



CANADIAN MUSLIM
PUBLIC AFFAIRS
COUNCIL

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Developments across immigration, national security, public safety, digital governance, and foreign policy continue to carry important implications for constitutional rights, Canada's humanitarian obligations, and Canadian Muslim communities. Federal policy in these areas must remain grounded in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, international law, and the principles of equality, accountability, procedural fairness, and non-discrimination.

The direction of Canada's immigration system continues to generate concerns regarding transparency, procedural fairness, humanitarian protection, and ministerial accountability. Policies affecting refugee eligibility, temporary resident pathways, family reunification, international students, visitor visas, and humanitarian programs reflect an increasingly restrictive approach. The consequences are particularly significant for individuals fleeing conflict and persecution in Muslim-majority countries, as well as Canadian Muslim families, students, civil society organizations, and humanitarian advocates seeking to support them.

Concerns also persist regarding inconsistent decision-making within Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, insufficient engagement with affected communities, lengthy processing times, high refusal rates, and humanitarian pathways that have struggled to respond effectively to urgent crises. Bill C-12 adds to these concerns through provisions affecting refugee claim eligibility and access to individualized assessment. Collectively, these issues risk further undermining confidence in the fairness, predictability, and humanitarian integrity of Canada's immigration system.

The Gaza Temporary Resident Visa Family Reunification Program continues to present serious humanitarian challenges. Applicants and their families face lengthy processing delays, impractical documentation and biometric requirements, insufficient transparency, and prolonged family separation despite the urgency of their circumstances. Palestinian students and scholars accepted to Canadian post-secondary institutions likewise continue to face barriers in securing study permits, jeopardizing educational opportunities and creating prolonged uncertainty. These experiences reinforce the need for humanitarian and immigration pathways that can respond effectively and rapidly during international crises.

Following the Royal Assent of Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, attention must remain focused on its implementation and its potential implications for Charter-protected freedoms, including freedom of expression, religion, association, and peaceful assembly. Concerns surrounding the legislation are heightened by the limited consultation with affected communities during its development and passage. Transparent implementation, meaningful community engagement,



public reporting, and sustained parliamentary oversight will be important to identifying and addressing unintended consequences.

Bill C-22, the Lawful Access Act, remains a significant concern as it proceeds through Parliament. The legislation would substantially expand Canada's digital surveillance and lawful access framework, raising questions regarding privacy, due process, oversight, and accountability. The breadth of the proposed authorities, reduced thresholds for accessing certain personal information, and use of secret orders require careful scrutiny. Without meaningful amendments and stronger safeguards, these powers risk weakening privacy protections and disproportionately affecting Muslim, racialized, immigrant, and refugee communities.

Bill C-34, the Safe Social Media Act, similarly warrants continued scrutiny. Its approach to terrorism and violent extremism extends beyond existing Criminal Code standards and may have implications for lawful online expression. Broad content-moderation obligations, when combined with insufficient safeguards, risk disproportionately affecting Canadian Muslim communities whose civic and political participation has historically been subject to heightened scrutiny within national security frameworks.

Canada's approach to Gaza must also extend beyond immediate humanitarian relief toward sustained recovery and reconstruction. This should include support for rebuilding essential civilian infrastructure, strengthening humanitarian assistance, ensuring unhindered humanitarian access, and working with trusted international, local, and Canadian humanitarian partners. Any Canadian contribution to Gaza's long-term recovery should remain firmly grounded in international law and the needs of affected communities.

Across these policy areas, the need for principled and accountable federal leadership remains clear. Canada's immigration, national security, public safety, digital policy, and foreign policy frameworks should protect constitutional freedoms, uphold humanitarian and international legal obligations, strengthen institutional accountability, and maintain public confidence in the fairness and integrity of federal institutions.

KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Immigration Policy and Ministerial Accountability

a. Growing Concerns Regarding the Administration of Canada's Immigration System

Concerns regarding the administration and overall policy direction of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to warrant attention. Policies and decisions affecting refugees, temporary residents, international students, family reunification applicants, visitor visa



applicants, and humanitarian pathways point to challenges that extend beyond processing backlogs or individual administrative decisions.

