



**Address to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Session**  
**on Islamophobia**

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Dear Mr. Chairman,

I am sorry to be the last one to speak in this session tonight, but I will try to be quick. I am now wearing my hat as the representative of the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF), and also the board member of the Steering Committee of the National Anti-racism Coalition of Canada. I have to say that I am very shocked after hearing the minister speak earlier today, that he completely ignored the challenges faced by the Arab and the Muslim community in Canada. This is more shocking coming from a government who just recently had to apologize on behalf of the Canadian population to Maher Arar and his family, for the ordeal they were put through.

The government recognizes the Canadian Security Agency's responsibility in sending Maher Arar for one year to Syria, where he was imprisoned and tortured. This is again surprising from the government who just launched another public inquiry in the cases of three other Arab Muslim men who went through the same injustices as Maher Arar.

Arabs and Muslims are currently one of the most targeted groups by Racism, Intolerance, and Islamophobia. A recent poll conducted by a major media outlet revealed that Arabs are the most hated ethnic group in Canada. The impact is also social and economic in nature; according to the Canadian Labour Congress, Arabs and West Asians have the highest unemployment rate amongst all racialized groups, in spite of being one of the most educated immigrant populations.

I know Mr. Chairman that this session is about Islamophobia; but I cannot stand here as a good Muslim, an Arab, and certainly as a proud Canadian and not talk about the misery and the historical injustices faced by the First Nation in Canada. I cannot ignore the challenges in front of the Foreign Trade Professionals, who saw their lives shattered when they came to Canada because their diplomas and experiences were not recognized. Precisely, in the big cities like Toronto, we currently have one of the most educated taxi fleet in the world. I cannot remain silent about the highest poverty rate amongst radicalized minority groups in Canada. Yes its trough we have one the most modern Constitution in Canada and an exemplary Charter of Rights and Freedom but it is about time that the Canadian Government recognizes that we have problems and tries to address them. It is equally pressing for this government to engage in productive and respectful dialogue with the Canadian Arab community, rather than ignoring it based on the community's criticism of the government's foreign policy at a certain point in time. It is a time to help and resolve the issues faced by Arabs and Muslims in Canada.

Thank you.