



# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COUNTERING HATE AND POLARIZATION

MAY 23-24 2025

## SUMMARY REPORT AND KEY INSIGHTS

Prepared By:

**NORTHERN JUSTICE WATCH**

The International Conference on Countering Hate and Polarization, organized by Northern Justice Watch in partnership with the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC) at the University of Ottawa, the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University, the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism at Ontario Tech University, and Lakehead University, took place over two days at the University of Ottawa. The conference aimed to explore the escalating impact of hate, prejudice, and polarization, examining the links between hate speech, serious crimes, including genocide and crimes against humanity, and promoting collaboration for preventive and remedial strategies.



Lakehead  
UNIVERSITY



uOttawa



Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University

CENTRE FOR  
FREE EXPRESSION

OntarioTech  
UNIVERSITY



# *yasemin mamaloglu*

Northern Justice Watch President



Yasemin Mamaloglu

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*On Day 1, the conference began with opening remarks from the Northern Justice Watch President, Yasemin Mamaloglu, who welcomed attendees and highlighted the event's goal to deepen understanding and collaborate in the realms of justice, rights, and global peace.*

# Prof. John Packer

Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa

The first keynote address was delivered by Professor John Packer, Director of the HRREC and Neuberger-Jesin Professor of International Conflict Resolution in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa. Professor Packer reflected on the imperative of living peacefully and prosperously together and overcoming differences, expressing concern that society is currently falling back in this regard. He described an increasingly "shameless world" where revealing human rights violations such as escalating hate-speech and targeted crimes are increasingly met with indifference and sometimes ridicule, and he highlighted significant gaps between declared values and actions, citing as an immediate example the University of Ottawa's history running residential schools and only recently deciding to forego charging Indigenous students tuition fees but yet meaningfully to compensate victims or their descendents. Professor Packer noted the presence of double standards in applying international law and protecting groups. He discussed the tension between freedom and security, observing that fundamental freedoms in Canadian Constitutional law are limited and increasing constraints are being adopted.



John Packer

Citing Statistics Canada data, Professor Packer noted a doubling of police-reported hate crimes in Canada over the last 10 years, particularly motivated by race/ethnicity, and argued the situation feels worse due to a general atmosphere of insecurity and incivility exacerbated by unrestrained public rhetoric. He criticized domestic and international institutions as weak, under-supported, and often reactive. Professor Packer questioned the effectiveness and potentially performative nature of specific government roles like selective special envoys and, instead, called for a generally applicable, pro-active, sufficiently funded and ultimately more effective institutional response to countering hate and polarisation. He discussed how the instantaneous nature of social media makes traditional remedies for harm difficult to deliver meaningful or timely effects. Finally, Professor Packer expressed concern about the perverse use of terms like "protection" to disadvantage some groups, a path not committed to human dignity, and concluded that existing approaches may have hit walls, necessitating a broad conversation on fundamental basics to find a more appropriate and effective balance of freedom and security.

# Dr. Faisal Bhabha

Centre for Free Expression & Osgoode Hall Law School, York University

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Faisal Bhabha, from the Centre for Free Expression and Osgoode Hall Law School at York University, provided a technical perspective on Canadian law regarding hate. Dr. Bhabha noted the tension between freedom of expression and the constitutional duty to protect equality, stating that tolerating hate leads to greater inequality. He explained that Canadian law doesn't define hate, relying on courts, citing the Supreme Court's Keegstra definition of hatred as instilling "detestation, enmity, ill will and malevolence". Dr. Bhabha detailed the criminal code provisions for public incitement (requiring likelihood of violence) and willful promotion of hatred (requiring specific intent). He highlighted the recent addition of the crime of willful promotion of anti-semitism targeting Holocaust denial. Dr. Bhabha questioned the clarity and potential political motivation behind this specific provision, suggesting it might be performative and susceptible to improper use. He clarified that colloquial "hate crimes" often refer to generic offenses with a hate motive leading to aggravated sentencing under section 718.2 of the Criminal Code.



