

Free and Equal?

Vicki Gunn

Executive Director, CHP Canada

On Jan 26, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that Amira Elghawaby has been appointed as the new advisor to the federal government, Canada's first "special representative on combating Islamophobia." What about "Christophobia," a fear and hatred of Christians? We saw that manifested in the burning or vandalizing of dozens of church buildings over the past couple of years. There should be a special representative for Christians—or should there?

While hate crimes are always wrong, the question must be asked, why there is special attention being given to Islamophobia and not for antisemitism, or hatred against black people, or hatred against other religious or ethnic backgrounds that face racism and bigotry? Is this the right approach in combating bigotry?

Here are some some numbers from Statistics Canada:

Hate Crimes Against	Population in 2020	Number of Hate Crimes	% of population
Muslim Community	2 million	82	0.004%
Asian Community	4 million	388	0.010%
Black Community	1.6 million	663	0.041%
Jewish Community	.5 million	321	0.064%
Info from Stats Can & Statista	https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00005-eng.htm https://www.statista.com/statistics/1231202/hate-crimes-motivated-by-race-reported-to-police-in-canada/		

First, I'd like to take a moment to thank Canadians for keeping these hate statistics so low—relative to other parts of the world. Even one hate crime is reprehensible, but contrary to what our Prime Minister has indicated in past comments, most Canadians are NOT racist! His characterization of participants and supporters of the Truckers' Freedom Convoy as "racists and bigots" was a blatant lie, meant to denigrate and isolate them in public opinion.

We can see from the above table that the Prime Minister has now appointed a special advisor to ensure protected rights for a group that experiences a rounded figure of 0% hate crimes, while those experiencing a considerably greater percentage of hate crimes per capita, the black and Jewish communities, do not have a similar position created to protect them from hate crimes.

Ms. Elghawaby said the position was created to address the “painful, even deadly reality of Islamophobia in this country.”¹ Perfection is never achievable among our social relationships, as is easily seen by Ms. Elghawaby getting into hot water a week into her position by her 2019 comments about Quebec’s Bill C21.²

But from Canada’s earliest years, there have been some associated challenges with assimilating different ethnic groups as they arrive. If we are going to assign special protections for any groups, it should be the ones that are most in need of protection.

We can see from the above statistics that both the Black and Jewish communities face a much higher incidence of racism per capita than do Muslims.

Ms. Elghawaby has already seen how easy it is to offend someone. Her apology, “I understand that the words and the way that I said them have hurt the people of Quebec. I have been listening very carefully. I have heard you and I know what you’re feeling and I’m sorry,” misses the fact that it’s very easy to hang the label of racist, or Islamophobe, on someone. But, it is also very easy to cause offence, even when not intended.

While she makes it her mission to ferret out the Islamophobes among us, some Quebeckers view her 2019 comments about “a majority of Quebeckers” as a hateful statement against them.

Prime Minister Trudeau sees Islamophobia as a major problem. We agree that hate crimes against any group is utterly despicable, but statistically, hate crimes against Muslims is almost 0%. Jewish, Indigenous, and other communities, facing a much higher percentage of bigotry against them, have not been given the same degree of “special representation.”

Under the guise of Islamophobia, Canadians are living through a dark time where they risk persecution by government officials because they have offended someone. Yet, the very official appointed to address the painful results of hurt feelings has come before us as one who has, herself, offended Quebeckers.

Canadians of every ethnicity and religious background are, for the most part, proud of our country and the safety that we enjoy within our borders.

The truth is that equality is not achieved by granting special protections. That is inequality, or as George Orwell so aptly put it in “Animal Farm”: “All animals are equal but some are more equal than others.”

CHP Canada applauds any effort to decrease racism and bigotry, but we also stand on the equal protection of all Canadians under the law. Rather than appoint special representatives to protect Muslims, Jews, black people, indigenous peoples, Asian or even white people, we need to treat all citizens equally and condemn racism and religious intolerance wherever it appears.

Canada was founded on principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law. This is a fundamental principle of law—the “rule of law”—that is meant to protect each citizen equally and also is meant to ensure that any person who commits a crime will have a fair trial and equal justice.

God keep our land, glorious and free—a key element of our national anthem—is also a prayer. The freedom we sing of in our anthem is a part of our Christian heritage.

Join with us to defend a law that is equally applied.³

Footnotes

¹ nationalpost.com/news/canada/trudeau-appoints-first-special-representative-to-combat-deadly-reality-of-islamophobia

² www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2023/02/01/amira-elghawaby-apologizes-says-quebecers-are-not-racists-as-justin-trudeau-offers-support.html

³ www.chp.ca/get-involved/