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Calgarians' Perceptions of Discrimination Amongst Minorities in Canada Following the Inception of Bill 21

"I-CARE Task Force sincerely appreciates and thanks Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi, Councillor Chahal and our Calgary council for unanimously voting to condemn Quebec's 'regressive' Bill 21 on Sep 30th, 2019. We call out to Conservative leader Erin O'Toole to publically reject the Bill 21 as well and show solidarity with religious minorities as other federal leaders have done", said Dr. Zaidi, Secretary I-CARE.

On April 16, 2019 Coalition Avenir de Quebec (CAQ) Passed Bill 21, 'An Act Respecting Laicity of the State'. This bill created to establish secularism will leave minorities, particularly Muslim females as second-class citizens. In this regard, the bill proposes to ban the public wearing of the hijab, kippah and turban for public servants including teachers, school administrators, Crown lawyers, police officers, correctional officers, etc.

"Think for Actions is deeply disappointed by the tabling of Bill 21 by Coalition Avenir de Quebec (CAQ)," said Dr. Mukarram Zaidi, chairman of Think for Actions. "This type of bill increases racism and discrimination by providing futile grounds to white nationalism, Neo-Nazis, and white supremacists."

Bill 21 highlights the abundance of discrimination present in Quebec's legal system and forces those practicing their religion to limit their presentation of practice in order to become secular. Outraged and in hopes for change, Think for Actions conducted a study consisting of interviews informing us that Calgarians are concerned about many forms of discrimination.

After multiple interviews were conducted within congregations of Calgary's houses of worship, those interviewed disapproved of Bill 21 and its ability to conduct a lack of personal religious freedom. Many interviewees exemplified discontent and fear for the future of a society that consists of religious minorities including one stating that they "**think [Bill 21] will produce hatred.**" Another interviewee made evident the bill's influence beyond the scope of its physical form as the respondent noted the psychological impact the bill would have when prohibiting daily use of religious symbols and mentioning that "**[the bill] makes your life unlovable and intolerable, it makes you feel valueless, and it makes you feel unwanted. And it definitely affects us on a personal, psychological, emotional level, it does.**"

All interviewees comprehended the bill to be "racist", discriminatory and unfair as one of the interviewees felt that the bill targeted non-Christians as an interviewee insightfully questioned "**Will the Province of Quebec remove all the crosses in the French schools? Will they take all the saint's names off the schools?**" The interviewee makes evident the prominent discrimination towards non-Christian religions by acknowledging institutions that (as a whole) represent a faith prominently.

"Bill 21 is a new form of legalized discrimination, blunt racism, and it disproportionately affects people of colour, creates second-class citizens for practicing Muslim, Sikh, Jews, and Christians. It's unbelievable in this day and age that someone would tell people what they can wear, taking us back to slavery and colonial times" said Dr. Mukarram Zaidi.

For further information and comments please contact:

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I-CARE Taskforce: More than 50 faith groups and community organizations are coming together to form The Task Force to fight hate, racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Christianophobia, Xenophobia, Colonialism and Homophobia impact every person regardless of their faith, colour, or gender.

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