

REPORT: Islamist strategy has become 'entrenched' in Canadian society, experts warn

US think tank warns that Muslim Brotherhood-aligned influence has spread across institutions and civil society, while Canada has failed to investigate the networks operating within its borders

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Researchers say Canada has failed to address a decades-old Islamist strategy they believe has become entrenched across Western civil society.

That is the warning from experts ahead of the release of a major new report from the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP).

The US think tank report, *Islamism Beyond Islamists*, examines Muslim Brotherhood-aligned influence in Canada and argues it follows a “structured transnational strategy of ideological entrenchment.”

In an interview with Juno News, Haras Rafiq, ISGAP’s vice-president of policy in New York — himself a Muslim — explained that distinguishing between Islam and Islamism is essential.



“This report is not about Islam or Muslims,” Rafiq said. “It’s about Islamism as a political ideology.”

The Islamist concept of *tamkeen*, which Rafiq describes as “entrenchment within civil society across all sectors,” is frequently referenced throughout the report.

ISGAP traces the *tamkeen* strategy back to historical Muslim Brotherhood writings, including the 1991 “Explanatory Memorandum” introduced as evidence during the Holy Land Foundation terrorism-financing.

The memorandum, which identified Canada as a target, described the Brotherhood’s work in North America as a “Civilization-Jihadist Process” aimed at “eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within.”

Rafiq said that the Muslim Brotherhood “doesn’t exist as an entity anywhere in the West.”

“It’s a movement,” he said.

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According to Rafiq, the strategy takes advantage of the freedoms offered by liberal democracies to gradually build influence in institutions.

“It’s as Karl Popper expressed, the paradox of tolerance,” he said. “It’s the same values that allow them to infiltrate and entrench themselves for influence.”

One example examined by ISGAP is what it calls the “Palestinization of Islam,” making the Palestinian cause central to Muslim religious identity and then spreading the cause throughout society.

Rafiq said this has become a successful recruitment strategy, particularly since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel.

“They’ve been able to make Muslims believe that Palestine is central to their Islamic theological identity,” he said.

But the influence has extended well beyond Muslims, he added, referring to the large numbers of non-Muslims participating in the weekly anti-Israel demonstrations and encampments that continue to this day.

“That means that the Islamism beyond Islamists has seeped right into other aspects of the left,” Rafiq said, adding that similar ideas have increasingly appeared on parts of the political right.

Another strategy examined by ISGAP is what they call the “weaponization of Islamophobia” as a strategy to discourage criticism. The report points to the growing number of critics calling its use a “blasphemy code by the back door.”

“When they don’t have an answer for something, they will claim this term Islamophobia,” he said. “It’s a shield... a deflection.”

Rafiq is careful to distinguish Islamophobia from anti-Muslim bigotry, which he stresses is real and should be opposed. However, Islam or Islamist political ideology, he says, should not be shielded from criticism.

The Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) provides one example of how scrutiny of Islamism is being redirected toward the regulators.

A lengthy Canada Revenue Agency audit raised concerns about MAC’s connections to the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological milieu and relationships with entities linked to terrorism. The CRA ultimately concluded MAC had “not fully alleviated concerns” about groups with “real or possible links to Terrorist Activities or Terrorist Groups” accessing its resources.



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Despite an earlier recommendation to revoke its charitable status, the process ended with financial penalties and a compliance agreement.

The audit was followed by years of academics and activists bemoaning that Muslim charities were being disproportionately scrutinized, accusing the regulator of Islamophobia. Canada's national security watchdog later found the CRA's process created "risks of bias and discrimination."



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The ISGAP report argues that the MAC audit reflects a homegrown pattern of oversight that is "limited, inconsistent, and episodic."

Canada has also never conducted the type of national investigation undertaken in France, Britain, or Austria. But Sam Westrop, director of Islamist Watch at the Middle East Forum, cautioned that those countries have hardly solved the problem.

"Free and democratic societies have not come up [with] a suitable means or the political courage to combat lawful Islamist ideology," Westrop told Juno News.

He said European investigations have produced little meaningful follow-up, while recent U.S. designations of Muslim Brotherhood branches have yet to result in significant domestic action.

Both Westrop and Rafiq agree that Canada should at least begin investigating.

Westrop suggested that Canada create a counter-extremism commission to map Islamist networks, enforce existing laws, end public

subsidies to extremist organizations, and reform charity transparency rules.

As for Rafiq, he said the most important recommendation coming out of the ISGAP report was that Canada must first align itself with the US on designating the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Lebanese, and Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood branches.

“Ideologies cannot be defeated by law and war alone,” he said. “There needs to be a civil society, non-violent pushback.”

Rafiq said Canadians should understand that “this is not a problem just for Muslims, Jews, Christians.”

“This is a fascist ideology, and the response needs to be from civil society,” he warned.

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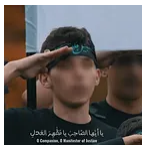
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