

## *Canada: Extremism and Terrorism*

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Early in the morning on November 27, 2023, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the Jewish Community Council of Montreal in Montreal's Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough, damaging one of the building's entrances. No injuries were reported. The attack happened hours after a meeting at the JCC on improving security for Jewish institutions. Canada has experienced a rise in antisemitic violence following an October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, in which the group killed more than 1,200 people and took more than 240 hostages into the Gaza Strip. Between October 7 and November 7, Montreal police counted 48 reported hate crimes and hate incidents against the Jewish community and 17 against the Arab-Muslim community. (Sources: [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [NPR](#))

During an October 28 “Stop the Genocide in Gaza” protest in Montreal in response to the war, Imam Adil Charkaoui led a prayer chant to “exterminate the Zionists.” Speaking with a microphone from a balcony, Charkaoui told the gathered crowd, “Allah, take care of these Zionist aggressors. Allah, take care of the enemies of the people of Gaza. Allah, identify them all, then exterminate them. And don't spare any of them.” He then said, “Allah, count every one of them, and kill them all, and do not exempt even one of them.” Charkaoui posted video of his speech on Facebook, Instagram, and X, formerly Twitter. The “Stop the Genocide in Gaza” protest was organized by the Palestinian Youth Movement, which also reportedly praised Hamas's October 7 attack. (Sources: [National Post](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#))

A few days after Charkaoui called for the extermination of Zionists, incendiary devices were left at the Beth Tikvah synagogue and the nearby Federation CJA building in Montreal's suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeaux on November 6. No injuries were reported. Police found broken bottles and burn marks on the synagogue's front door. Jewish communal leaders in Quebec linked the attacks to the Israel-Hamas war. Overnight on November 8-9, shots were fired at the Talmud Torah Elementary School and the Yeshiva Gedola school in Montreal's Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough. Police found bullet holes in the sides of the buildings, but no significant property damage or injuries were reported. In response to the attacks, police increased their presence around Jewish institutions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemned “antisemitic violence in the strongest possible terms.” Education Minister Bernard Drainville called the attacks on the schools “a form of terrorism.” Police returned to the Yeshiva Gedola on November 12 after receiving reports of shots fired early in the morning. No injuries were reported, but authorities found bullet impact marks and bullet shells at the school. (Sources: [Montreal Gazette](#), [Montreal Gazette](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [Reuters](#))

## **Overview**

Within the past few decades, several hundred Canadian civilians have been killed or injured in incidents related to violent extremism. The Canadian authorities and public have historically viewed extremism and terrorism as a threat both within Canada and abroad. In late January 2015, ISIS's then-spokesman [Abu Muhammad al-Adnani](#) called for increased attacks on Canada in retaliation for the country's then-participation in airstrikes on the terror group. In October 2014, Canadian-born ISIS supporter Martin Couture-Rouleau rammed a car into a group of Canadian soldiers at a shopping center in Quebec, killing one soldier and wounding another in one of the first documented ISIS-inspired vehicular attacks. During the attack, Couture-Rouleau instructed a 911 dispatcher “to alert Canada, the governor and everyone who is responsible for the army” to leave the anti-ISIS coalition. ISIS's *Dabiq* magazine has since reprinted calls to action. While Canadian authorities remain vigilant, Public Safety Canada did not record any domestic terror attacks in 2018. According to Public Safety Canada, the threat posed by those espousing violent interpretations of religious, ideological, or political views continues but has remained stable. Canada's threat level has remained at Medium since 2014. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [National Post](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#))

Canada has not had a combat role in Iraq and Syria since 2016. Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada has increasingly participated in the training of Iraqi and local Kurdish troops, specifically offering “Canada's specialized capabilities—from mobile medical teams, to engineering support, to aircraft that can carry supplies and personnel—on a case-by-case basis.” Trudeau has, since his tenure, pledged to challenge Canadian counterterrorism bills, including by repealing parts of Canada's C-51 Anti-Terrorism Act, which grants Canadian police the right to preventative arrest in order to bar suspected terrorists from traveling abroad to partake in terrorist activities. In July 2017, the Canadian government awarded 10 million Canadian dollars (U.S.D. 8 million) and an apology to confessed terrorist and former Guantanamo detainee Omar Khadr. When questioned by journalists about the settlement and apology, Trudeau told reporters, “There is a judicial process underway that has been underway for a number of years now and we are anticipating I think, a number of people are, the judicial process is coming to its conclusion.” Khadr had previously accepted a plea agreement from the U.S. government after confessing to lobbing a grenade at U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2002, killing a member of a U.S. Army Special Forces unit. (Sources: [CBC News](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Guardian](#), [Star](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [National Post](#))

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Despite apparent policy shifts in the Trudeau government, Canada has historically viewed violent Islamist extremism as one of the leading threats to its national security. In 2017, a slight majority of Canadians continued to consider ISIS a national security threat, with 55 percent characterizing ISIS as a “major threat” to the country. In 2013, the Canadian intelligence service warned Parliament that Canadian recruits had joined every global [al-Qaeda](#) affiliate, adding that these groups had mentioned Canada as a possible target. That year, Canadian authorities thwarted two attacks inspired by al-Qaeda. In 2014, two high-profile attacks by Islamic extremists occurred within the same week: the running over of a soldier by a car and the shooting spree at Parliament Hill. Canada has also experienced attacks waged by right-wing extremists, including the January 2017 shooting at a Quebec mosque. The perpetrator, 27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette, was reportedly inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Pew Research Center](#), [CBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Atlantic](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Royal Mounted Canadian Police (RMCP) work to prevent terrorist attacks at home and abroad. The Canadian government has also launched a host of research initiatives aimed at understanding and combatting the threat of violent extremism. Internationally, the Canadian Armed Forces have provided aircraft and assistance to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as the NATO-led training of Afghan forces. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