Faisal Bhabha

Dr. Bhabha discussed Bill C-63 (Online Harms Act) proposing a new hate crime offense motivated by hatred with potentially high sentences, but questioned the evidence supporting increased police powers. He expressed skepticism about relying solely on law enforcement to solve the social problem of hate and bigotry, arguing it risks distraction. Dr. Bhabha mentioned that under human rights law, discrimination and harassment are prohibited, and noted that only four Canadian jurisdictions offer civil damages for hate speech. He discussed the repealed federal Section 13 targeting hateful communications, which Bill C-63 seeks to revive, noting the Supreme Court's distinction between "hatred" (extreme vilification) and mere "ridicule". Dr. Bhabha concluded that while addressing hate is valid, the impulse is dangerous, citing how post-9/11 anti-terrorism laws harmed vulnerable communities and questioning if beefier hate laws would truly benefit those most in need or could be used against them.

# amira elghawaby

Canada's Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia

*Ms.*

Amira Elghawaby spoke about her office's commitment to advancing inclusion for Muslim communities and the dangerous rise in hate and polarization fueled by online disinformation and systemic inequalities.



Amira Elghawaby

She highlighted the fear for safety among Muslim communities, whose fundamental freedoms are undermined by Islamophobic tropes. Ms. Elghawaby cited a significant increase in Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Arab racism since October 7th, noting tragically that more Canadian Muslims have been killed in targeted violence in Canada than in any other G7 country.

She discussed how online hate, amplified by algorithms, translates into real-world harassment and discrimination, particularly targeting visibly Muslim women. Ms. Elghawaby noted a chilling effect on free expression for those advocating for Palestinian human rights, with individuals facing penalties and fear of reprisal.

She clarified that criticism of Islam is distinct from Islamophobia, which targets individuals or groups. Ms. Elghawaby concluded that hate often remains invisible, many victims don't report, and addressing this challenge requires ensuring everyone feels they belong.

# toby mendel

Lawyer, Centre for Law and Democracy



Toby Mendel

*Mr.*

Toby Mendel focused on international law standards, citing ICCPR Article 20 requiring states to prohibit incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence based on national, racial, or religious hatred. He also referenced Article 19(3) on speech restrictions and noted conflicting standards with CERD Article 4. Mr. Mendel highlighted the key elements of Article 20, including the requirement of intent to incite and incitement to defined results. He argued the biggest hate problem is online, where dynamics are changed. Mr. Mendel highlighted the EU Digital Services Act requiring platforms to conduct risk assessments on their impacts (including discrimination) and implement mitigation measures, suggesting this systemic approach to addressing algorithmically amplified hate might be a more effective and free speech-defensible solution than criminal prohibitions.

Prof.  
*alex neve*

Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa)

Professor Alex Neve presented the Ottawa Convoy Occupation as a case study on protest rights and hate. He described the occupation as a violent, intimidating, and hate-filled event with links to far-right groups. Professor Neve highlighted the lack of response from police and authorities, who initially treated it as a peaceful protest despite the intimidating presence and clear signs of hate. Drawing from testimony heard by the Ottawa People's Commission, Professor Neve detailed human rights abuses, threats, taunts, and the pervasive presence of hate in symbols and actions, targeting diverse communities.

He contrasted the lack of limits on the convoy's protest with the forceful restraints on other protests, highlighting an uneven application and definition of hate, such as framing advocacy against genocide as anti-semitic. Professor Neve called for a human rights-based policy on policing protests in Ottawa to ensure clarity and consistency, noting the existence of double standards regarding hate, freedom of expression, and human rights.



Alex Neve

# evan balgord

Executive Director of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network.

*Mr.*

Evan Balgord discussed the rapid growth of the far right in Canada since 2016, correlating with increasing hate crimes. He noted that police-reported data captures only a small fraction of actual hate crimes.

Mr. Balgord identified "aggrieved entitlement" (belief groups should be doing better relative to others) as a key factor, exacerbated by economic inequality. He discussed the role of online propaganda and the far right's use of parasocial relationships. Mr. Balgord outlined the evolution of far-right movements in Canada, from anti-Muslim groups to the Freedom Convoy, noting the pandemic's role in attracting people.

