



CMPAC's Intersection with Amnesty Canada's *Human Rights Agenda 2026*

Introduction

Amnesty International Canada's [Human Rights Agenda 2026](#) presents a significant critique of Canada's current legislative and political trajectory, warning of a broader shift toward expanding state authority, weakening procedural safeguards, shrinking civic space, and increasing reliance on securitized governance frameworks. Throughout the report, Amnesty argues that governments are increasingly prioritizing enforcement-oriented approaches, economic nationalism, and public order measures at the expense of constitutional protections, international human rights obligations, and the rights of marginalized communities. (p. 5)

Importantly, the report situates current legislative developments within broader realities of systemic racism, discriminatory enforcement, criminalization of dissent, and uneven application of domestic and international law. This analytical framework is particularly relevant to ongoing concerns surrounding Bills C-9, C-12, online harms and digital regulation frameworks, protest rights, refugee protections, Palestine advocacy, and arms export accountability.

Many of these issues have been the subject of sustained advocacy by the Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC), particularly in relation to Bills C-9, C-12, C-22, proposals addressing online harms, the protection of Charter freedoms, and Canada's response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Amnesty's report therefore serves not only as a snapshot of the current human rights landscape, but also as an important contribution to broader conversations regarding the balance between public policy objectives and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Through its analysis of emerging legislative trends, enforcement practices, and accountability mechanisms, **the report raises important questions about the direction of Canadian governance and the implications of expanding state powers for marginalized and racialized communities.**

Amnesty's Recommendations

Of the thirty-five recommendations contained within Amnesty International Canada's Human Rights Agenda 2026, many intersect directly with CMPAC's ongoing advocacy priorities. These include recommendations to withdraw Bill C-9 and Bill C-12, strengthen Charter protections and safeguards against rights-infringing legislation, protect protest rights, establish greater oversight of immigration enforcement bodies, prohibit arms transfers connected to serious violations of international law, impose accountability measures for international crimes, and strengthen corporate human rights due diligence frameworks.

Collectively, these recommendations reflect a broader emphasis on limiting the expansion of state powers, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and ensuring that Canadian domestic and foreign policy remains grounded in human rights and international legal obligations.

1 Bill C-9 and the Expansion of Criminal Law Powers

1.1 Expansion of Broad Enforcement Authorities

A central concern throughout Amnesty's report is the increasing normalization of expansive state powers under the justification of public safety and hate prevention. Amnesty repeatedly warns that legislation introduced without meaningful safeguards risks disproportionately impacting Indigenous, Black, migrant, refugee, Muslim, and other racialized communities already subject to systemic discrimination within Canadian institutions. (p. 24-25)

This concern is most directly reflected in Amnesty's analysis of Bill C-9, identified as one of the federal government's principal "rights-impacting bills." (p. 24-25) The report highlights concerns regarding:

- new Criminal Code offences related to intimidation and obstruction,
- expanded hate-related offences,
- "hate or terrorist symbols" provisions,

Amnesty warns that vague statutory drafting combined with expanded police and prosecutorial discretion creates significant risks for overreach and discriminatory enforcement. The report specifically notes that broad definitions concerning hate-related conduct and symbolic expression may contribute to disproportionate targeting of racialized communities and deepen existing inequities within Canada's justice system. (p. 25)

1.2 Civil Liberties and Charter Concerns

The report's criticism of weakened procedural safeguards is particularly significant. Amnesty's concerns regarding the absence of the requirement of Attorney General consent to the new

hate, intimidation and obstruction offences, reflect broader warnings about diminished oversight in expression-related prosecutions. (p. 25)

Taken together, Amnesty's analysis reinforces broader concerns that legislation framed around hate prevention may nonetheless create chilling effects on lawful political expression, religious discourse, protest activity, and advocacy concerning contentious political issues, including Palestine solidarity organizing.

Amnesty ultimately concludes that Bill C-9's deficiencies are sufficiently significant that the legislation should be withdrawn and reworked. (p. 25)

2. Criminalization of Protest and Shrinking Civic Space

2.1 Expansion of Policing and Public Order Frameworks

Amnesty's report also documents growing concerns regarding the criminalization of protest movements and rights-based organizing in Canada. In its analysis of Indigenous land defenders, Amnesty references:

- RCMP raids,
- injunctions,
- exclusion zones,
- criminal prosecutions,
- and Charter concerns connected to enforcement operations. (p. 13)

The report further cites concerns raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples regarding the use of injunctions and exclusion zones to create “a favourable atmosphere for the criminalization” of protest activity. (p. 13)

2.2 Implications Beyond Indigenous Land Defence

Although discussed within the context of Indigenous land defence, the broader implications extend beyond environmental protest movements. Amnesty's analysis reflects growing concern that governments are increasingly relying on criminal law tools, policing frameworks, and public order mechanisms to regulate or deter forms of political dissent deemed disruptive or politically contentious.

This concern is particularly relevant in the context of growing debates surrounding protest restrictions, surveillance, and policing of Palestine solidarity demonstrations and other forms of rights-based advocacy across Canada.

The relationship between these concerns and Bill C-9 is especially notable. Amnesty's warnings regarding vague intimidation provisions, broad symbolic restrictions, and expanded police discretion reinforce broader civil liberties concerns regarding the potential chilling effect of such legislation on lawful protest and political advocacy.

