

**OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance  
Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005**

**National Council on Canada Arab Relations**

**Session 4**

Excellencies, dear delegates,

My name is Mazen Chouaib and I represent the National Council on Canada Arab Relations.

I have requested the privilege of addressing you briefly because I believe that the various OSCE participating states neglected to address the concerns and fears of many communities in Europe and North America, including my own, as well as other racialized minorities such as Asians, Africans and Latinos.

The Arab communities in the OSCE participating States have been the target of vicious attacks not because they are only Muslim or Christian but simply because they are Arab

The Middle East is composed of many cultural and ethnic minorities; there are Kurds, Jews, Assyrians, Keldeyans, Armenians and many more. The religion of Islam as a majority religion embraces and respects this beautiful and vibrant diversity. It is important to respect the heritage of over 300 million Arabs. It is also important to recognize and remember that Arab culture was preserved in the churches of the Middle East.

Dear friends,

After September 11<sup>th</sup> it became hard for me as an Arab Canadian to read newspapers or watch movies in North America. I started to question my culture and its values. Me, an Arab, started feeling insecure about this wonderful heritage that I carry. We have people who started anglosizing their names and their children names because they did not want to be identified as Arab.

I urge you to treat the issue of anti Arab racism and hate as seriously as you have treated other issues in this forum. Racism directed at Arab is old and prevalent. In North America the image of the Arab in popular culture is shocking. Hollywood has vilified us. Have you also noticed in your daily paper and in movies that we are always portrayed as angry terrorists?

There are many studies and historical examples showing the link between popular vilification of a racialised minority and hate crimes. A recent report in Canada based on a pilot project with police forces indicates that between 2001 and 2002, 57% of hate crimes were motivated by race or ethnicity.

The responsibility of the state is to protect the human rights of all its citizens. Communities also need to work together and with the state to educate and change attitudes. The Arab communities in the OSCE are bridgebuilders. If allowed they can play the most important role to promote the interest of their countries.

In Canada there are attempts at addressing some of these issues. The government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage has collaborated with community organizations to remedy these issues.

What Canada values and wishes to promote domestically is cultural diversity. Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a prime example of the commitment to the protection of human rights for all. But it is not enough. There is more work, a lot more work to be done.

Thank you,