He mentioned recent efforts by Christian nationalists and others to train political operatives for local elections. Mr. Balgord suggested countermeasures like raising participation costs, disrupting organizing, civilian oversight of police, reviving Section 13 of the CHRA, requiring platform safety plans, and addressing economic inequality.



*Evan Balgord*



# victoria kuketz

Public Policy Forum Fellow

*Ms.*

Victoria Kuketz discussed rapid polarization in Canada since 2020, a "perfect storm" of economic pressures, digitization, identity politics, and elite detachment. She noted how the pandemic turned into a social/political crisis, pushing some out of the mainstream and making them vulnerable to radicalization. Ms. Kuketz stressed leading with empathy and dialogue, not shame, to engage across differences, particularly reaching out to diaspora communities. Referencing her research, Ms. Kuketz highlighted findings on partisan sorting, performance-focused political behavior, and online polarization amplified by algorithms and leading to young adults' concerns about "cancel culture" limiting expression and experimentation.

Her data showed many young adults feel political stability is threatened and disengage from mainstream politics, not feeling meaningfully heard. Ms. Kuketz concluded by discussing young people's deepest fears about the future and stressing the need for policy recommendations for functional politics and building connected communities with better conflict negotiation tools.



Victoria Kuketz

# Rizwan Mohammad

Senior Advocacy Officer with National Council of Canadian Muslims

Rizwan Muhammad, Senior Advocacy Officer with NCCM, emphasized that online hate is not separate from real-world reality, citing tragic attacks linked to online radicalization and the dehumanization of Muslims. He stated online hate emboldens violence, fuels fear, pushes people out of public life, and disproportionately targets visibly Muslim women.

Mr. Muhammad highlighted the call for "digital justice" by Canadian Muslims, seeking the freedom to participate online without fear, arguing that the "free marketplace of ideas" fails when hate is amplified. He noted that while Canadian law applies to online speech, enforcement is difficult, and survivors bear a heavy burden. Mr. Muhammad discussed the devastating consequences for Muslim communities from algorithmically amplified hate, deepfakes, and disinformation, criticizing opaque and biased moderation systems. He recounted NCCM's engagement on online harms legislation, raising concerns about freedom of expression, privacy, and the risk of criminalizing advocacy. Mr. Muhammad warned inaction allows hate to persist, emboldens extremists, and damages Canada's social cohesion.



Rizwan Mohammad

# aislin jackson

BC Civil Liberties Association



Aislin Jackson

*A*islin Jackson, Staff Policy Counsel at the BC Civil Liberties Association, expanded the discussion beyond Islamophobia, citing the Toronto van attack linked to online misogyny and other instances of online harassment leading to physical assault. Ms. Jackson connected the use of non-consensual intimate images online as a tactic to drive people out of public life. She noted challenges in regulating large, foreign-based platforms due to risk of market exit and lack of democratic accountability, suggesting regulating algorithms might be more effective than content blocking. Ms. Jackson highlighted AI as an amplifier of online harms and urged a human rights/privacy first approach to AI policy.

# anaïs bussières mccnicoll

From Canadian Civil Liberties Association



Anaïs Bussières McNicoll

Anaïs Bussières McNicoll, Director of Fundamental Freedoms at CCLA, provided an overview of existing Canadian laws applying to online speech, including the criminal code, human rights legislation, and tort law.

Ms. McNicoll noted the limitations, including reliance on police/crown for enforcement and the heavy burden on survivors. She cautioned against broad speech prohibitions that could be weaponized against marginalized groups.

Ms. McNicoll stressed that any policy response must put individuals first, comply with the Charter, guard against chilling effects, and avoid state surveillance by proxy. She called for transparency in content moderation, appeal mechanisms for users, and tools for users to manage their online interactions.

# mariam musse

Policy Analyst at the Office of the Federal  
Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime



Mariam Musse

*Ms.*

Mariam Musse, Policy Analyst and Researcher at the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC), presented on the office's mandate and the importance of the Canadian Victim Bill of Rights (CVBR) in advancing justice for hate crime victims.

