



PRESS RELEASE RELEASE

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The Muslim Advisory Council of Canada remains steadfast in combatting all forms of racism, discrimination and hate. While we continue to advocate for policy changes to help codify measures that stop acts of hate against Muslims, unfortunately systemic Islamophobia persists.

On December 20, 2021, the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) published an article entitled “Don’t use an instrument of oppression as a symbol of diversity and inclusion” which was disseminated to thousands of healthcare professionals in Canada and made publicly available online. This piece is an example of Islamophobia. It perpetuates ignorance and hatred. The fact that this article was published in a journal of repute is unacceptable and dangerous. It creates further misconceptions of the Islamic faith.

The author, a pediatric surgeon, grew up in a society where misinterpretation of the hijab and requirements to wear it resulted in negative experiences. One person’s negative opinion due to socio-political specificities does not justify demonizing another’s choice, identity and state of being. The image used in the original referenced poster, is of a young girl in a hijab working on a task with another child. This is a reflection of positive representation of Muslims, and demonstrates the great strides we as a society have made in combating Islamophobia and the demonization of Muslims. To argue that including such a picture is not integral to 'inclusion' when images like this have been excluded from the mainstream for decades, only perpetuates the exclusionary, racist, Islamophobic sentiments that continue to ostracize generations of Muslims.

“As a visibly Muslim woman who has faced Islamophobia in the healthcare system as a parent of a sick child, I am extremely disturbed that the author of this article has close proximity to children in their professional life while holding these discriminatory views about Muslim girls and women who choose to wear the hijab. Furthermore, this article incorrectly ties together the hijab with negative connotations of oppression. As a member of the Family Advisory Council at McMaster Children’s Hospital, my colleagues often hear me reference that health inequities exist for marginalised groups leading to lower quality of care. We are in contact with our healthcare partners across Canada and are raising our concerns about this matter.”-Tabassum Wyne, Executive Director of the Muslim Advisory Council of Canada.

We are only six months removed from the horrific tragedy in London, Ontario, where visible Muslims were murdered due to their faith. This article only helps perpetuate this hate, while needlessly targeting the hijab. The Muslim Advisory of Canada demands that CMAJ retract this harmful article and issue an apology explaining to their thousands of subscribers about the harm they caused to Canadian Muslim communities, including healthcare professionals and patients.

The Muslim Advisory Council of Canada is a not for profit organization dedicated to empowering the Canadian Muslim diaspora and providing a platform to advocate for an equitable society. For press inquiries contact: info@muslimadvisory.ca.