## **Radicalization and Foreign Fighters**

### *Islamic Extremism*

In February 2013, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) alerted Canadian Parliament that the country was increasingly vulnerable to violence resulting from domestic Islamic extremism. Indeed, Canada remains at risk from domestic jihadist cells, as well as from attacks carried out by radicalized individuals. In October 2014, two Canadian Islamic extremists carried out high-profile attacks within the same week. On October 20, Quebecer Martin “Ahmad” Couture-Rouleau killed one soldier in a car-ramming attack. Two days later, Montreal native Michael Zehaf-Bibeau embarked on a shooting spree at Parliament Hill, killing 24-year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo. Both Couture-Rouleau and Zehaf-Bibeau had previously attempted to travel to Syria to fight with extremist groups. (Sources: [The Star](#), [CBC](#))

In addition to lone wolf attacks, Canada may also be vulnerable to domestic ISIS networks. On February 3, 2015, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided an alleged ISIS cell in Ottawa. Three young men were arrested and charged with financial and ideological support of ISIS. Two of the men believed to be fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq or Syria were charged in absentia. The RCMP declared the raid part of the ongoing “Project Servant,” a national security investigation that began in December 2012. (Sources: [CBC](#), [CBC](#), [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

Samy Metwally, an imam at an Ottawa mosque, said in January 2015 that the Canadian Muslim community has experienced a surge of converts following the October 2014 attack on Parliament Hill. Metwally expressed concern that converts are vulnerable to radicalization and “become persuaded by misinformation on the Internet.” (Source: [National Post](#))

Canadian security officials have noted that Canadian extremists have largely not heeded calls for attacks by ISIS. In August 2018, ISIS urged followers to follow the examples of their “brothers” in Canada. According to Public Safety Canada, the country remains vigilant but has not seen a domestic response to this declaration. The government did not record any domestic terrorist attacks in 2018. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

In December 2018, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Ralph Goodale issued a statement that the 2018 Public Report on the Terrorism Threat to Canada had employed terms such as “Sikh,” “Shia,” and “Sunni” to describe forms of extremism. Goodale recognized that though such terminology had been employed for several years, it was not precise enough to avoid maligning entire communities. Goodale called for a thorough review and “appropriate changes to the language used throughout the government to describe extremism.” As a result, Public Safety Canada reissued its 2018 report in April 2019 with an addendum that a threat “must be clearly linked to an ideology rather than a community.” As part of what Public Safety Canada called the government’s “bias-free approach,” it said the government would avoid terminology that “unintentionally impugns an entire religion.” (Sources: [Government of Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

### *Foiled Attacks*

Canadian authorities have prevented incidents of would-be Islamic extremism, intercepted in the planning stages of the attack. In April 2013, for example, Chiheb Essaghaier and Raed Jaser were arrested and charged with conspiring to attack a passenger train traveling between Toronto and New York. According to the Canadian police, the pair was receiving support from al-Qaeda elements located in Iran. The elements provided support

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consisting of “directions and guidance,” but were reported not have not received assistance from the state of Iran. This was the first known al-Qaeda plan or attack within Canada. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

In July 2013, Canadian authorities arrested John Muttall and Amanda Korody and charged them with conspiring to bomb the British Columbia Legislature Building using improvised explosive devices during Canada Day festivities. The Canadian police reported that the plan was inspired by al-Qaeda ideology, and that the conspirators had converted to Islam a few years earlier. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Huffington Post](#))

### *Right-Wing Extremism*

Canada is not immune to right-wing extremism. Public Safety Canada’s 2017 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada found that while the extreme right is “not an ideologically coherent group,” there is “always the potential” for terrorism motivated by right-wing ideologies. According to Public Safety Canada, right-wing extremists are particularly active online, utilizing chat forums and online networks. A 2016 study published in the *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* journal found that at least 100 right-wing extremist groups were active in Canada in recent years, most notably in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia. Groups and individuals subscribing to right-wing extremist ideology have been responsible for a number of violent incidents in the country, including the high-profile shooting of three police officers in New Brunswick in June 2014 by lone-wolf Justin Bourque. Bourque had reportedly previously posted pro-gun and anti-government messages on social media. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [National Post](#), [Vice News](#), [Studies in Conflict & Terrorism](#))

In January 2017, a suspected far-right extremist gunman opened fire at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City during Sunday evening prayers, killing six people and wounding 19 others. The shooter, 27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette, was reportedly known by Quebec-based activists for holding nationalist, anti-feminist views. He was reported to have been inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. The shooting came on the same weekend that Justin Trudeau announced that refugees would be welcome in Canada, directly following President Donald Trump’s ban on citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. Canada accepted more than 39,000 Syrian refugees in 2016. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In June 2019, the Canadian government designated white supremacist groups Blood & Honour and Combat 18 as terrorist entities. The designations marked the first time Canada had labeled white supremacist groups as terrorists. In February 2021, the government added far-right groups Atomwaffen Division, The Base, Proud Boys, and Russian Imperial Movement. After a Muslim family was struck and killed in a vehicle attack in Ontario in June 2021, Trudeau pledged to combat far-right groups and online hate. (Sources: [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [Reuters](#))

On June 19, 2020, the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) published a report claiming that over 6,600 right-wing extremist social media pages, channels, and accounts have been linked to Canadians. According to a senior researcher at ISD, the June 2020 U.S. protests against systemic racism and police brutality have dramatically increased the number of right-wing sentiments online. According to the study, right-wing extremists have posted content endorsing explicit violence and illegal hate speech. The five subgroups represented among the study are: white supremacists, ethnonationalists, anti-Muslim groups, militia groups, and “incels.” According to the study, ethnonationalists represent the most active users on social media platforms. (Sources: [Global News](#), [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#))

