



CENTRE FOR FAITH AND THE MEDIA



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien

The Muslim Project

Since September 11, 2001, and subsequent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries, the number of Canadian and international news stories involving Muslims and Islam have multiplied.

Canadian journalists face challenges in covering these stories. They are under tight deadlines, with limited “resource” people within Muslim communities, and they are governed by corporate editorial policies on use of terms such as “Islamist”, “Islamic extremist,” “terrorist”, etc.

Meanwhile, Muslim Canadians who number close to a million, make daily contributions to Canadian society in a variety of spheres, trades and professions, yet some are faced with the consequences of media-induced negative stereotypes.

Yet, the sheer volume of stories linking Muslims in Canada, and Muslims in international contexts to terrorist activities, leaves the public with the impression that Muslim Canadians might pose a threat.

The Centre for Faith and the Media recognizes two important realities:

1. The challenges faced by Canadian journalists in covering stories involving Muslims and Muslim communities;
2. The challenges faced by Canadian Muslim communities who are attempting to present their stories, their concerns, perspectives and positive contributions.

In 2007, the Centre received a federal grant to pursue “The Muslim Project”, in an effort to improve reporting on Muslim stories and communities within Canadian media. With the endorsement and cooperation of major Muslim organizations in Canada, the Centre has begun a multi-year project to approach this challenge in five ways:

1. Media Relations Training Workshops for Muslims

These one-day workshops will take place in Muslim communities in eight Canadian cities: Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax.

2. Roundtable Dialogues on Muslim Coverage

These will be conducted at Journalism schools and universities in those eight cities, and bring together Media leaders, Muslim leaders, journalism students and professors, and Muslim youth.

3. IPSOS-REID Focus Groups

With IPSOS-REID, the Centre has conducted Focus Groups among Muslims in three cities: Calgary, Toronto, Montreal

(See the report on our website: www.faihandmedia.org/muslim-project/reports-surveys-and-polls)

Participants discussed media consumption habits, effects of Canadian media stories on the Muslim communities, and their key concerns about Canadian media coverage of Muslim stories.

4. Website Directory, and Media Tool Kit

The Centre will develop a website directory of Muslim key contacts for organizations, schools, mosques, agencies, masjids, etc. across the spectrum of Muslim traditions and ethnic communities. This will provide a central location for existing information on Canada’s Muslim community, including data from Statistics Canada through the 2001 Census, the Department of Immigration, and data available from polls. The Centre will also publish a new Media Tool Kit about Canadian Muslims.

5. Involvement of Muslim Youth

The project will involve Muslim Youth as participants in the workshops, the dialogues, in the Ipsos-Reid Focus Groups, and in the development of the directory. Together with Muslim leaders, the Centre will help Muslim youth to understand the role of the media in Canadian democratic society and how to engage the media constructively.

Comments from participants in IPSOS-REID Focus Groups for The Muslim Project:

“The attitude towards Muslims is positive in Canada. But when 9/11 occurred, my friends who are Lebanese and Egyptian said there was so much tension with people with dark hair and Arabs, they said they were afraid to go out. A lot of that had to do with media.”

“It also depends on how much the average person has knowledge about what they hear, they read. If they take everything from the news, everyone is bad, a terrorist.”

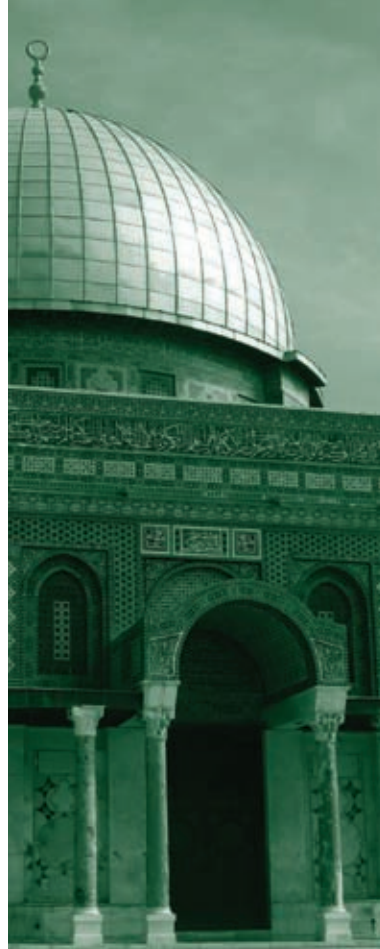
“I feel everyone is afraid of Muslims now....I think we are looked down on, there are discriminations. I have been here 20 months. I work in an organization of mostly whites. They are very tolerant. You can't blame anyone really. There is a misconception because of the media.”

“Media makes it look much worse for us....!watch out for the Muslims!”

“Again it [TV] is visual. You hear about something horrible, but if you see it, you can't get it out of your mind. The media is very important, they influence the majority.”

“I agree with the fact that when a Muslim commits a crime, the first thing that comes into play is the fact he is Muslim. It is not about the crime, but about his religious affiliation. It has gotten worse.”

See the full report at: www.faihandmedia.org





The Centre seeks the support and involvement of:

- ☞ Canadian journalists and media outlets
- ☞ Canadian Muslim communities and their leaders
- ☞ Canadian Muslim Youth organizations and their leaders
- ☞ Muslim journalists
- ☞ Journalists who report on religion stories for major media outlets

We thank Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism for its generous grant to conduct this valuable project, and many individuals across Canada who are assisting us with this important work.

A list of other organizations which have endorsed The Muslim Project is on our website.

FOR A SCHEDULE OF DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR WORKSHOPS AND DIALOGUES, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE.

For more information, please contact:

Richelle Wiseman, Executive Director
info@faithandmedia.org

Khadija Mustapha-Ali, Project Coordinator
Khadija905@hotmail.com

The Centre for Faith and the Media
Toll-free: 1.877.210.0077
www.faihandmedia.org



THE
MUSLIM
PROJECT



CENTRE FOR **FAITH** AND THE **MEDIA**

www.faithandmedia.org



Canadian
Heritage

Patrimoine
canadien