



HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION Meeting (HDIM)

Warsaw, Poland

September 17, 2018

WORKING SESSION 10: Fundamental Freedoms I, including Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association, National Human Rights Institutions and the Role of Civil Society in the Protection of Human Rights, and Freedom of Movement

Thank you Mr. Moderator,

Distinguished attendees, ladies and gentlemen:

My name is Christine Douglass-Williams. I am a Canadian citizen, journalist, author; former Director of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation and Former External adviser to Canada's Office of Religious Freedom.

I will address Canada's free speech issue pertaining to anti-islamophobia motion M-103 which was passed in parliament last year. It has drawn much controversy as it was deemed to be a motion that impedes open discussion about important issues of concern to many Canadians, particularly that it declares intention to "take action" against 'islamophobia'—a term that has not been adequately defined.

Despite multiple suggestions by many human rights groups and individuals to change the wording of "islamophobia" to anti-Muslim bigotry, it was adamantly refused.

The Motion ended up being represented as part of a 23-million dollar program to tackle discrimination; in a form of cracking down on "islamophobia", where quote "citizens will be monitored for compliance". How this will play out is a mystery, and deeply troubling as I believe it can serve to perpetuate an air of nervousness and mistrust, contrary to national cohesion.

The only working definition of islamophobia that was revealed in Canada was through an official guidebook published by the Toronto District School Board that condemned "Islamophobia" and defined the term to include "dislike directed...towards Islamic politics or culture."

There are undeniable elements of Islamic politics and culture that need open discussion about among human rights proponents; and for the furtherance of a free society in the interests of those most vulnerable.

I would like to recommend that the word “islamophobia” be replaced with anti-Muslim bigotry as the normal usage in democracies, when confronting issues of discrimination; and that we as proponents of human rights could agree (or at least openly discuss) that free discussion about any doctrine, philosophy or ideology does not translate to the rejection of any identifiable group of people. On the contrary, it enables the protection of all groups without exceptions, without partiality and therefore fosters feelings of safety, good-will and acceptance.