### *Antisemitism*

The Jewish advocacy organization B’nai Brith Canada recorded a record 2,799 antisemitic incidents in Canada in 2021, including 75 violent incidents. That number decreased slightly to 2,769 in 2022, which saw 25 violent incidents. B’nai Brith linked the higher number of violent incidents in 2021 to the Israel-Hamas conflict that May but noted that the 25 violent incidents reported in 2022 were still above the norm for Canada. In 2023, Canada saw another rise in antisemitism linked to the Israel-Hamas war begun that October. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing more than 1,200 people and taking more than 240 hostages into the Gaza Strip. The attack sparked a new war between Hamas and Israel, which began targeting Hamas infrastructure in Gaza. As the war progressed, Canada saw an increase in antisemitism and antisemitic attacks on Jewish institutions. Between October 7 and November 7, Montreal police counted 48 reported hate crimes and hate incidents against the Jewish community and 17 against the Arab-Muslim community. In 2022, by contrast, Montreal police tallied 72 hate crimes and incidents against all groups for the entire year. (Sources: [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [NPR](#))

Montreal saw a spike in incidents shortly after the start of the war. During an October 28, 2023, “Stop the Genocide in Gaza” protest in Montreal in response to the war, Imam Adil Charkaoui led a prayer chant to “exterminate the Zionists.” Speaking with a microphone from a balcony, Charkaoui

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told the gathered crowd, “Allah, take care of these Zionist aggressors. Allah, take care of the enemies of the people of Gaza. Allah, identify them all, then exterminate them. And don’t spare any of them.” He then said, “Allah, count every one of them, and kill them all, and do not exempt even one of them.” Charkaoui posted video of his speech on Facebook, Instagram, and X, formerly Twitter. The Stop the Genocide in Gaza protest was organized by the Palestinian Youth Movement, which reportedly praised Hamas’s October 7 attack. A few days after Charkaoui called for the extermination of Zionists, incendiary devices were left at the Beth Tikvah synagogue and the nearby Federation CJA building in Montreal’s suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeau on November 6. No injuries were reported. Police found broken bottles and burn marks on the synagogue’s front door. Jewish communal leaders in Quebec linked the attacks to the Israel-Hamas war. Overnight on November 8-9, shots were fired at the Talmud Torah Elementary School and the Yeshiva Gedola-Merkaz HaTorah school in Montreal’s Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough. Police found bullet holes in the sides of the buildings, but no significant property damage or injuries were reported. In response to the attacks, police increased their presence around Jewish institutions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemned “antisemitic violence in the strongest possible terms.” Education Minister Bernard Drainville called the attacks on the schools “a form of terrorism.” (Sources: [National Post](#), [Montreal Gazette](#), [Montreal Gazette](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#))

### *Incel Movement*

On May 20, 2020, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) released a report that officially recognized violent misogyny as a form of ideological extremism. According to the CSIS, violent extremists and terrorists are divided into three categories: religiously-motivated, politically motivated, and ideologically motivated. The report was released a day after an alleged member of the incel movement was charged with terrorism offenses for killing one woman and wounding another in a Toronto attack in February 2020. “Incels” are self-described “involuntary celibates” who adhere to an ideology of violent misogyny. Incels surfaced throughout online forums around the mid-2010s and advocated for violence against women, influencing over 50 attacks in the United States and Canada. Incel members disseminate their beliefs through online forums such as Reddit, and it is reported that members have been known to also foster ultra conservative alt-right beliefs. Given the hyper-violent beliefs perpetuated by the incel movement, the CSIS has categorized the group as operating in the realm of domestic terrorism. The February attack was the latest in incel-claimed attacks, with the first two taking place in April 2018 and June 2019. (Sources: [Global News](#), [Newsweek](#))

On April 23, 2018, a man drove a van down a busy street in Toronto. The attack killed ten and injured another 16. The suspect, Alek Minassian, was arrested 30 minutes following the attack. According to police, Minassian claimed he was a member of the “incel” movement and that he carried out the attack in retribution for sexual rejection and ridicule by women. On March 10, 2020, Minassian admitted to planning and carrying out the attack. Minassian currently faces 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 of attempted murder. Minassian’s trial date will begin on November 9, 2020. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Global News](#))

On June 3, 2019, a man wielding a knife indiscriminately stabbed a woman and a child at a shopping area in New Sudbury. The victims survived the attack, but are wounded. Police apprehended the suspect, Alexander Stavropoulos, and discovered that he is a member of the “incel” movement. Stavropoulos claimed he was inspired by a previous attack carried out by fellow “incel,” Alek Minassian, in April 2018. On January 13, 2020, Stavropoulos pleaded guilty to two counts of murder and a breach of probation. According to court records, Stavropoulos was previously convicted for a similar attack in downtown Sudbury in April 2018. (Source: [CBC News](#))

### *Foreign Fighters*

By the end of 2018, there were approximately 190 overseas extremists with ties to Canada, according to Public Safety Canada’s 2018 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada. According to the report, the Canadian government is aware of approximately 60 foreign fighters who have since returned to Canada. In November 2016, CSIS Director of Operations Brian Rumig reported that the number of foreign fighters traveling from Canada to conflicts abroad had “leveled off.” According to Public Safety Canada’s 2018 report, Canada has not experienced and does not expect to experience an influx of Canadian foreign fighters returning to Canada. That report found there were fewer Canadians attempting to travel abroad in 2018, though a small number remain committed to fighting abroad for groups such as ISIS or al-Qaeda. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Canadian Security Intelligence Service](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Macleans](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

In response to the terrorist threat, Canada has increasingly imposed peace bonds—a court order requiring an individual to “keep the peace” for up to one year—on radicalized individuals suspected of planning to travel to conflict zones for the purpose of terrorist activities abroad or of intention to wage domestic terror attacks. Those individuals placed under peace bonds are subject to a variety of conditions, including a potential Internet ban. Suspects may also be placed on a terrorist watchlist and denied passport applications or have their valid passports revoked. As crown prosecutor Lynn Décarie has said, “This is a preventive measure, it’s not a charge.” (Sources: [National Post](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

