

JOINT STATEMENT

Joint Statement: Urgent Call for Senate Review of Bill C-9 to Protect Civil Liberties and Fundamental Freedoms

April 2nd, 2026 - Canadian Civil Liberties Association, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council, Amnesty International Canadian Section, Independent Jewish Voices, Ligue des droits et libertés, Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association, and The Centre for Free Expression, reaffirm our deep concern about Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, following its passage at third reading in the House of Commons. We remain firmly of the view that this legislation, in its current form, risks undermining the very rights and freedoms it purports to defend.

Since Bill C-9's introduction in Parliament, our organizations have engaged constructively with parliamentarians, providing detailed legal analyses, policy recommendations, and testimonies at the Justice committee. In parallel, a broad coalition of [civil liberties organizations](#), [advocacy organizations](#), [Muslim organizations](#), [Jewish organizations](#), and [Christian organizations](#) issued multiple joint statements and submissions expressing serious concerns about the bill's scope and potential impacts on fundamental freedoms.

Despite these efforts, the government has moved the legislation without meaningfully addressing many of the substantive concerns raised by communities – and actually made the bill *worse* by removing the Criminal Code's good-faith religious defense without putting anything adequate in its place.

The forced advancement of Bill C-9 through Parliament raises serious concerns about the integrity of the legislative process. Legislation of this scope and consequences, directly affecting fundamental freedoms, criminal law, and the scope of state power, demands careful, transparent, and inclusive deliberation. Instead, the federal government forced Bill C-9 to move forward without adequate time to meaningfully consider amendments proposed by civil society organizations, faith communities, legal experts, and directly impacted communities. The outcome is legislation that has not undergone the rigorous scrutiny necessary to protect constitutional rights and guard against unintended consequences.

Bill C-9 introduces vague and overly broad provisions that risk criminalizing lawful expression, peaceful protest, and legitimate dissent. By expanding offences tied to subjective concepts such as "fear", the legislation creates significant legal uncertainty and opens the door to arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement. New overly-broad obstruction offences risk criminalizing otherwise lawful protests. The broadening of hate propaganda provisions to include the display of symbols tied to the discretionary and politicized terrorist entities list will not only expand the use of controversial anti-terrorism powers, it will grant police subjective powers to determine whether an image simply resembles a prohibited image or slogan. These provisions threaten to chill

public discourse and undermine Charter protected rights, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism are on the rise. Communities across this country are worried, and they deserve protection. But Bill C-9 doesn't solve this complex issue. To be clear: punitive laws that criminalize expression do not stop hatred. They hand governments a blunt tool that tends to be disproportionately used against Indigenous communities, racialized communities, faith groups, and protesters. Rather than addressing the root cause of hate, Bill C-9 risks further entrenching existing inequities within the justice system. The outcome will not be greater safety, but greater surveillance, over policing, and further marginalization of already vulnerable communities.

At a time when Canadians are seeking unity, justice, and accountability, efforts to combat hate must not come at the expense of the fundamental freedoms that define our democracy.

1. We call on the Senate of Canada to address the shortcomings in the legislative process by undertaking broader and more meaningful consultations, particularly with communities that were not adequately heard.
2. We call on the Senate of Canada to reject Bill C-9 and vote against its passage. Should the Senate proceed with its consideration, we urge Senators to introduce the necessary amendments and safeguards to mitigate the risks this legislation poses to religious freedoms, civil liberties, and constitutionally protected rights.

A careful, inclusive, and rights-respecting approach is essential to ensure that measures intended to combat hate do not erode the very freedoms they seek to protect.

Signatories

Amnesty International Canadian Section (English speaking)
Canadian Civil Liberties Association
Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association
Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC)
Independent Jewish Voices
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
Ligue des droits et libertés
The Centre for Free Expression