



**NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS**

Your Voice. Your Future.

**POSITION BRIEF:
NATIONAL SECURITY AND RADICALIZATION**

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The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) has and will continue to categorically condemn and oppose terrorism and violent extremism in all their forms. We strongly believe in upholding Canadian democratic values and we commend the role of Muslim communities in co-operating with national security measures and law enforcement.

We are as outraged by acts of terrorism as any other Canadian; even more so when violence is committed in the name of Islam. In 2005, NCCM organized an unprecedented statement by 120 Canadian imams (religious leaders) to denounce terrorism and to publicly confront extremism. More recently in April 2013, NCCM responded to terrorism-related arrests in Toronto and Montreal with an unequivocal denunciation of violent acts that are perversely justified through the cloak of religion.

At the same time, we have espoused a consistent message: effectively countering terrorism and extremism does not require erosion of, or leniency in, upholding civil liberties and *Charter* rights that are guaranteed to all Canadians. We firmly believe that national security and human rights are not mutually exclusive – rather, they share a symbiotic relationship. The loss of one signals the loss of the other. Our national security program requires the co-operation and vigilance of security agencies to maintain the confidence and participation of Canadian Muslim communities.

Tackling Terminology

“Terms like Islamic terrorism, Islamist terrorism, Jihadism and Islamofascism succeed only in conflating terrorism with mainstream Islam, thereby casting all Muslims as terrorists or potential terrorists.” – Words Make Worlds, RCMP Publication

NCCM has found that the national security discourse in media, politics and public safety work tends to erroneously conflate terrorism with Islam. This serves to confuse Canadians about the nature of security in Canada, to embolden prejudicial elements in our society and to feed the extreme narrative espoused by terror groups such as Al-Qaeda about an inevitable conflict between Muslims and the West.

While phrases like “Islamist terrorism”, “Islamicism”, and “Islamic extremism” may fit well in academic discourse, the use of such loaded terms in the public sphere distorts public perceptions about Canadian Muslims and ultimately undermines our valued social cohesion. By adopting and consistently using correct terms that identify the true

nature of the problem (e.g. Al-Qaeda inspired extremism), security agencies can contextualize the threats to national security and empower Muslim communities to help meet these challenges.

- **Recommendation #1:** Security agencies and officials should abandon public terminology that creates false linkages between Islam and terrorism in favour of consistent language that contextualizes threats and accurately identifies the perpetrators of violent extremism.

Revisiting Security Practices

NCCM fully recognizes the seriousness of today's national security issues and the difficulties in investigating threats. Nonetheless, our experiences indicate that some current practices employed by security agencies often have a negative impact on individuals and on Canadian Muslim communities.

Security agencies cannot remain unconcerned with the impact of certain security practices on Muslim communities and their questionable treatment of individual Muslims. We have observed that when some Muslims believe they are singled out and viewed with suspicion because of their faith, they are less likely to integrate into the Canadian mainstream. For this reason, where there is at least a perception of discrimination or targeted scrutiny it poses an impediment to Muslim civic inclusion and to engendering a culture of democratic values and human rights within Muslim communities.

The Special Senate Committee on the Anti-Terrorism Act, in its 2007 report, found that there is at least some degree of racial/religious profiling taking place in implementing national security enforcement. However, the frequency and scope of any abuses by security agencies is largely un-documented.

In NCCM's experience, and that of lawyers active in national security law with whom we partner, the ongoing complaints received about information gathering tactics indicate a pattern of inappropriate practices. Some of the inappropriate practices include:

- Speaking with employers and showing up at workplaces;
- Offering money and favours for "information";

- Intimidating and threatening newcomers;
- Unconstitutional questions about the individual's level of commitment to Islam and their religiosity;
- Discouraging legal representation; and
- Improper identification by security agents - this impedes the ability to file complaints and undermines transparency and accountability.