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In addition to joining ISIS abroad, Canadians have also joined al-Qaeda outfits abroad. In February 2013, the CSIS told Parliament that Canadians were involved in every al-Qaeda affiliate group globally. CSIS also warned that these affiliate groups had listed Canada as a target. In January 2013, Algeria's Prime Minister claimed that two Canadians were among [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) terrorists who held an Algerian natural-gas plant and dozens of hostages under siege. The Canadian government confirmed that two young men from Ontario "who had embraced an extremist ideology" died while carrying out the deadly attack in the Algerian desert. Authorities have managed to stop several Canadians before they can join terrorist affiliates overseas. In July 2014, Mohamed Hersi became the first Canadian to be convicted of an attempt to travel abroad to join a terrorist group after attempting to join [al-Shabab](#), al-Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia. (Sources: [CBC](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [CBC](#))

Before traveling abroad to join an extremist or terrorist group abroad, some radicalized Canadians have stopped in northern Alberta to procure jobs at oil sands, using their earnings to finance their terrorist activities. According to an Edmonton police chief, "you can make a whole bunch of money in a very short period of time... and you can do it in relative anonymity." The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed that Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the terrorist behind the Parliament Hill shooting in 2014, had worked at the oil sands before launching his attack. According to police, Zehaf-Bibeau had wanted to fight with extremists in Syria but had been unable to acquire a passport. (Sources: [National Post](#), [CNN](#))

## **Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents**

### *September 2017 Edmonton Ramming Attack*

On September 30, 2017, an assailant in a Chevrolet Malibu drove through a traffic barricade outside a Canadian Football League game at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Alberta. The attacker struck a police officer with the car before exiting and stabbing the officer with a knife. The attacker then escaped on foot. Police discovered an ISIS flag in the car. Later that night, police pulled over a U-Haul at a drunk-driving checkpoint and discovered the driver's license had a similar name as that under which the Malibu was registered. The driver sped off. Police pursued the truck into downtown Edmonton where the driver struck and injured four pedestrians before flipping the truck over. Altogether, five people were injured but no fatalities were reported. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBC News](#))

Police arrested the suspect and identified him as Abdulahi Hasan Sharif, a 30-year-old Somali refugee. Canadian authorities had previously investigated Sharif for extremist views in 2015 after a former coworker reported that he had espoused "genocidal beliefs" about polytheists. But authorities deemed Sharif to not be a threat. After the ramming attack, police charged Sharif with five counts of attempted murder, four counts of criminal flight causing bodily harm, one count of dangerous driving, and one count of possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose. Authorities did not level any terrorism-related charges but said such charges may be added if the investigation warrants. (Sources: [Toronto Star](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#), [CBC News](#))

### *January 2017 Mosque Shooting*

On January 29, 2017, a suspected right-wing extremist carried out a deadly shooting at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Centre in Quebec City during Sunday evening prayers, killing six people and wounding 19 others. The shooter—27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette—was reportedly inspired by anti-immigrant, far-right ideology. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau immediately referred to the incident as a "terrorist attack on Muslims." (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#))

Canadian authorities charged Bissonnette with six counts of first-degree murder and five counts of attempted murder. He was reportedly known by Quebec-based activists for holding nationalist, anti-refugee, anti-feminist views, which he shared on social media. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

### *October 2014 Extremist Attacks*

On October 20, 2014, Quebecer Martin "Ahmad" Couture-Rouleau ran over two soldiers in his car in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu near Montreal, killing one. The Canadian police shot him dead. Couture-Rouleau, a convert to Islam, reportedly drove from the scene of the attack [boasting](#) about "striking in [the] name of Allah." Canadian police claimed that he acted alone. [According](#) to the police, Couture-Rouleau had tried to fight in Syria, but failed, compelling him to bring "terror home instead."



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The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed that Couture-Rouleau had attempted to travel to Turkey in July 2014, but authorities seized his passport. Couture-Rouleau was one of 90 people in Canada on a radicalized watch-list, and Canadian security officials were monitoring him. He had been posting extremist content on various social media profiles for months before the attack. (Sources: [Daily Mail](#), [Just Security](#), [The Star](#), [The Star](#))

On October 22, 2014, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau went on a shooting spree at a national war memorial and a Parliament building in Ottawa. An eyewitness [reported](#) hearing Zehaf-Bibeau yell “for Iraq” before shooting and killing 24 year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo. Parliament security killed Zehaf-Bibeau in a shootout. (Source: [CBC](#))

Zehaf-Bibeau grew up in eastern Canada, and spent time in Libya before moving to western Canada. He had an extensive criminal record and was sympathetic to Islamist radicalism, according to authorities. Then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper blamed ISIS-inspired radicalism for the assault. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Sources claimed that Zehaf-Bibeau was in the process of applying for a passport with the intent to travel to Syria, but that the process was stalled by security measures preventing Canadians from joining extremists overseas. However, Canadian authorities conceded that Zehaf-Bibeau had [not](#) been identified as a security threat prior to the attack. The RCMP was unaware that the perpetrator had been in Ottawa. (Sources: [Globe and Mail](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#))

According to the RCMP, before the attack, Zehaf-Bibeau recorded but did not distribute a video in which he appeared “quite lucid and quite purposeful.” (Source: [New York Times](#))