The cumulative impact has been an immigration system that is increasingly restrictive, unpredictable, and difficult for affected individuals and civil society organizations to navigate. Key concerns include inconsistent decision-making, high refusal rates, insufficient transparency regarding the reasons for refusals, prolonged processing times, and limited opportunities for meaningful engagement with communities directly affected by immigration policy.

These challenges carry particular implications for Muslim communities. Many Canadian Muslims have immediate family members, community partners, students, scholars, or humanitarian contacts in regions affected by war, occupation, authoritarianism, and displacement. Immigration decisions can therefore have direct consequences for family unity, access to safety, education, humanitarian protection, and community participation. Concerns also persist regarding the additional security screening, profiling, and systemic barriers experienced by applicants from certain countries and regions.

Questions of leadership and accountability within the immigration portfolio also remain significant. When humanitarian programs repeatedly struggle to achieve their stated objectives, applications remain unresolved for prolonged periods, and civil society organizations are unable to obtain clear and timely answers from the department, stronger ministerial accountability is required.

Recommendations:

- The Prime Minister should undertake an independent review of the management and policy direction of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to assess whether current policies are consistent with Canada's humanitarian commitments, procedural fairness obligations, and public service standards.
- The Government of Canada should restore regular, structured engagement between IRCC and civil society organizations, refugee-serving agencies, settlement organizations, faith communities, and immigration practitioners to ensure that policy development reflects the experiences of affected communities.
- IRCC should improve transparency by publishing clearer information regarding application processing times, refusal trends, operational guidance, and departmental performance indicators.
- IRCC should strengthen accountability mechanisms by providing regular public reporting on humanitarian programs, temporary resident pathways, refugee processing, and family reunification initiatives.



b. Bill C-12 and Access to Refugee Protection

The implementation of Bill C-12 raises serious concerns regarding access to Canada's refugee determination system. Provisions that expand refugee claim ineligibility or create additional procedural barriers risk preventing individuals from receiving a full and individualized assessment of their need for protection.

Refugee eligibility decisions must not be based primarily on broad administrative categories or the timing and manner in which a person entered Canada. Individuals fleeing persecution, conflict, political repression, or state violence may face significant barriers obtaining documents, travelling through regular channels, or immediately initiating a refugee claim.

These concerns are particularly relevant to individuals displaced from Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and other regions where Muslims are experiencing armed conflict, political instability, and persecution. Canada must not respond to administrative pressures by weakening access to refugee protection or shifting away from individualized decision-making.

Recommendations:

- Refugee eligibility provisions should remain consistent with Canada's obligations under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and other international human rights commitments.
- The Government should conduct comprehensive consultations with refugee-serving organizations, legal experts, humanitarian organizations, and affected communities before implementing significant changes to Canada's refugee protection framework.
- Parliament should establish a formal review of the legislation following implementation to assess its impact on access to protection, procedural fairness, and vulnerable populations.

c. Humanitarian Pathways and Family Reunification

The continuing shortcomings of the Gaza Temporary Resident Visa Family Reunification Program demonstrate the need for more effective humanitarian immigration mechanisms during international crises. Nearly two years after the program's launch, fewer than 970 individuals have reached Canada, largely through self-arranged evacuation efforts, while an estimated 500 applicants have died while awaiting processing.

Palestinian students and scholars accepted by Canadian post-secondary institutions have also faced prolonged delays in obtaining study permits. These barriers have contributed to lost academic terms, deferred admissions, and the potential loss of educational opportunities. Canada's immigration system should be equipped to respond more rapidly and effectively when students, scholars, and families are displaced by armed conflict.



The continued experiences of families and students affected by the crisis demonstrate the importance of humanitarian pathways that are accessible, responsive, and capable of adapting documentation, security, and biometric requirements to the realities of conflict zones.

Recommendations:

- 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.

