

## **SALCO STATEMENT ON LONDON TERROR ATTACK**

The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO) is devastated, outraged and horrified by the Terrorist attack on the Afzaal family in London on June 6, 2021. The family was out on an evening walk, when they became victims of this heinous hate-motivated crime that left four of them dead, and the youngest member, a nine-year old boy, critically injured. The terrorist targeted this family simply because they were Muslim. SALCO condemns this despicable act of Islamophobia, hate, and bigotry. SALCO demands justice for this family and calls on all levels of the government and community members to come together to combat racism and xenophobia in this country.

A large percentage of SALCO's clientele is Muslim. In our day to day work, we routinely see the impact of systemic and individual racism, discrimination and violence on members of the Muslim and/or South Asian community in relation to their access to justice and services, employment equity, income security, housing, and other fundamental human rights. Through legal representation, law reform and advocacy, and community legal education, SALCO has been working alongside other partners to advance safety, justice and equality for racialized and faith-based communities. As a member of the Anti-Hate Community Leaders' Group, we have been working to bring attention to hate-motivated crimes since 2019. When an incident like this takes place, it sends a disturbing message that our country has made little progress, and any strides we have made thus far in ensuring a just and equitable society seem futile. It feels as though we are back to square one.

The Afzaal family deserved to be safe in their home, Canada. We, as a country, need to rise up against all forms of racism, hate, and xenophobia and ensure that nobody suffers the tragedy that has befallen this family. SALCO, along with the Anti-Hate Community Leaders' Group and other social justice organizations, demands that the perpetrator be held fully accountable for his actions through the criminal justice system. Governments and political parties across Canada have perpetuated Islamophobia in many ways including casting votes against Motion 103, implementing and then failing to repeal the *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* (a direct slight against Muslim communities), failing to legislate and resource anti-racism departments, banning religious dress like the hijab and niqab, and failing to take any meaningful action after the massacre of six Muslims in Canada four years ago in Quebec. We call on all levels of government to take urgent action to strengthen legislation, policies and programming on anti-racism, including education for youth, and counselling services for individuals facing Islamophobia and other forms for racism. We urge all levels of government to engage in consultations with organizations fighting racism and Islamophobia to collect necessary data, and understand the needs of the affected communities. Platitudes will not save lives.