- **November 27, 2023:** A Molotov cocktail is thrown at the Jewish Community Council of Montreal in Montreal’s Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough, damaging one of the building’s entrances. No injuries are reported. The attack happens hours after a meeting at the JCC on improving security for Jewish institutions. Source: [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#)
- **November 12, 2023:** Shots are fired at the Yeshiva Gedola of Montreal at approximately 5 a.m. No injuries are reported. Authorities find bullet impact marks and bullet shells at the school. Sources: [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), [Reuters](#)
- **November 8, 2023 - November 9, 2023:** Shots are fired overnight at the Talmud Torah Elementary School and the Yeshiva Gedola school in Montreal’s Côte-des-Neiges—Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough. Bullet holes are found in the sides of the buildings. No significant property damage or injuries are reported. Police increase their presence around Jewish institutions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemns “antisemitic violence in the strongest possible terms.” Education Minister Bernard Drainville calls the attacks on the schools “a form of terrorism.” Sources: [Montreal Gazette](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#)
- **November 6, 2023:** Incendiary devices are left at the Beth Tikvah synagogue and the nearby Federation CJA building in Montreal’s suburb of Dollard-des-Ormeau. No injuries are reported. Police find broken bottles and burn marks on the synagogue’s front door. Jewish communal leaders in Quebec link the attacks to the Israel-Hamas war, which started on October 7 with a large-scale Hamas surprise attack on Israeli civilians. Sources: [Montreal Gazette](#), [Montreal Gazette](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#)
- **October 28, 2023:** During a “Stop the Genocide in Gaza” protest in Montreal in response to Israel’s war with Hamas, Imam Adil Charkaoui leads a prayer chant to “exterminate the Zionists.” Speaking with a microphone from a balcony, Charkaoui tells the gathered crowd, “Allah, take care of these Zionist aggressors. Allah, take care of the enemies of the people of Gaza. Allah, identify them all, then exterminate them. And don’t spare any of them.” He then says, “Allah, count every one of them, and kill them all, and do not exempt even one of them.” Charkaoui posts video of his speech on Facebook, Instagram, and X, formerly Twitter. The Stop the Genocide in Gaza protest is organized by the Palestinian Youth Movement, which reportedly praised Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel, which killed more than 1,200 people and sparked the war. Sources: [National Post](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [NPR](#)
- **October 26, 2022:** Canadian police arrest Oumaima Chouay following her return to Montreal after five years in detention at an ISIS detention camp in northern Syria. Chouay was charged with four terrorism-related offenses, including participation in activity of a terrorist group. Chouay reportedly left Canada in 2014 and participated in terrorist activities on behalf of ISIS in Syria until she was arrested in November 2017. Another woman, Kimberly Polman, is also arrested upon her return to Canada from Syria. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **December 18, 2021:** Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi, originally from Edmonton, pleads guilty in a San Diego court to funding ISIS terrorist activities in Syria. From November 2013 to March 2014, Abdullahi provided money to four of his American and Canadian cousins to support their terrorist activities in Syria. Abdullahi was arrested by Canadian authorities in September 2017, and in June 2019, the Alberta Court of Appeal upheld his extradition and turned him over to U.S. authorities later that year. According to the plea agreement, Abdullahi will serve 20 years in prison. Sources: [Global News](#), [U.S. Department of Justice](#)
- **December 10, 2021:** Mohammad Khalifa, known as the voice of ISIS, pleads guilty to terrorism in a Virginia court.

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Khalifa, who is originally from Toronto, admits he executed two Syrian soldiers. Khalifa faces a possible life sentence for charges related to providing material resources to a foreign terrorist organization. Khalifa was captured in Syria in 2019, but the Canadian government has refused to repatriate Canadian ISIS members to stand trial. Khalifa reportedly served prominent roles in the jihadist organization from 2013 until 2019, where he was both a fighter and served as a lead translator in ISIS's propaganda production. Source: [Global News](#)

- **November 23, 2021:** A Canadian woman who returned from a detention center in Syria returns to Canada. Upon her arrival, she is arrested, but does not face any terror charges. The woman appeared in court and was granted a terrorism peace bond that would impose restrictions on her. The woman is the first adult to return to Canada from the Kurdish-run detention centers in Syria. Source: [Global News](#)
- **October 28, 2021:** A Maryland court sentences Patrik Mathews, a Canadian member of the neo-Nazi terrorist group, The Base, to nine years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Mathews was charged for organizing a neo-Nazi plot to instigate a race war in the United States. Source: [CBC News](#)
- **June 6, 2021:** Nathaniel Veltman jumps a curb with his pickup truck in London, Ontario, and strikes a Muslim family of five, killing four and wounding one. He drives off but is arrested soon after and charged with four counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted murder. Police say there is evidence the attack was planned and premeditated and Veltman targeted the family because they were Muslim. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calls the incident a "terrorist attack" and pledges to combat far-right groups and online hate. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 24, 2020 - September 14, 2022:** A 17-year-old boy fatally stabbed a woman and injured another at an erotic massage parlor in Toronto. The assailant allegedly carried out the attack due to a hatred of women and was charged with first-degree murder and attempted murder. On May 20, 2020, Canadian authorities charged the suspect with terror charges, representing the first time that police have treated an incel-inspired attack as terrorism. The next day, Canada's spy agency identified "violent misogyny" as a form of ideologically motivated extremism. On September 14, 2022, the perpetrator appeared at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice where he pleaded guilty to killing one woman and trying to kill another on behalf of the incel movement. However, the plea does not cover the terrorism charges that were issued months after the attack. Sources: [CBC News](#), [The Globe and Mail](#)
- **February 21, 2020:** A man wielding a steel hammer violently attacks and kills a random victim, Annie Hang-Kam Chiu, in Toronto. The perpetrator, Saad Akhtar, had carried two notes pledging allegiance to ISIS and intended to kill as many people as possible. One of the notes, which he placed next to Chiu's body stated, "This is for the Islamic State, & all the crimes against Muslims. God is great!" After murdering Chiu, Akhtar turned himself into Toronto Police 22 Division. On August 26, 2021, Akhtar was found guilty of murder and terrorism and was sentenced to life in prison with no eligibility for parole. Source: [Global News](#)
- **June 3, 2019 - January 13, 2020:** A man wielding a knife indiscriminately stabs a woman and a child at a shopping area in New Sudbury. The victims survive the attack, but are wounded. Police apprehend the suspect, Alexander Stavropoulos, and discover that he is a member of the "incel" movement. Stavropoulos claims he was inspired by a previous attack carried out by fellow "incel," Alek Minassian, in April 2018. On January 13, 2020, Stavropoulos pleads guilty to two counts of murder and a breach of probation. According to court records, Stavropoulos was previously convicted for a similar attack in downtown Sudbury in April 2018. Source: [CBC News](#)
- **July 22, 2018:** Faisal Hussain fires a pistol at crowds of people dining at outdoor restaurants on Toronto's popular Danforth Avenue, killing two and wounding 13. After a firefight with police, officers discover the gunman dead in a nearby alley. Hussain's family says he suffered from mental health problems his entire life. Two days later, Toronto police declare the shooting unrelated to national security, but ISIS claims responsibility hours later through its Amaq News Agency. The Canadian government denied ISIS's claim. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [National Post](#), [Associated Press](#), [ABC News](#), [Public Safety Canada](#)
- **April 23, 2018:** A man drives a van down a busy street in Toronto. The attack kills ten and injures another 16. The suspect, Alek Minassian, was arrested 30 minutes following the attack. According to police, Minassian claimed he was a member of the "incel" movement and that he carried out the attack in retribution for sexual rejection and ridicule by women. On March 10, 2020, Minassian admitted to planning and carrying out the attack. Minassian currently faces 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 of attempted murder. Minassian's trial date will begin on November 9, 2020. Sources: [CNN](#), [Global News](#)
- **September 30, 2017:** An assailant in a Chevrolet Malibu drives through a traffic barricade outside a Canadian Football League game at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton, Alberta. The attacker strikes a police officer with the car before exiting and stabbing the officer with a knife. The attacker then escapes on foot. Police discover an ISIS flag in the car. Later that night, police pull over a U-Haul at a drunk-driving checkpoint and discover the driver's license has a similar name as that under which the Malibu is registered. The driver speeds off. Police pursue the truck into downtown Edmonton where the driver strikes and injures four pedestrians before flipping the truck over. Police arrest the suspect and identify him as a 30-year-old Somali refugee whom Canadian authorities had previously investigated for extremist views but deemed to not be a threat. Altogether, five people are injured but no fatalities are reported. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [CBC News](#)
- **January 29, 2017:** A suspected right-wing extremist—27-year-old Alexandre Bissonnette—opens fire at a mosque in Quebec City, killing six people and wounding eight others. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau refers to the incident as a "terrorist attack on Muslims." Bissonnette is arrested and charged with six counts of first-degree murder and five counts of attempted murder. Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#)
- **August 10, 2016:** Canadian police in southwestern Ontario shoot ISIS supporter Aaron Driver after he detonates a homemade explosive in the back of a taxi.