2. Legislative Concerns and Recommendations

a. Bill C-9: *The Combatting Hate Act*

Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, has now received Royal Assent. As the legislation enters the implementation stage, CMPAC remains concerned about both its substance and the process through which it was enacted. Throughout its consideration, civil liberties organizations, faith communities, legal experts, and affected Canadians consistently raised concerns regarding the bill's implications for Charter-protected freedoms and the lack of meaningful consultation with impacted communities.

CMPAC's analysis concluded that several provisions may have unintended consequences for lawful expression, peaceful assembly, religious practice, and political advocacy. These concerns remain particularly relevant for Muslim communities, whose organizations and representatives consistently warned that aspects of the legislation could disproportionately affect religious expression, community institutions, advocacy, and civic participation.

Bill C-9 should also be understood within a broader legislative trend involving expanded state powers and increasing restrictions affecting the exercise of Charter-protected rights and freedoms. With the legislative process now complete, attention must shift toward ensuring that the Act is implemented in a manner that is transparent, proportionate, and fully consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ongoing oversight, public reporting, and meaningful engagement with affected communities will be essential to identifying unintended consequences and maintaining public confidence.



Recommendations:

- The Government of Canada should ensure that the implementation and enforcement of Bill C-9 fully respect the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly the freedoms of expression, association, religion, and peaceful assembly.
- The Department of Justice should establish a structured post-implementation consultation process involving civil liberties organizations, legal experts, faith communities, and affected stakeholders to assess the practical impacts of the legislation and identify areas requiring clarification or legislative amendment.
- The Department of Justice should publish regular public reporting on the use of Bill C-9's provisions, including data on investigations, charges, prosecutions, and enforcement trends, to promote transparency, accountability, and evidence-based policy evaluation.
- Parliament should undertake a comprehensive statutory review of Bill C-9 following a reasonable implementation period to evaluate its effectiveness, assess its impacts on Charter rights and affected communities, and consider amendments where unintended consequences are identified.
- Civil liberties organizations, faith communities, legal experts, and affected Canadians remain actively engaged in monitoring the implementation of Bill C-9 to help ensure that efforts to combat hate are pursued in a manner consistent with constitutional protections, democratic accountability, and fundamental freedoms.
- The Government of Canada, in coordination with relevant law enforcement agencies, should develop clear directives, operational guidelines, and training for the enforcement of Bill C-9 to minimize the risk of discriminatory, inconsistent, or disproportionate application, particularly against Muslim, racialized, religious, and other affected communities. These guidelines should reinforce Charter protections, establish safeguards against bias and discriminatory profiling, and promote consistent and proportionate enforcement across jurisdictions.

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

Bill C-22 has passed third reading in the House of Commons and will now be referred to the Senate for consideration. The bill proposes a significant expansion of Canada's lawful access and digital surveillance authorities, with implications for privacy rights, due process, and Charter protections. CMPAC remains concerned that the legislation expands state access to personal information while providing insufficient safeguards, oversight, and accountability mechanisms.

In its current form, the bill raises concerns regarding the breadth of data access powers, the threshold for authorization, and the potential impact on Charter-protected rights and freedoms. Without stronger safeguards, these measures risk normalizing intrusive surveillance practices



and disproportionately affecting marginalized and racialized communities, including Canadian Muslims.

Recommendations:

- The Senate 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 Senate should consider amendments that strengthen judicial authorization requirements, independent oversight, transparency obligations, and accountability mechanisms.
- The senate should initiate structured consultations with civil liberties organizations, legal experts, technology specialists, and affected communities to identify amendments that appropriately balance public safety objectives with privacy rights and fundamental freedoms.
- CMPAC will continue to monitor the bill's progress through the Senate and advocate for amendments that safeguard privacy, due process, and Charter-protected rights.

c. Bill C-34, the *Safe Social Media Act*

CMPAC recognizes the importance of protecting Canadians from genuine online harms and supports efforts to improve accountability for social media platforms and digital services. However, these objectives must be pursued in a manner that remains consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, established principles of criminal law, and Canada's commitment to protecting lawful expression and civic participation.

