

Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy Avoids Real Action. Includes a Definition of Islamophobia

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) skeptically welcomes the Trudeau government's announcement of its new anti-racism strategy, which includes a definition of Islamophobia. Canadian Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez unveiled "[Building a Foundation for Change](#)" yesterday, a plan that allocates \$45 million to fight racism through community initiatives, public education campaigns and combatting online hate. While CJPME is encouraged to see the federal government take steps toward addressing racism in Canada, there are still significant gaps in the strategy, which ultimately fails to enumerate any concrete actions on the urgent problem of Islamophobia in Canada.

The government's anti-racism strategy comes as a response to the Heritage Committee's M-103 report and recommendations, which called for a national action strategy against racism and discrimination. While the M-103 study was initially commissioned as a result of growing Islamophobia in Canada, CJPME notes that the new anti-racism strategy deemphasizes the challenges facing Canada's Muslim community today. Instead, the strategy speaks only generally of the need to fight anti-Black racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia and other discriminations. CJPME President Thomas Woodley responded, "While any steps toward combatting racism should be applauded, the government's new anti-racism strategy seems to be a pre-election marketing pitch that seeks to make everyone happy, and avoids any concrete commitment to action."

CJPME welcomes the definition of Islamophobia in the strategy, yet notes that it fails to mention the racialized aspect of Islamophobia. That is, people who are not Muslim but are perceived to be Muslim also suffer from Islamophobia in Canada. Moreover, whereas the government's strategy adopted a definition of anti-Semitism that includes hate towards Jewish "community institutions or religious facilities," there is no similar provision in the Islamophobia definition.

CJPME asserts that there are clear actions the government could implement to take a stand against growing racism in Canada. First, the government could vocally condemn the bigotry that Bill 21 has enshrined into Quebec law. Second, the government could easily implement the M-103 Report's Recommendation #30, which calls for a "National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia and other forms of religious discrimination." CJPME notes that the government already has several recommendations against discrimination that they could implement- from the M-103 report to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. CJPME calls the government to stop equivocating, and to take concrete actions to protect Canada's most vulnerable minorities.

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