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He dies shortly thereafter. Driver had reportedly planned an imminent attack on a crowded urban area, and had pledged allegiance to ISIS Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a video provided to Canadian police by the FBI. ISIS's Amaq News agency claims responsibility for the explosion soon after it occurs. Sources: [CBC News](#), [National Post](#), [SITE Intelligence](#)

- **April 25, 2016:** The Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group beheads Canadian citizen John Ridsdel, reportedly hours after the deadline for his ransom expires.  
Prime Minister Trudeau calls the incident an “act of cold blooded murder.” Ridsdel had been held by the Abu Sayyaf Group since September 2015. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **March 14, 2016:** Canadian citizen Ayanle Hassan Ali is suspected of stabbing two Canadian soldiers at a military recruiting center in Toronto. Ali tells police, “Allah told me to do this. Allah told me to come here and kill people.” Authorities are reluctant to label the incident a terror attack. Toronto’s police chief Mark Saunders says that “one statement” does not determine a motive. Sources: [CNN](#), [CBC](#)
- **October 22, 2014:** Canadian Michael Zehaf-Bibea goes on a shooting spree at Parliament hill in Ottawa, killing 24 year-old soldier Cpl. Nathan Carillo.  
Parliament security shoot Zehaf-Bibea dead. Prime Minister Stephen Harper blames ISIS-inspired extremism for the attack. Sources: [CBS](#), [New York Times](#)
- **October 20, 2014:** Quebecer Martin “Ahmad” Couture-Rouleau kills one Canadian soldier by running him over with a car in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, near Montreal.  
The Canadian police shoot him dead. Couture-Rouleau was a convert to Islam and on a list of known radicals. Source: [Daily Mail](#)
- John Muttall and Amanda Korody were arrested and charged with conspiring to bomb the British Columbia Legislature Building during Canada Day festivities.  
The Canadian police reported that the plan was inspired by al-Qaeda ideology. Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Huffington Post](#)
- Chiheb Essaghaier and Raed Jaser were arrested and charged with conspiring to attack a passenger train traveling between Toronto and New York.  
The pair supposedly received support from al-Qaeda. This was the first known al-Qaeda plan or attack within Canada. Source: [The Globe and Mail](#)
- Canadian police arrested 18 individuals associated with a homegrown extremist cell plotting to blow up the Parliament building, kill the Prime Minister, and take members of parliament hostage.  
The individuals had assembled an improvised explosive device three times stronger than the bomb used in the Oklahoma bombing, which killed 168 people. Known as the “Toronto 18,” the group consisted of radicalized men, all of who were residents of Canada, and most were Canadian citizens. Five of the individuals were teenagers. Officials said they had trained together in a camp inside Canada, and that they were inspired by al-Qaeda ideology. According to authorities, the group’s members were “motivated by an interpretation of Islam which required an attack upon the near enemy, including the Canadian military and Parliament.” Sources: [Dawn CTV News](#), [National Post](#)
- A Jewish elementary school was firebombed in Montreal.  
A note left at the school said the attack was in retaliation for the Israeli army’s killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin in March. Sleiman Elmerhebi, 19, was arrested and later found guilty. Source: [CBC](#)
- Ahmed Ressam was arrested and convicted of planning to bomb Los Angeles International airport.  
The attack was planned as part of the 2000 millennium attacks. He hid explosives in his car, which he took on a ferry from Victoria, British Columbia, to Port Angeles, Washington. Authorities arrested him as he attempted to leave the ferry. Ressam has lived in Canada since 1994 where he was given political asylum under false pretenses. From March 1998 to February 1999, he trained in an al-Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. Ressam claimed that it was during this training period that he began to plan to attack U.S. targets. Source: [Frontline](#)

## Domestic Counter-Extremism

### *Legislation*

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks against the United States, Canada has escalated its counter-extremism efforts by passing several bills into law—including the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001 and the Combatting Terrorism Act of 2013—that have influenced Canadian counterterrorism policy.

