



CANADIAN MUSLIM
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
COUNCIL

CMPAC POLICY BRIEF

MAY 2026



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CMPAC Policy Brief: May 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent legislative, foreign policy, and national security, and public safety developments have significant implications for constitutional governance, humanitarian commitments, and the rights of Canadian Muslim communities. Across multiple policy domains, there is a consistent need to ensure that federal action remains fully aligned with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, international humanitarian law, and principles of equality, accountability, and non-discrimination.

Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, currently under review in the Senate, introduces amendments to the Criminal Code that raise substantial constitutional concerns. Legal analyses indicate that certain provisions risk encroaching upon freedoms of expression, religion, association, and peaceful assembly. Legislative measures aimed at addressing hate must be narrowly tailored, evidence-based, and developed through meaningful consultation to avoid disproportionate impact on minority faith and racialized communities.

Similarly, Bill C-22, the Lawful Access Act, proposes significant expansions to Canada's lawful access and digital surveillance framework. Although intended to enhance public safety and investigative capacity, the bill raises significant concerns about privacy protections, the scope of state access to personal data, and the adequacy of independent oversight mechanisms. Without stronger safeguards, there is a risk of normalizing broad surveillance powers in ways that may disproportionately affect marginalized communities and weaken constitutional protections under sections 2, 7, and 8 of the Charter.

With respect to Gaza, Canada's engagement must extend beyond immediate humanitarian assistance toward a coordinated, long-term reconstruction and development framework. The widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, healthcare institutions, and education systems necessitates sustained international support. Canada's commitments under international law require advocacy for unhindered humanitarian access, support for rebuilding essential services, and investment in community-driven recovery initiatives that enable long-term stability and dignity. The Gaza Temporary Resident Visa (TRV) Family Reunification Program continues to face serious implementation challenges. Limited arrivals, prolonged processing delays, and barriers are also affecting Palestinian students admitted to Canadian institutions, resulting in significant educational disruption. A restructured, rights-based approach that prioritizes expedited processing, family unity, and administrative accountability is necessary to ensure the program meets its stated humanitarian objectives.



Moreover, persistent concerns regarding the Canada Border Services Agency suggest potential patterns of discriminatory screening and enforcement practices that may disproportionately affect Muslim communities. These issues underscore the urgent need for independent review, stronger oversight, and reforms to ensure full compliance with Charter rights and substantive equality principles.

In addition, escalating anti-Muslim violence highlights the urgent need for a coordinated national response to protect Muslim communities and institutions. Attacks of places of worship, including recent incidents targeting Islamic centres, demonstrate the ongoing threat of hate-motivated violence. While public condemnation is important, it is insufficient without preventative action. Strengthened security funding, improved hate crime tracking and structured engagement with Muslim communities are necessary to ensure meaningful action.

These developments demonstrate the importance of principled federal leadership that safeguards constitutional freedoms, strengthens institutional accountability, and addresses systemic discrimination. Canada's domestic and international policies must remain consistent with the rule of law, human rights obligations, and commitments to equity and public trust.

KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Legislative Concerns and Recommendations

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

As currently being reviewed in the Senate, Bill C-9 expands the Criminal Code in ways that raise serious constitutional, legal, and community-level concerns, particularly regarding Charter-protected freedoms of expression, religion, association, and peaceful assembly. CMPAC's [initial analysis](#) and [secondary analysis](#) of committee proceedings shows that vague provisions could criminalize lawful speech, peaceful protest, or religious instruction, particularly affecting Muslim, Palestinian, and other faith communities..

Recommendations:

- The government of Canada should withdraw Bill C-9 in its current form to prevent infringements on fundamental freedoms, including lawful expression and religious practice.
- The government of Canada should initiate a structured consultation process involving legal scholars, civil liberties organizations, faith-based groups, and affected communities, to effectively combat hate.
- CMPAC is working with the Senate to address the shortcomings in the legislative process by undertaking broader and more meaningful consultations, particularly with communities that were not adequately heard.



- CMPAC is also working with the Senate to introduce the necessary amendments and safeguards to mitigate the risks this legislation poses to religious freedoms, civil liberties, and constitutionally protected rights.

b. Concerns Regarding Bill C-22, the *Lawful Access Act*

Bill C-22 proposes a significant expansion of Canada's lawful access and digital surveillance authorities, with implications for privacy rights, due process and Charter protections. In its current form, the bill raises concerns about the breadth of data access, the threshold for authorization, and the absence of sufficiently robust, independent oversight mechanisms. Without stronger safeguards, these measures risk normalizing intrusive surveillance practices and disproportionately impacting marginalized and racialized communities, including Canadian Muslims.

Recommendations:

- The Government of Canada should pause the advancement of Bill C-22 in its current form and conduct comprehensive constitutional review to ensure full compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly sections 7, 8, and 2.
- The Government should narrow the scope of data access provisions by clearly defining the categories of information that may be obtained and limiting access to what is strictly necessary and proportionate for specific investigations.
- The Government should initiate structured consultations with civil liberties organizations, legal experts, technology specialists, and affected communities to co-develop amendments that balance public safety objectives with fundamental rights.

2. Recommendations Related to Palestine Policy

a. Development and Rebuilding of Gaza

CMPAC is keen to support efforts toward a meaningful Canadian contribution to the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza. Post-conflict engagement should extend beyond immediate humanitarian assistance to include structured, sustainable reconstruction of essential civilian infrastructure, including the re-building of the decimated healthcare and education sectors. Recovery efforts should be complemented by diplomatic measures including advocacy for the lifting of the blockade, securing unhindered humanitarian access, and ensuring compliance with international law to prevent further cycles of oppression. This will be very well received by the Muslim community.



