



CANADIAN MUSLIM RESEARCH

**TH!NK-TANK**



## Press Release

September 28, 2020. Calgary, AB

### **The incidents in Ponoka and Red Deer on anti-racism groups should be classified as racially motivated attacks, as they are not related to freedom of speech.**

Incidents like the recent anti-racism rally in Red Deer, where counter protesters entered and created a hostile environment for everyone involved, are a result of improper regulations of freedoms.

Ponoka RCMP officer questioned an interviewer if she thought “one side’s voice was more important than the others, and added that “it’s (one side) not (more important).” This is alarming in the sense that it suggests Canada’s law enforcement is willing to equate racist aggression with peaceful protests. Prime Minister Trudeau has repeatedly made statements condemning racism and islamophobia, insisting that hatred has no place in Canada, however, these statements contradict the experiences of the everyday Canadian at a grassroots level. Due to the lack of action regarding hate crimes on part of the authorities, multiple lives have been lost to hatred and violence motivated by racism, this includes the recent stabbing of Mohamed-Aslim Zafis.

On September 13, 2020 Zafis was stripped of his life. He was known to attend to those entering and leaving the mosque, ensuring that they met the standards of public health during the pandemic. William Von Neutegem has been charged with fatally stabbing Zafis, the motivation behind the murder is evident, pointing to Neutegem’s involvement with racist and Islamophobia hate groups from the U.K.

Dr. Mukarram Zaidi notes, “We have witnessed tragedy due to the rise in neo-Nazism and other far-right ideologies through the incidents in the Quebec Mosque to the Toronto Mosque, and a similar pattern currently in Ponoka and Red Deer, Alberta.” Professor Irfan Chaudhry, director of the Office of Human Rights, Diversity and Equity at MacEwan University, explains “What occurred in Red Deer can only be classified as racially motivated attacks that go beyond freedom of speech laws”. He urges the Premier, Justice Minister, Police Chief and RCMP chief to “call it out as it is”, referring to the counter-protest as a “violent attack that is racially motivated.” The government should take action to deter alt right and white supremacy groups that will lead to the rise of neo-Nazism (which has no place in Alberta) rather than providing them a platform to grow.

We encourage Albertans to email [premier@gov.ab.ca](mailto:premier@gov.ab.ca) and [ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca](mailto:ministryofjustice@gov.ab.ca) and demand the government take firm actions against the alt right and white supremacy groups.

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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