In response to the 9/11 attacks, the Canadian government passed Bill C-36, or the “Anti-Terrorism Act,” which received Royal Assent on December 18, 2001. The bill resulted in the expansion of the Criminal Code, adding “Part II.1- Terrorism” as an addendum to the document. Part II.1 contains numerous provisions regarding the financing of terrorism, including the freezing and forfeiture of property of property. It also establishes a list of designated terrorist entities. (Sources: [Canadian Department of Justice](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

Trudeau’s government plans to ensure that the CSIS acts within the bounds of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms, similar to the United States Constitution.



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In April 2013, Bill S-7, or the “Combatting Terrorism Act,” was passed to amend the Criminal Code. The enactment deems that an individual who boards or attempts to board an airplane to carry out a terrorist attack as defined under section 83.18(1) of the Criminal Code “is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than 10 years.” According to then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the Combatting Terrorism Act was passed to protect against Canadian foreign fighters returning home to carry out terrorist attacks. Although Canada has formally criminalized foreign terrorist fighting, as well as committing, financing, and conspiring to commit acts of terrorism, it is especially difficult to prosecute foreign fighters under Canadian law, due to the high burden of proof needed to show that Canadians who traveled to foreign conflict zones did, indeed, join up with terrorist organizations or commit terrorist acts abroad. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [UNSC Meeting Report](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In July 2014, Mohamed Hersi became the first Canadian to be convicted for offenses related to Criminal Code section 83.18(1). Hersi was attempting to join al-Shabab in Somalia. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [CBC](#))

In September 2014, the Canadian government announced it would invalidate the passport of any Canadian citizen traveling overseas with the intention of joining an extremist group. Although the government’s right to terminate a passport has existed since 1981, the conflict in Syria and Iraq has given Canadian authorities new reasons to act. This means that Canadian fighters leaving for foreign conflict zones may effectively be left stranded without the ability to return to Canada or possibly other western countries. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [Reuters](#))

Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-44, dubbed the “Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act,” on February 2, 2015. The law grants the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) increased surveillance capabilities, including expanding operations into regions beyond Canadian borders. The bill also allows CSIS to share information with the group of countries called “Five Eyes,” namely the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. (Sources: [Bill C-44](#), [CBC](#), [New York Times](#))

In May 2015, Canadian Parliament passed Bill C-51, or the “Anti-Terrorism Act” into law. The law grants Canadian police with wide-ranging powers—including preventative arrest—and makes it easier for airport authorities to deny suspected foreign fighters from boarding a plane. The law also strengthens the CSIS’s ability to “disrupt” threats, which might include “providing more information to a would-be terrorist’s family and friends, interfering with a would-be terrorist’s travel plans or intercepting weapons intended for terrorist use.” It also allows more than 100 federal agencies to share Canadians’ personal data, and simplifies the process leading to an individual’s arrest and detainment. The law enables authorities to issue peace bonds based on evidence an individual “may” commit a terror offense, as opposed to the previous standard of issuance that an individual “will” commit a terror offense. Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney celebrated the passage of legislation, declaring, “The [act] will provide our police forces with the tools they need to protect Canadians against serious and evolving threats from terrorist organizations like ISIS.” (Sources: [Globe and Mail](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Before Prime Minister Trudeau took office in November 2015, his party announced its intention to repeal parts of the C-51 bill, including some of the provisions extended to the CSIS. Trudeau’s government plans to ensure that the CSIS acts within the bounds of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms, similar to the United States Constitution. (Sources: [Canada Justice Laws Website](#), [National Post](#), [National Post](#))

Trudeau’s government also plans to establish a multi-party committee designed to oversee every government department and agency. This committee—which would report to the prime minister—would help to expand the review of Canada’s security agencies. The new government also plans to narrow the definition of “terrorist propaganda,” and is expected to call for a review of the anti-terrorism law after three years. (Sources: [Huffington Post](#), [National Post](#))

In June 2019, the Canadian government passed Bill C-59, which granted new powers to Canada’s intelligence apparatuses. The bill authorized Canadian security to deploy cyberattacks if ordered by the prime minister and the cabinet. These attacks could be used to disrupt an impending terror attack. The bill also created the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency (NSIRA) and a new intelligence commissioner to act as a watchdog over Canada’s national security agencies. According to the Canadian government, NSIRA will “ensure that Canada’s national security agencies are complying with the law and that their actions are reasonable and necessary.” (Sources: [CBC](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Parliament of Canada](#))

In January 2020, Trudeau’s government announced plans to create a new office of Director of Terrorism Prosecutions to focus on terrorism prosecutions. Trudeau charged the ministers of justice and public safety with coordinating “efforts to prosecute terror suspects to the fullest extent of the law” and creating the new office. The creation of the new office was delayed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Sources: [National Post](#), [CBC](#))

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Included in Canada's Criminal Code is a list of designated terrorist entities. In February 2021, Canada designated 13 additional groups as terrorist organizations, raising the list to a total of 73 entities. The newly designated groups included three al-Qaeda affiliates and five ISIS affiliates, the Kashmiri Islamist group Hizbul Mujahideen, and far-right groups Atomwaffen Division, The Base, the Proud Boys, and Russian Imperial Movement. Entities designated under the Criminal Code are reassessed every five years. When the government added the 13 new entities in February 2021, it also reassessed seven groups and determined their continued inclusion in the list. Those groups were al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Al-Shabaab, ISIS – Khorasan Province, Al-Ashtar Brigades, and Fatemiyoun Division. Canada designated four additional terrorist entities on June 25, 2021. The entities included the Three Percenter movement—a U.S. far-right anti-government group—and the U.S.-based, white nationalist Aryan Strikeforce. American neo-Nazi James Mason was also designated due to providing ideological and tactical instruction on how to operate a terrorist group to listed entities. Also included in the designations was the ISIS affiliate, Islamic State-Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC). (Sources: [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#))