3. Bill C-12 and the Securitization of Immigration Policy

3.1 Restrictive Immigration Measures and Due Process

Amnesty's broader critique of securitized governance frameworks is also reflected in its analysis of refugee and immigration policy. The report raises concerns regarding increasingly restrictive immigration measures, expansion of detention authorities, diminished procedural protections, and weakening refugee safeguards. (p. 57-59)

Amnesty advocates for:

- stronger refugee protections,
- withdrawal from the Safe Third Country Agreement,
- increased oversight of CBSA,
- and an end to immigration detention practices.

3.2 Immigration Governance Through a Security Lens

The report repeatedly warns that migration policy is increasingly framed through a securitized lens in which executive discretion expands while procedural fairness and due process protections diminish.

These concerns are particularly significant for racialized communities that have historically experienced disproportionate scrutiny within national security and immigration enforcement systems. Amnesty's analysis therefore reinforces broader concerns regarding the expansion of enforcement-oriented immigration governance at the expense of rights-based protections and international refugee obligations.

4. Online Harms Frameworks and Digital Regulation

4.1 Expansion of Digital Enforcement Mechanisms

Amnesty's discussion of online harms and technology-facilitated regulation intersects with broader concerns surrounding digital governance and online harms legislation, including Bill C-22 and related frameworks.

Although Amnesty approaches this issue primarily through the lens of gender-based violence, the report's broader human rights framework raises important concerns regarding proportionality, oversight, and expansion of state-backed digital enforcement systems.

4.2 Risks to Political Expression and Advocacy

This analysis is particularly relevant given increasing concerns regarding:

- overbroad moderation frameworks,
- algorithmic suppression,
- surveillance,
- and disproportionate restrictions on politically sensitive speech online.

The report repeatedly emphasizes that governance frameworks must remain grounded in rights protections, accountability mechanisms, and proportionality safeguards rather than expansive enforcement powers justified through broad public safety narratives. (p. 5)

These concerns are especially relevant in the context of debates surrounding digital censorship and moderation of Palestine-related advocacy and political expression.

The concerns identified by Amnesty are further amplified when considered alongside Canada's broader legislative trajectory, including Bills C-22 and C-34. While addressing different policy objectives, these measures collectively expand state oversight of digital spaces, communications, and online activity.

Amnesty emphasizes that regulatory frameworks must remain grounded in proportionality, accountability, and human rights safeguards, warning against the gradual expansion of enforcement powers without corresponding protections. As digital regulation, online harms policies, and national security frameworks increasingly intersect, robust safeguards are necessary to ensure that lawful political expression, advocacy, and dissent are not subject to disproportionate restrictions or surveillance.

5. International Law, Gaza, and Arms Export Accountability

5.1 Selective Application of International Law

Amnesty's foreign policy analysis strongly intersects with ongoing advocacy concerning Gaza, international humanitarian law, and Canadian arms exports.

In the report's foreword, Amnesty criticizes the selective application of the "rules-based international order," arguing that international law has frequently been applied with differing standards "depending on the identity of the accused or the victim." (p. 5)

The report explicitly references Gaza as one of the defining global human rights crises requiring principled accountability and meaningful international engagement. (p. 5)

5.2 Arms Exports and Accountability Frameworks

Amnesty repeatedly rejects approaches in which geopolitical or economic considerations supersede international humanitarian law obligations or civilian protection principles.

This analysis substantially reinforces broader concerns regarding:

- Canadian military exports,
- accountability mechanisms,
- sanctions frameworks,
- and compliance with international humanitarian law obligations.

This analysis is directly relevant to the objectives underlying Bill C-233, which seeks to prohibit the export of military goods and technology from Canada to Israel. The bill is premised on the principle that Canada should not authorize arms transfers where there is a substantial risk that

such exports could contribute to violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law. While Amnesty's report does not specifically address Bill C-233, its broader critique of selective accountability and inconsistent application of international law provides important support for the rationale underlying the legislation.

Conclusion

Amnesty International Canada's *Human Rights Agenda 2026* identifies a broader structural trend toward expanding state authority across criminal law, protest regulation, immigration enforcement, digital governance, and foreign policy frameworks.

Most significantly, the report reinforces the principle that rights-impacting legislation cannot be meaningfully assessed solely according to legislative intent, but must also be evaluated according to enforcement realities, systemic discrimination, and the cumulative expansion of discretionary state powers.

The report's conclusions regarding Bill C-9 are particularly notable, as Amnesty explicitly warns that vague drafting, expanded discretion, and weakened safeguards risk exacerbating discriminatory enforcement patterns and undermining Charter protections. Similar concerns emerge throughout the report's analysis of immigration policy, protest policing, online harms frameworks, and foreign policy accountability.

Taken together, Amnesty's analysis contributes to growing concern among civil liberties and human rights organizations that Canada is entering a period characterized by increasing securitization, shrinking civic space, and expanding enforcement frameworks across multiple areas of public policy.

These concerns closely mirror many of the issues currently being raised by CMPAC and other civil society organizations across Canada. In this respect, the report provides independent validation of broader concerns regarding the cumulative impact of rights-impacting legislation. As Parliament continues to consider measures affecting speech, assembly, migration, digital rights, and foreign policy, Amnesty's analysis serves as a reminder that human rights protections must remain a central consideration in legislative and policy development. For CMPAC, the report reinforces the importance of continued engagement on these issues to ensure that security, public order, and political considerations do not come at the expense of constitutional freedoms, due process, and Canada's domestic and international human rights obligations.