

The lack of credibility of a 2005 CAIR-CAN survey

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Chapter: Is Canada Losing the Balance between Liberty and Security? (pp. 145-146)

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<http://books.google.ca/books?id=HmiqBgnkAXYC&pg=PA145#v=onepage&q&f=false>

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EXCERPT (p. 145-146)

Hard-line immigré-based groups such as the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) and the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) are the leading advocates of adopting sharia law. These groups have caused alienation within the Muslim community with their improbable “studies” (see pg. 146) that allege Canadian Muslims are being victimized everywhere, and their calls for further “accommodation” of the fundamentalist view.

Challenging CAIR-CAN statistics, Fraser Institute CANSTAT Project Director Neil Seeman (2002, Sep. 14) concluded that “however much some in the media tried to imagine a ‘backlash’ against Muslim Canadians, the truth is there never really was one.” In fact, Statistics Canada reports that the number-one target of hate crimes in 2001 and 2002 after 9/11 was not Muslims but Jews. Twenty-five percent of 1,000 hate crimes reported by 12 big-city police forces in Canada were committed against Jews. By comparison, Muslims (11%) were targeted in roughly the same numbers as South Asians (10%) and gays and lesbians (9%) (The Globe and Mail, 2005, July 14).

In the United States, FBI statistics have led the Investor’s Business Daily to declare that “Muslim groups are crying wolf about exploding anti-Muslim abuses” (2007, Dec. 3):

In 2006, a whopping 66% of religiously motivated attacks were on Jews, while just 11% targeted Muslims, even though the Jewish and Muslim populations are similar in size. Catholics and Protestants, who together account for 9% of victims, are subject to almost as much abuse as Muslims in the US (see also Salman, 2006, Aug. 31).

A Closer Look at a CAIR-CAN Survey (p. 146)

The credibility of one of CAIR-CAN's surveys on the treatment and perceptions of Canadian Muslims came into question when a representative of CAIR-CAN testified before the Maher Arar Commission regarding its curious statistical "survey," conducted in June 2005 and titled *Presumption of Guilt*.

Testifying about the survey, CAIR-CAN's Chair, Sheema Khan, faced only deferential questions from Commission staff. However, Simon Fothergill, Counsel for the Attorney General of Canada, exposed doubts about the survey's reliability and credibility (Commission of Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Maher Arar, 2005: 6290ff). It turned out that the anonymous, questionnaire-based study had made response-forms available on the internet, making it possible for foreigners who had never even set foot in Canada to attest to the imaginary anti-Muslim abuse they had suffered in the country. Copies had also been emailed to those on the CAIR-CAN member list, raising issues of bias, given CAIR-CAN's *idée fixe* about "anti-Islamic" behaviour.

Fothergill pointed out that over half the respondents were connected to CAIR-CAN (6323, l. 3-6), and a "good proportion" were from those interested in Muslim and/or Arab advocacy or issues (6323, l. 17-22). In the end, the survey's credibility – and its implicit claims regarding anti-Islamic tides – were dashed as Khan proved unable to clarify fundamental aspects of the study, including the number of forms that were distributed: "I can't really say"; the number of hard copies that were distributed at centers and mosques: "I don't have the number on me right now"; and whether the ethnic make-up of respondents was statistically-representative of Muslim Canada: "I would have to look at the Census to speak to that" (6321, l. 16-21; 6322, l. 1-2; and, 6322, l. 25-6324, l. 1-2).

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lead, at best, to an unrealistic balance between liberty and security, and restricted freedoms. In an era of proliferating weapons and materials of mass destruction, the risk of social, economic, and political chaos and infrastructural collapse is not to be disregarded. In fact, chaos can create the worst form of unconstitutionality,¹⁶ for, in a chaotic situation, there is no judiciary, no government, no rule of law, no liberty—and perhaps, for increasing numbers—no life. However, well before this point were to be reached, more subtle restrictions on freedom would be felt.

The radical traditions of *sharia*, as known in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and parts of Pakistan, are already pressed upon us in the form of “Islamic civil law,” frequently in the teeth of objections from Canadian Arabs and Muslims who may have escaped the horrors of certain sharia jurisdictions. Hard-line immigré-based groups such as the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) and the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) are the leading advocates of adopting sharia law. These groups have caused alienation within the Muslim community with their improbable “studies” (see pg. 146) that allege Canadian Muslims are being victimized everywhere, and their calls for further “accommodation” of the fundamentalist view.

Challenging CAIR-CAN statistics, Fraser Institute CANSTAT Project Director Neil Seeman (2002, Sep. 14) concluded that “however much some in the media tried to imagine a ‘backlash’ against Muslim Canadians, the truth is there never really was one.” In fact, Statistics Canada reports that the number-one target of hate crimes in 2001 and 2002 after 9/11 was not Muslims but Jews. Twenty-five percent of 1,000 hate crimes reported by 12 big-city police forces in Canada were committed against Jews. By comparison, Muslims (11%) were targeted in roughly the same numbers as South Asians (10%) and gays and lesbians (9%) (*The Globe and Mail*, 2005, July 14).

In the United States, FBI statistics have led the *Investor’s Business Daily* to declare that “Muslim groups are crying wolf about exploding anti-Muslim abuses” (2007, Dec. 3):

¹⁶ On this subject, it is worth recalling the Canadian Supreme Court’s warning to this effect in *Reference re Manitoba Language Rights* [1985] 1 S.C.R. 721.

A Closer Look at a CAIR-CAN survey

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In 2006, a whopping 66% of religiously motivated attacks were on Jews, while just 11% targeted Muslims, even though the Jewish and Muslim populations are similar in size. Catholics and Protestants, who together account for 9% of victims, are subject to almost as much abuse as Muslims in the US (see also Salman, 2006, Aug. 31).

As mentioned, it is unclear why anyone would propagate unreliable information that might trigger upheavals, but this is part of the challenge Canada now faces (for a critical, annotated bibliography of the