Canada.

We stand united in rejecting this legislation and in defending the fundamental rights and freedoms that underpin Canadian democracy.

Signatories:

1. Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC)
2. Independent Jewish Voices (IJV)
3. Jews Say No to Genocide
4. The United Church of Canada
5. Canadian Civil Liberties Association
6. Centre for Free Expression (CFE)
7. OpenMedia
8. Arab Canadian Lawyers Association
9. Canadian Council for Refugees
10. Refugee Lawyers Association
11. International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
12. Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)
13. Le Centre de Réfugiés / The Refugee Centre
14. Canadian Muslim Healthcare Network
15. United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel
16. British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
17. Palestinian Canadian Congress
18. Palestine Solidarity Ottawa Centre
19. Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter
20. IfNotNow Toronto
21. Harm Reduction Action Collective
22. HIV Legal Network
23. Alliance for Trans Youth (Windsor, Ontario)