CMPAC is concerned that [Bill C-34](#) expands Canada's legal framework surrounding terrorism and violent extremism beyond existing Criminal Code definitions while requiring online platforms to identify and remove a broader range of content. Without clearer legal definitions and stronger safeguards, these provisions risk encouraging the over-removal of lawful expression and creating uncertainty for political advocacy, journalism, academic discussion, religious expression, and human rights advocacy.

These concerns are particularly significant for Canadian Muslim communities, which have historically experienced heightened surveillance, profiling, and scrutiny under Canada's post-9/11 national security framework. Broad and vaguely defined terrorism and violent extremism provisions risk disproportionately affecting lawful civic participation and public discourse, particularly on issues relating to international conflicts and human rights. CMPAC is also concerned that the bill provides insufficient protection for lawful advocacy, protest, and dissent while placing complex legal determinations in the hands of private technology companies, creating incentives to remove lawful content to avoid regulatory penalties.



Recommendations:

- Amend Bill C-34 to ensure terrorism and violent extremism definitions remain consistent with the Criminal Code and are sufficiently precise to protect lawful expression.
- Strengthen explicit protections for lawful advocacy, protest, dissent, journalism, academic research, religious expression, and human rights advocacy.
- Establish stronger independent oversight and transparency requirements for content moderation decisions.
- Create an ongoing consultation process with Muslim organizations, civil liberties organizations, digital rights experts, and affected communities throughout the implementation and future review of the legislation.

3. Recommendations Related to Palestine and Syria Policy Development and Reconstruction of Gaza and Syria

Canada's engagement in Gaza and Syria should look beyond immediate humanitarian relief toward sustained approaches to recovery, reconstruction, and long-term development. A meaningful Canadian contribution should support the rebuilding of essential civilian infrastructure and services, including healthcare, education, housing, water, and other critical systems, alongside measures that strengthen humanitarian assistance and support affected communities.

Long-term recovery should be accompanied by diplomatic and policy measures that address barriers to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. In the context of Gaza, Canada should continue to advocate for the lifting of the blockade, unhindered humanitarian access, and compliance with international law. Particular attention should be given to rebuilding and strengthening Gaza's healthcare system, including investments that restore healthcare infrastructure while developing the capacity of local health institutions and professionals to meet immediate and long-term community needs.

In Syria, Canada should work toward lifting remaining sanctions that impede reconstruction, economic recovery, humanitarian assistance, and the restoration of essential civilian services. Canadian policy should facilitate, rather than unnecessarily restrict, legitimate humanitarian, development, reconstruction, and economic activity that contributes to the ability of Syrian communities to rebuild and recover.

Canada should work closely with trusted multilateral institutions, local partners, and Canadian humanitarian and development organizations with experience in Gaza and Syria to ensure that recovery and reconstruction initiatives are responsive to local needs and capable of supporting sustainable outcomes. A comprehensive approach should recognize that reconstruction extends beyond physical infrastructure. Supporting community-driven economic recovery, education,



livelihoods, healthcare capacity, and local institutions will be essential to creating sustainable conditions for affected Palestinian and Syrian communities.

Recommendations:

- Support comprehensive, long-term recovery and reconstruction strategies for Gaza and Syria that extend beyond emergency humanitarian assistance.
- Coordinate Canadian assistance with trusted multilateral institutions, local partners, and Canadian humanitarian and development organizations with experience in Gaza and Syria to improve effectiveness, local responsiveness, and sustainability.
- Support the rebuilding of essential civilian infrastructure and services, including healthcare, education, housing, water, and other critical systems.
- Advocate for the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and secure sustained, unhindered humanitarian access necessary for humanitarian assistance, recovery, and reconstruction.
- Invest in rebuilding and strengthening Gaza's healthcare system, with dedicated support for health-sector capacity building, including healthcare institutions, local health professionals, medical education and training, and the long-term delivery of essential health services.
- Review and lift remaining Canadian sanctions on Syria that unnecessarily impede humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, economic recovery, and the restoration of essential civilian infrastructure and services.
- Promote community-driven economic recovery, education, livelihoods, and local capacity-building initiatives that enable affected communities to participate meaningfully in reconstruction and long-term development.