Drawing on findings from a recent OFoVC study, she noted that many victims of hate are unaware of available services and face barriers, including limited specialized training among service providers and police, a lack of culturally relevant support, and restrictive eligibility criteria for victim compensation.

Ms. Musse also outlined challenges in policing hate crime, including underreporting driven by distrust and the normalization of institutional failure, difficulties in defining and prosecuting hate crimes, and resource constraints. The OFOVC's recommendations include legislative reform, accountability for online hate speech, investments in specialized training, development of a national resource hub, and centering victims' rights within Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate.

# dr. *ronan lee*

Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow at Loughborough University London

*Dr.* Ronan Lee spoke about the impact of hate speech on the Rohingya community, highlighting their history of persecution in Myanmar and the brutal forced deportation in 2017 enabled by an environment of hate.

Dr. Lee detailed how the opening up of Myanmar post-2010 allowed social media platforms like Facebook to become dominant vehicles for circulating anti-Rohingya narratives and dehumanizing language, arguing this facilitated the genocide with no domestic opposition.

He warned that unregulated social media combined with hate speech creates an environment where such atrocities could happen again.



*Dr. Ronan Lee*

dr. *davut  
akca*

Assistant Professor at Lakehead University



*Davut Akca*

*Dr.* Davut Akca presented research drawing a pathway from hate speech to hate crimes and atrocity crimes, citing examples like Rwanda and the Holocaust. Dr. Akca presented a case study on the Hizmet movement, detailing the "social genocide" they faced in Turkey and the persistent victimization experienced by Hizmet members in Canada, including online/verbal attacks and threats.

He highlighted high levels of PTSD and polarization within Turkish communities in Canada linked to hate speech, and discussed concerns about transnational repression by the Turkish government against Hizmet members in Canada, incited by hate rhetoric.

Dr. Akca noted that hate crime statistics in Canada are increasing but underreported, and while legal/institutional responses are needed, the primary antidote to hate is dialogue and community-led initiatives, including alliances among victim communities. He also stated that transnational repression constitutes a national security threat for Canada.

# *izle brands-kehris*

UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights

Day 2 began with a keynote address by Ilze Brands-Kehris, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. Ms. Brands-Kehris highlighted the current pivotal moment of overlapping global crises increasing tensions and polarization. She noted the worrisome normalization of hate speech and actions globally.

Ms. Brands-Kehris discussed trigger moments like conflicts and elections that fuel hate and polarization, stressing the link between hate speech and the prevention of atrocity crimes. She expressed deep concern about the erosion of respect for international law and the undermining of the universality of human rights, citing challenges to consensus on issues like critical speech around religion.

Ms. Brands-Kehris discussed the work of the OHCHR in providing guidance and supporting efforts to counter hate speech and discrimination, noting progress in some countries and highlighting regional initiatives and multi-stakeholder approaches during elections.

Responding to questions, Ms. Brands-Kehris acknowledged perceptions of double standards in applying international law, particularly visible in responses to Ukraine versus Gaza, but stressed the OHCHR's role in providing objective information and upholding universal standards equally. She also agreed that ICCPR Article 20, prohibiting propaganda for war and incitement, needs more focus and integrated analysis with Article 19.



*Ilze Brands-Kehris*



Special Advisor at Ontario Provincial Police

# *ricky veerappan*

*Mr.* Ricky Veerappan, Special Adviser at OPP, discussed policing through the lens of human rights in diverse communities.

He presented a continuum highlighting how dehumanization and hate can lead to atrocity crimes, while appreciating human rights builds capacity for peaceful coexistence.



*Ricky Veerappan*

Mr. Veerappan outlined five guiding principles for police:

- policing through the lens of human rights,
- policing with a global mindset,
- building relationships before crises,
- policing with humility/compassion/empathy, and leading with humanity to amplify our shared human connection.

He concluded by emphasizing collaboration and human rights education.