Instances of such problematic conduct have been found as fact by the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC) based on their impartial investigations into numerous complaints regarding inappropriate practices during security interviews, and the manner in which complainants are contacted. While national security agencies state that they do not use racial or ethnic profiling, NCCM echoes the Canadian Human Rights Commission's 2011 Report to Parliament which stated that a lack of public reporting or data collection leaves such statements warranting challenge.

However, the 2007 Senate Committee report also noted that many members of ethnic communities do not complain about inappropriate conduct because they are either unaware that complaint mechanisms exist or they are too afraid of the repercussions of coming forward. NCCM maintains that the under-reporting of complaints is a significant problem among Canadian Muslims and that the findings of SIRC potentially do not reflect the full scope of inappropriate practices.

NCCM believes that documented concerns about inappropriate practices by security agencies are a serious issue and they must be mitigated. Canadian Muslims have a role to play in protecting the national security of Canada and many have done so in several cases.

- **Recommendation #2:** The co-operation of Muslim communities can be instrumental in investigations. Creating meaningful changes in front line information-gathering practices to eliminate inappropriate methods will enhance effectiveness of security work, build more trust between Canadian Muslim communities and our security agencies, and minimize perceptions of targeted scrutiny.
- **Recommendation #3:** Security agencies should collect data disaggregated based on the racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds of individuals interviewed and/or investigated and publicly report on this data.

ISSUE: RADICALIZATION

As readily acknowledged by security experts, academic consultants and security agencies, radicalization is a complex and individual process that is difficult to define within set parameters. At the same time, NCCM recognizes that homegrown radicalization is a major Canadian security concern and we share concerns about instances of radicalization, including recent reports of Canadians traveling abroad to engage in acts of violent extremism.

NCCM maintains that conflating religiosity with a propensity to engage in violent acts is both mistaken and alienates Muslim communities from efforts to combat extremism. Acts of religious devotion and religious observances are not predictors or indicators of violent extremism. Moreover, public communications about radicalization in Canada must be contextualized by both security officials and decision-makers to avoid promoting skewed perceptions of Canadian Muslim communities.

A recent declassified but heavily redacted CSIS intelligence report, as reported by the *National Post* on January 3, 2013, indicated that radicalization by extremists was occurring at “a large number of venues” including mosques and homes. NCCM took exception with the media’s dissemination of this redacted report because without context false perceptions are formed to the detriment of Canadian Muslims, including that Muslim communities are a “fifth column” in society.

Radicalization affects Canadian Muslims in more ways than one as we must deal with both community implications when instances of radicalization arise and the associated public perceptions. The recent report from London, Ontario about three Muslim youth traveling abroad to engage in violent acts evidences the impact of such developments on Muslim communities.

Accordingly, broader engagement by security agencies with Muslim communities is necessary in today’s complex national security efforts. To date, such engagement has been limited in scope because of issues of mistrust. By advancing engagement beyond mere phone calls when incidents arise towards more active outreach and relationships, security agencies will help empower Canadian Muslims and find deeper co-operation from Muslim communities in our collective efforts to thwart violent extremism and reduce radicalization.

- **Recommendation #4:** Security officials should be prudent to not conflate religiosity with radicalization or conflate religious devotion with a propensity to commit acts of violence.
- **Recommendation #5:** When redacted internal security and intelligence reports are released for public consumption, security agencies should publicly clarify the limited scope of use of such redacted reports without the availability of underlying context and data.
- **Recommendation #6:** Security agencies, security officials and decision makers must pursue constructive outreach and relationships with Canadian Muslims to empower Muslim communities as real partners. Security agencies should produce community literature about radicalization to assist communities in identifying and addressing radicalization that may lead to violence.

SUMMARY

NCCM is committed to upholding public safety with civil liberties and working with Muslim communities on building confidence and engagement with security agencies. Trust and co-operation are undermined, however, when inappropriate security practices continue or the Islamic faith of close to 1 million Canadians is conflated with terrorism and violent extremism.

It must be remembered that Canadian Muslim communities are already at the forefront of the national security discourse and they should be engaged as constructive partners by security agencies at all levels.