Statement

For Immediate Release:
November 27, 2026

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Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada on the Supreme Court of Canada's Ruling Regarding Quebec's Bill 21

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada expresses its profound disappointment following today's decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in *English Montreal School Board v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, which upholds Quebec's *Act respecting the laicity of the State* (Bill 21).

While we hold the highest respect for Canada's judicial institutions and the rule of law, today's ruling represents a deeply concerning moment for the removal of constitutional rights of religious freedom, pluralism, and substantive equality in our country. There is no doubt that Bill 21 infringed upon fundamental rights of law-abiding Quebecers.

The apex court has affirmed the effectual reach of Bill 21 through the pre-emptive invocation of Section 33 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The decision compels law-abiding citizens to choose between their deeply held religious convictions and their ability to serve their society in the public sphere.

Genuinely pluralistic democracies demonstrate impartiality of the public institutions and the fairness of the public servant's actions. It is inclusive in nature. A fair society does not enforce visual uniformity or erase expressions of faith from the public sphere, including classrooms, courtrooms, and public institutions. When a qualified teacher, lawyer, or public servant is barred from serving solely because of a hijab, turban, kippah, or cross, the state ceases to be neutral; it becomes exclusionary.

As a community whose foundational motto is *"Love for All, Hatred for None,"* and whose members have personally endured majority supported, state-sanctioned religious restrictions elsewhere in the world, Ahmadi Muslims have long cherished Canada as a global beacon where loyalty to one's country does not conflict with public practice of faith.

It is disappointing that a law that impacts all faiths disproportionately impacts Muslim women is upheld due to the beliefs of the majority.

We love this Canada and believe that the enduring strength of the *Charter* is weakened by the normalization of the notwithstanding clause to curtail fundamental freedoms.

The Court's recognition that Section 8 infringes upon the democratic rights of elected members of the National Assembly is a welcome safeguard for the few. It should not stop there. The broader reality remains unchanged for countless Canadians, particularly Muslim women and religious minorities who continue to bear the disproportionate burden of this legislation in their professional lives.

Even in the face of legal setbacks, our commitment to civic engagement, mutual respect, and constructive dialogue remains unwavering. We call upon lawmakers, civil society, faith-based communities, and Canadians of all backgrounds to reflect deeply on the decision. We should collectively work to build a society where constitutional rights cannot be suspended at political convenience.

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