Acting Deputy Crown Attorney in  
Ottawa

*moiz karimjee*  
*& s/sgt ali*  
*toghrol*

Ottawa Police Service



Moiz Karimjee



S/Sgt Ali Toghrol

*Mr.*

Moiz Karimjee and S/Sgt. Ali Toghrol presented their collaborative approach in Ottawa. S/Sgt. Toghrol highlighted their unique partnership as a Bahá'í and a Shiite Muslim combating hate, stressing knowing the law and building relationships with communities. He described training police officers on hate crimes and the Ottawa unit's success in prosecuting cases, attributing it to communication with the Crown and community relationships. Mr. Karimjee detailed the prosecution process, including immediate response to serious hate-motivated crimes and meeting with victims.

He explained how criminal law applies to hate-motivated actions and how motive can lead to aggravated sentencing under section 718.2(a)(i), citing successful cases. Mr. Karimjee clarified the distinction between public incitement and willful promotion of hatred.

Presenting a case study involving youth graffiti at the University of Ottawa, Mr. Karimjee and S/Sgt. Toghrol discussed using a rehabilitative, educational approach involving community members as an alternative to punitive measures. Responding to questions, they acknowledged that combating hate is a social issue requiring partnership beyond policing. S/Sgt. Toghrol emphasized the hate crime unit's role as a criminal investigative unit, not intelligence-gathering, to build trust with marginalized communities.

# *hannan mohamud*

Legal researcher and advocate

*H*annan Mohamud, a Canadian legal advocate, shared her lived experience as a Black Muslim woman, highlighting the failures of the justice system in addressing hate. She recounted witnessing the Freedom Convoy and the N-word incident at U Ottawa law school, noting how her advocacy led to online trolling.

Ms. Mohamud discussed the challenge of proving motivation in hate crime cases due to a lack of clear legal standards. She connected online hate to real-world violence, citing the Quebec City mosque shooting and a personal account of her aunt and cousin, Black Muslim women, being attacked in Edmonton, which sparked a wave of similar anti-Black, anti-Muslim hate attacks in Alberta.

Ms. Mohamud discussed barriers to reporting, distrust of police, and criticized relying solely on policing, highlighting disproportionate enforcement against Indigenous and Black individuals. She argued symbolic legal gestures fail survivors and called for a new framework with disaggregated intersectional data, trauma-informed community-led responses, and funding for non-carceral safety initiatives.



*Hannan Mohamud*

*dr.*  
*philip slayton*  
Lawyer and Writer

*Dr.* Philip Slayton, a lawyer and writer, discussed anti-semitism, placing it in historical context and analyzing its evolution from religious to racial to political prejudice. He outlined what he viewed as "poor thinking" following October 7th that links events in Gaza to all Jews, arguing this "turbocharges" a new form of anti-semitism.

Dr. Slayton proposed four distinct types of anti-semitism (degradation, violent, organized private, organized public), arguing each requires a different, proportionate response.



*Dr. Philip Slayton*

He cautioned against lumping them together as this confuses the issue and makes responses ineffective. Dr. Slayton concluded by discussing whether Jews are victims, acknowledging their history of suffering but also their current achievements and power, raising questions about the "burden of the eternal victim" and its potential impact on reaction

Human Rights Defender and Filmmaker

# joanne hedges



Joanne Hodges

*Ms.*

Joanne Hodges presented on the Tigray genocide in Ethiopia. She described the scale of the atrocities (600,000 to 1 million perished, massacres, estimated 350,000 cases of sexual violence) clearly intended to inflict humiliation and cause social death. Ms. Hodges highlighted the ethnic cleansing, destruction of infrastructure, and man-made famine. She stated the genocide was enabled by a sophisticated state-driven disinformation campaign by Ethiopia and Eritrea, coupled with a long history of dehumanizing rhetoric against Tigrayans.

Ms. Hodges discussed legal and institutional criminalization before the war and efforts to suppress testimony and restrict aid access during the conflict. She spoke about the impact on the Tigrayan diaspora in Canada, who struggled to be believed, faced a "war of information," and experienced acts of hate and fear due to threats against families in Ethiopia.

