



CANADIAN MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Statement on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia

January 29th 2026

January 29 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, honouring the memory of six men killed in the 2017 attack on the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City in Quebec City: Azzeddine Soufiane, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Ibrahima Barry, and Abdelkrim Hassane.

This anniversary is also a necessary point of reflection on the impact of Islamophobia and its root causes that can be tied to systemic and structural issues reflected in policy legislation and public discourse. It recalls a moment of pain that cannot be forgotten, a wound that continues to shape the sense of safety and belonging felt by many Muslims in Canada, and a reminder that remembrance must be paired with meaningful action.

Since the Québec City attack, Islamophobia in Canada has shown a troubling trajectory. Data from [Statistics Canada](#) show that police-reported hate crimes targeting Muslims rose **102%** from **84 incidents in 2020** to **220 incidents in 2023**, and remained high in **2024 with 229 incidents**. While underreporting remains a recognized limitation in hate-crime data, the trend line is nonetheless anti-Muslim hostility is persistent and rising, not receding.

An honest statement on Islamophobia in Canada requires looking at the broader ecosystem that shapes public attitudes rather than individual prejudice. Policy frameworks and media narratives play a formative role in defining who is perceived as belonging, who is viewed with suspicion, and whose rights are treated as conditional. Legislation signals societal priorities and defines normative boundaries.

When bills are framed around “security,” “neutrality,” or “public order,” but have disproportionate impacts on identifiable communities, they can contribute to social othering even when drafted in neutral language.

Québec’s secularism framework, including Bill 21 and subsequent measures such as Bill 9, has been widely debated for this reason. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association [has argued](#) that Bill 21 “masks discrimination as secularism.” At the federal level, debates surrounding Bill C-21 and public safety have unfolded in a media environment where discussions of violence, radicalization, and security often intersect with implicit biases about Muslim communities. Even where legislation is not explicitly directed at Muslims, the surrounding narrative ecology can still shape public perception in ways that reinforce suspicion toward Muslim civic participation and identity.



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Most concerning, however, is [Bill C-9](#). Framed as a response to hate, its structure raises significant civil-liberties questions, that especially target the Muslim community. The removal of long-standing safeguards for good-faith religious expression and the expansion of state powers around expression risk creating a chilling effect on lawful advocacy, protest, and religious discourse. When definitions of harm are broadened without equally robust protections for rights, enforcement may fall unevenly on communities already subject to surveillance and scrutiny.

The lived experience of many Muslim Canadians reflects this loop: increased scrutiny in public life, hesitation in civic participation, and concern that expressions of faith or solidarity may be misinterpreted or through new legislation, criminalized.

On January 29, remembrance must be paired with honest introspection and self correction by the government. The Canadian government must work with the Muslim community to ensure that measures taken in the name of safety do not further entrench Islamophobia into our society. Combating Islamophobia requires more than condemning hate after it occurs. It requires examining how laws are drafted, how media frames are constructed, and whose voices are included in decision-making.

The question is not only how Canada responds to hate, but whether its policies and narratives actively prevent the conditions that allow hate to grow.