

Dr. Salim Mansur: Hearing of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence

Opening Statement

By

Dr. Salim Mansur

University of Western Ontario

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Standing Committee:

I want to begin with thanking you for inviting me to this hearing.

I come before you as an academic. I am not a lawyer. I am a scholar, writer, and student of politics, history, culture in general and of the world of Islam in particular. I am Canadian, Muslim by faith, husband and father, and I have been deeply involved in public affairs nationally and in my community. I come from not only within the Canadian Muslim community, but literally my family and I come from within the wreckage of the Muslim world. We are the fortunate ones, those of us who found home and all that it denotes in Canada.

But the Muslim community in Canada is not insulated from the

troubles raging in the world of Islam, just as Canada is not insulated from those troubles as they reach our shores. The Canadian Muslim community is faced with immense challenges as its members seek to adapt to the politics and culture of a liberal democratic society that their history never prepared them for. The Muslim community is deeply troubled, even bewildered, as it is torn by demands of faith and loyalty of the world they left behind and of the country they now call home.

The Muslim community, especially those within who are spoken of as “moderate” Muslims, needs help, but they are losing the struggle against those within the community who are engaged in apologetics and will not condemn by name, for instance, Hamas or Taliban or the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood, or those who preach the virtues of jihad as holy war incumbent on Muslims as part of their religious belief instead of demanding its end. “Moderate” Muslims find themselves besieged inside the Muslim community by the apologists of radical Islam or Islamism who oppose any reform within Islam that ends gender inequality between men and women, ends discrimination against homosexuals, minorities, dissident Muslims or ex-Muslims. Unfortunately, those within the Canadian Muslim community who indulge in and promote the victimhood narrative are winning the battle for the hearts and minds of Muslim youth; and then to add insult to injury, these same apologists of Islamism are received by the broader Canadian community as spokespeople for Canadian Muslims in general.

Muslims are not in any danger in Canada. Speaking here as a Muslim, we are not under attack by Canadians, our faith is not endangered, nor do we, as Muslims, face any discrimination in Canada; instead, it is the opposite, those of us who speak out against Islamism, against the false narrative of Islamophobia and victimhood, against jihad, against Muslim anti-Semitism or Judeophobia that rages across the Muslim world and right here in our midst in Canada, we are under attack by the self-

appointed leaders in mosques and within the Muslim community for being disloyal to their version of politics dressed as religion. In my faith to be so vilified is a mark for injury and death.

As someone who might be designated as “moderate” or “dissident” Muslim, yet someone who has the pulse of the Muslim community both here and abroad, I am here to support the spirit and intent of the bill before this committee that will see passports revoked, if the Minister has reasonable grounds to suspect a terrorism act is likely to be committed.

The act as proposed allows individuals the constitutional right to challenge such decisions in court, and the judge will have the discretion to appoint “a friend of the court” to act on their behalf if the judge believes it is necessary. My colleagues on the panel have served in such capacity, and I defer to their legal expertise. ??I will speak in broader terms about the issue before us. ?

The state has a right to protect the integrity of its citizenship. Some may argue that having a passport is a “Charter” right; but there is no “Charter” right to be participating in acts, which are reasonably believed to be by the Minister and the courts as “preparatory” to committing a terrorism offence. Those with such intent, if it can be confirmed, should not only lose their passports, but more effort should be made to charge them under section 83.01 of our Criminal Code.

While “reasonable grounds” to believe someone is about to commit a terrorist offence is not the same as proof beyond a reasonable doubt, it is still sufficient, in my view, to see to it that these individuals are charged and brought before the court to be prosecuted and if the evidence stands then convicted for violating the laws of Canada. Charges are deterrent.

We need to see the laws, which have been passed by Parliament fully enforced by the RCMP. So far, they have been too soft on jihadists and those who want to be jihadists. It is dismaying to ask of some 90 individuals who were seeking to join ISIS how many were charged under our Criminal Code? Similarly, of some 80 individuals who have returned from supporting terrorism abroad – materially or as a party to a crime – how many have been charged, prosecuted and convicted? And of the 145 individuals known to be abroad, how many of them have been charged in *absentia*?

In a post-9/11 world when we as Canadians refuse to come to grips with radicalization within our schools, our mosques and the Muslim community, then is it too much to demand of our government that if there are reasonable grounds, which will be examined in court, to believe that someone is about to commit a terrorist offence that someone should be indicted for terrorism under the provisions of our Criminal Code?

Today our secular, liberal, modern, democratic politics and culture are under siege. In such circumstance to indulge political correctness that denies there is a dark side within the Muslim community means denying the sort of assistance the Muslim community needs to embrace without reservation Canada as their home. Such assistance will only be forthcoming when it is made amply clear to that community that there is no preferential treatment of any community or people in Canada, and that the rule of law in Canada means those who break the law will face prosecution and if found guilty will be duly sentenced.

There is something to be said in praise of tough love when we are educating our children to be responsible citizens. The Muslim community in Canada needs tough love to save it from itself, or from its own demons, in these dire times for Muslims globally. This Bill C-59 is one more step in the direction of putting together the right mix of tough love in dealing with those individuals who view being Canadian is a

matter of convenience.

Thank you.