Ms. Hodges highlighted social media's central role as a vehicle for hate and disinformation, with online armies attacking advocates, and Facebook acting as a megaphone amplifying violent content. She tragically compared Facebook's role in Tigray to radio's role in the Rwandan genocide. Ms. Hodges shared the personal story of Professor Merik, a respected Tigrayan professor murdered after malicious rumors spread on Facebook, illustrating the real-world consequences of online hate. Ms. Hodges concluded that despite the horrors, communities are not powerless and urged combining energies and working together for justice and accountability.

# *Jamileh Nasso*

President of the Canadian Yazidi Association

*Ms.* Jamileh Nasso presented on the Yazidi genocide in Iraq and the subsequent hate campaign. She detailed the 2014 ISIS genocide, including mass executions, abductions (women/children), displacement, mass graves, slavery markets, and the forced conversion of boys. Ms. Nasso noted the low number of ISIS members prosecuted globally for crimes against Yazidis. She highlighted the August 2024 online hate campaign on the genocide's 10th anniversary, triggered by a commander's speech taken out of context, leading to over a million hate messages, threats, forced displacement from camps, vandalism, and verbal abuse against children, with minimal response from local governments or tech platforms.

Ms. Nasso discussed global responses to the genocide (resettlement, trials in some countries, UN evidence collection) but noted a lack of prosecution for ISIS financiers or digital insiders. She detailed Canada's response, including recognizing the genocide, resettling survivors, and the war crimes program's structural investigation.

Ms. Nasso stressed the vital role of the Yazidi community's response in Canada, forming a multi-faith coalition to advocate, fundraise, and support resettlement efforts. She discussed the current unstable situation in Sinjar, missing women/girls, and the need for an intelligence-backed task force, enforcement of Yazidi Survivors Law, criminalizing online hate, and education, emphasizing the power of local community collaboration.



*Jamileh Nasso*

# dr. Tahir Shaaran

Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto

*Dr.* Tahir Shaaran, Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto and advocate for Hazara rights, discussed the Hazara community facing genocide and mass killing. He provided historical context of persecution and massacres dating back to the late 19th century, often incited by hate speech. Dr. Shaaran detailed the systematic discrimination faced by Hazaras and massacres during the civil war and under the Taliban, including the destruction of cultural identity symbols. He noted improvements during international intervention but continued attacks and discrimination.

Dr. Shaaran stated that under the Taliban's return, the situation worsened with ongoing killings, displacement, reduced representation, diverted aid, land confiscation, heavy taxation, restricted practices, removal of judges, and destruction of heritage. He highlighted persistent hate speech, labeling Hazaras as infidels and justifying violence.

Dr. Shaaran discussed the denial and distortion of the Hazara genocide by generalizing violence, masking ethnic targeting, and sometimes driven by ethnic affiliation or political interests. He noted the political and global exclusion of Hazaras, limiting their platform to voice struggles.

Dr. Shaaran cited international bodies recognizing the risk/reality of Hazara genocide. He concluded that atrocity is increasing under the Taliban, urging Canada and the international community to recognize the Hazara genocide as a crucial first step for prevention.



Dr. Tahir Shaaran

dr.  
davut  
akca

Assistant Professor at Lakehead University



Davut Akca

*Dr.* Davut Akca, building on his earlier presentation and research, briefly summarized the findings of the Northern Justice Watch study on the Hizmet movement, showing persistent victimization (online, verbal, threats, physical attacks) for Hizmet members even after coming to Canada.

Dr. Akca presented quotes illustrating the impact of the "FETO" label, threats, boycotts, and anti-Hizmet rhetoric in mosques. He highlighted quotes detailing transnational repression activities by the Turkish government against Hizmet members in Canada, incited by hate speech, leading to surveillance fears, denial of services, and targeting of families in Turkey.

Dr. Akca also showed quotes demonstrating polarization within Turkish communities in Canada. He summarized the findings on multi-layered impacts, persistent trauma, and continuing transnational repression.

Dr. Akca concluded by emphasizing that dialogue is the antidote to hate, urging communities, especially victim communities, to come together and form alliances, balancing legal/institutional responses with community-led initiatives.