Recommendations:

- Support a comprehensive, long-term reconstruction strategy beyond emergency aid.
- Coordinate aid with multilateral and local partners and Canadian relief and development organizations who have experience in Gaza for effectiveness and sustainability.
- Continue to advocate for the lifting of the blockade and unhindered humanitarian access.
- Promote community-driven economic and educational recovery initiatives.

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 objective where fewer than 970 individuals have reached Canada, largely through self-arranged evacuation efforts, and an estimated 500 applicants have died while awaiting processing. At the same time, Palestinian students with acceptances to Canadian universities are unable to obtain study permits. As a result, students have lost academic terms, forfeited admission and their future educational pathways have collapsed.

Demands and Emerging Opportunities Post-Ceasefire

- Urge IRCC to expand eligibility and accelerate TRV processing for applicants in Gaza and Egypt and ensure family reunification at the border.
- Simplify or waive excessive security and biometric requirements: Adjust or remove impractical biometrics and documentation rules that prevent evacuation in conflict zones.
- Ensure full family unity at the border and in Canada.
- Ask for a public commitment from the Prime Minister and relevant ministers to address systemic failures in the program.
- Finalize and approve outstanding study permit applications for 130 accepted Palestinian students without delay.

3. Combatting Anti-Muslim Hate, Violence and Structural Islamophobia

a. Protection of the Muslim Community's Charity Sector

CMPAC [notes](#) the findings of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA) regarding the Canada Revenue Agency's Review and Analysis Division, which confirm long-standing concerns that Muslim-led charities have been disproportionately impacted by Canada's counter-terrorism financing framework. The report identifies structural and methodological deficiencies that have resulted in audits lacking credible risk indicators, creating material, reputational, and operational harms for affected organizations and undermining trust between Muslim communities and public institutions. These findings underscore the need for reforms that strengthen oversight, ensure Charter-compliant practices, and protect Muslim charities while preserving the integrity of Canada's national security framework.



Recommendations:

- Implement all NSIRA recommendations in full, including the collection of demographic data, validation of risk indicators, and rigorous documentation of decision-making.
- Revise and revamp the National Inherent Risk Assessment (NIRA) methodology by applying FATF's functional definition of NPOs, basing risk ratings on demonstrable evidence of terrorist financing vulnerability, integrating sector-led compliance measures into risk calculations, and shifting from an "inherent risk" framework to an evidence-based residual-risk assessment.
- Suspend the use of RAD's audit powers until reforms are enacted that ensure impartiality and protect against discriminatory practices.
- Establish independent oversight of the CRA's national security functions, with accountability mechanisms accessible to Parliament and civil society.
- Engage in structured consultations with Muslim civil society organizations and other affected communities to restore confidence in the charitable sector's regulatory framework.

b. Ongoing Concerns Regarding Systemic Targeting of Muslims Within CBSA

Persistent concerns regarding the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) point to a broader pattern of Islamophobic treatment experienced by Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim. Concerns regarding repeated targeting, and discriminatory screening, raise serious questions about whether CBSA practices continue to enable unequal treatment under the appearance of neutrality. Addressing Islamophobia requires concrete action to review and reform CBSA and ensure Muslim communities are protected from discrimination.

Recommendations:

- The Government of Canada should undertake an independent review of CBSA policies, practices, and operational guidance to assess whether border screening, admissibility, and enforcement measures produce disproportionate impacts on Muslim and racialized communities.
- The Government of Canada should establish strengthened accountability and external oversight mechanisms for CBSA decision-making, including regular public reporting on discrimination complaints, outcomes, and corrective measures.
- CBSA should implement mandatory training on systemic Islamophobia, anti-racism, and unconscious bias for officers and decision-makers involved in screening, enforcement, detention, and admissibility processes.
- The Government of Canada should conduct a comprehensive review of national security and immigration policies developed in the post-9/11 context to ensure compliance with Charter protections, and principles of substantive equality.



- CMPAC is working with policymakers and institutional stakeholders to advance safeguards that strengthen accountability, protect civil liberties, and ensure border governance does not contribute to systemic discrimination or unequal treatment.

c. Escalating Anti-Muslim Violence and the Need to Protect Islamic Institutions

The deadly attack at the Islamic Center of San Diego highlights the continued threat of anti-Muslim violence and the consequences of failing to respond to escalating Islamophobia with meaningful action. While public condemnations remain important, Muslim communities continue to bear the burden of inadequate protection, delayed intervention, and limited long-term safeguards for mosques and Islamic institutions. Canada must treat anti-Muslim violence as a public safety priority and move beyond reactive responses toward preventative measures that strengthen security, and protection for Muslim communities.

Recommendations:

- The Government of Canada should expand and strengthen security funding available to mosques, Islamic centres, and Muslim community institutions identified as vulnerable to hate-motivated violence.
- Public Safety Canada should develop a national strategy to prevent and respond to anti-Muslim hate incidents and threats targeting places of worship.
- Law enforcement agencies should strengthen protocols for identifying, investigating, and reporting anti-Muslim hate crimes and violent incidents.
- The Government of Canada should establish regular engagement mechanisms with Muslim organizations to identify risks and develop community-informed public safety responses.
- The Minister of Public Safety should commit to measurable outcomes and public reporting on actions taken to address anti-Muslim violence and protect Muslim communities across Canada.