Tarik Saglam

## *closing remarks*

In closing remarks, Professor John Packer thanked attendees and particularly Dr. Davut Akca for his initiative and leadership in organizing the conference. He thanked Tariq Saglam for serving as MC. Professor Packer reflected on the profound richness of diversity and Canada's historical project of multiculturalism, expressing concern that polarization and hatred have compromised this idea of "deep togetherness," leaving society barely at the edge of coexistence. He stressed the university's role as a space for open engagement and critical challenge. Professor Packer drew attention to the "Echoes of Resilience" exhibit on comparative genocides, highlighting the importance of victim community alliances (including Hazara, Tigrayans, Uyghurs, Yazidis, Tutsi). He concluded that countering hate and fulfilling the promise of "never again" requires linking arms, cooperating, and forming alliances among groups.

# Conclusion

The International Conference on Countering Hate and Polarization offered an in-depth and multifaceted examination of the growing threats of hate, prejudice, and social division—both in Canada and globally. Drawing from expert keynotes, panel discussions, and testimonies from impacted communities, several key takeaways emerged:

## **1. Legal Responses Must Be Balanced and Inclusive**

While legal tools like criminal provisions and human rights frameworks remain important, multiple speakers emphasized that law alone cannot eradicate hate. Caution is required to ensure laws are not weaponized against marginalized groups or used performatively.

## **2. Digital Platforms Amplify Hate**

The exponential role of social media and algorithm-driven amplification of hate speech was a recurring theme. The inadequacy of current moderation systems and the opacity of platform governance structures exacerbate harm, especially for communities already facing systemic discrimination.

## **3. Victims and Communities Remain Underserved**

Survivors of hate crimes often face barriers to justice, such as limited access to culturally relevant support, distrust in law enforcement, and challenges in reporting. Intersectional, trauma-informed, and community-led responses were repeatedly advocated.

## **4. Hate Is Both Local and Transnational**

Several speakers presented compelling cases of how hate speech fuels both domestic and transnational repression. Canada's institutions must be equipped to recognize and respond to these cross-border threats, particularly when they originate from authoritarian regimes.

## **5. Prevention Requires Education, Dialogue, and Empathy**


From discussions on far-right recruitment to polarization among youth, the importance of proactive, empathetic education and dialogue was clear. Promoting civic engagement, critical media literacy, and platforms for inclusive discourse is essential.

## **6. Victim Community Alliances Are Vital**

One of the most inspiring outcomes of the conference was the visible solidarity among diverse victim communities. These



# Recommendations



## **1. Develop a National Strategy on Countering Hate and Polarization:**

This strategy should include robust policy tools, community consultations, and coordinated efforts across sectors—including education, technology, law enforcement, and public health.



## **2. Fund and Support Community-Led Initiatives**

Allocate dedicated resources to grassroots organizations and victim communities engaged in prevention, education, victim support, and dialogue-based initiatives.



## **3. Strengthen Platform Accountability**

Advocate for enforceable transparency standards and algorithmic audits for digital platforms, while respecting free expression and privacy rights.



## **4. Invest in Training and Awareness for Law Enforcement and Service Providers**

Expand specialized training on hate crimes, trauma-informed practices, and cultural competency to better serve victims and reduce systemic barriers.




## **5. Enhance Legal Protections While Guarding Against Overreach**

Ensure any new legislation aimed at combating hate speech and online harms is Charter-compliant, evidence-based, and includes safeguards against misuse.



## **6. Support Academic and Civil Society Research**



Continued research is needed to better understand the evolving nature of hate and polarization, evaluate interventions, and inform responsive policy.

In conclusion, the conference underscored that while hate is adaptive and pervasive, so too can be our responses—when grounded in rights, empathy, and collaboration. The road ahead requires a coalition of voices, the courage to confront uncomfortable truths, and sustained commitment from all levels of society. Only by standing together can we uphold the promise of “never again.”

# Contact Us:

For more information and to support this initiative, please visit our website at [www.northernjusticewatch.org](http://www.northernjusticewatch.org) or follow us on social media.



[www.northernjusticewatch.com](http://www.northernjusticewatch.com)



[info@northernjusticewatch.com](mailto:info@northernjusticewatch.com)

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