### *Anti-Hate Bill (Bill C-36)*

On February 4, 2022, Diversity Minister Ahmed Hussen announced that the Canadian government would reintroduce a law combating racial and religious hatred, including online hate. Bill C-36 was first introduced in June 23, 2021, but was tabled when the September 2021 federal election was called. If passed, the new version of Bill C-36 would create a new type of peace bond. Specifically, a person who fears they could be a target of a hate crime could apply for the bond as a way of deterring a person from committing a hate crime. If breached, penalties would include up to two years in prison. Critics of the bill when it was first introduced claimed there were problems relating to freedom of speech and that it would be difficult to enforce. (Sources: [Jurist](#), [Government of British Columbia](#), [Global News](#), [Parliament of Canada](#), [CBC](#))

### *Security Agencies*

Canada has a number of authorities and agencies responsible for preventing acts of violent extremism. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is Canada's police force that operates at the national, federal and provincial levels. The RCMP is responsible for preventing crime, enforcing laws and contributing to national security, among other mandates. (Source: [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

The RCMP runs various programs, including the Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSET), which are responsible for detecting and preventing potential threats to the Canadian public. INSET were formed in 2002 in response to the 9/11 attacks, and aim to share and analyze intelligence between the RCMP and the CSIS. INSET coordinated the 2013 arrests in which four individuals were arrested and charged with conspiring to carry out a terror attack. INSET were also responsible for arresting suspects involved in the "Toronto 18" plot in 2006. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Royal Canadian Mounted Police](#))

In April 2014, the RCMP launched the High Risk Traveller Case Management system to identify "high risk travellers" and disrupt their plans to reach conflict zones such as Syria. (Source: [National Post](#))

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) is Canada's primary intelligence service, responsible for investigating threats, analyzing information and producing intelligence. According to the CSIS's [website](#), the service's top priority is "countering terrorist violence." The service "strives to prevent terrorist acts from being planned in Canada, from occurring on Canadian territory and from affecting Canadian citizens and assets abroad." (Source: [Canadian Security Intelligence Service](#))

The CSIS is responsible for the Security Screening program, which prevents individuals who pose a threat from entering Canada or gaining Canadian citizenship. "Security Screening serves as a first line of defence against both extremism and terrorism," and is practiced both within Canada and "through its liaison efforts abroad." (Source: [CSIS](#))

On May 20, 2020, the CSIS released a report that officially recognized violent misogyny as a form of ideological extremism. According to the CSIS, violent extremists and terrorists are divided into three categories: religiously-motivated, politically motivated, and ideologically motivated. The report was released a day after an alleged member of the incel movement was charged with terrorism offenses for killing one woman and wounding another in a Toronto attack in February 2020. "Incels" are self-described "involuntary celibates" who formed from an online subculture that surfaced in the mid-2010s. Their hyper-misogynistic ideology advocates for violence against women and other people who are deemed to be in successful personal relationships. The movement's hateful creed has led to over 50 attacks across the United States and Canada. The first of incel-claimed attacks in Canada was in April 2018, followed by one in June 2019 and the most recent being the February attack. (Source: [Global News](#))

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Both the CSIS and the RMCP are active members of Canada's Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (ITAC), a cooperative initiative of intelligence sharing between more than a dozen departments of Canada's legal and intelligence community. The ITAC, originally named the "Integrated Threat Assessment Center," was launched in October 2004. It was formed directly from a measure in the Canadian government's "Securing An Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy," a strategic framework and action plan designed in April 2004 to prevent current and future threats. The ITAC was renamed in 2011 to renew its focus on terrorist threats to Canadian interests. (Source: [Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre](#))

In February 2011, the U.S. and Canada issued an action plan called *Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness*. The action plan coordinates information regarding land and air border crossing, which improves border management and support national security operations. According to the website, the action plan improves "the screening of passengers boarding aircraft and the ability of law enforcement partners to conduct timely investigations into extremist travel abroad." (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

### *Law Enforcement*

Canada has deployed its law enforcement agencies to arrest, monitor, and charge terrorist suspects. In 2016, Canada continued to take action against terrorist suspects, including Kevin Omar Mohamed, arrested in March 2016 on weapons-related charges, and further accused of attempting to leave the country to join al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front. Mohamed had been subject to peace bond restrictions as a result of his terrorist-related activity. Tevis Gonyou McLean was similarly subject to peace bonds when he was charged in December 2016 with issuing threats and attempt to bomb police headquarters in Ottawa. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

In 2017, Canada arrested and charged far-right extremist Alexandre Bissonnette, after Bissonnette opened fire at a mosque in Quebec, killing six people and wounding 19 others. Bissonnette was not charged with terrorism in relation to the incident, but was charged with six counts of first-degree murder and five of attempted murder. In June 2017, shortly after a Canadian-Tunisian man carried out stabbing attack at the United States' Bishop Airport in Michigan, Canadian police were quick to coordinate with their U.S. counterparts, raiding an apartment in Montreal in connection to the attack. The suspect, Amor Ftouhi, was charged in the United States with violence at an international airport and interference with airport security but was not immediately charged with terrorism-related offenses. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [ABC News](#))

### *Initiatives to Counter Extremism*

The Canadian government has launched various research projects aimed at reducing extremist radicalization and violence within Canada. In June 2011, the government launched the Kanishka Project, created to provide funding to conferences, publications, and research centers aimed towards countering terrorism, including "preventing and countering violent extremism." (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

The Canadian Safety and Security Program, a federally funded program, also contributes to the body of research regarding violent extremism in Canada. The program's mandate is to "anticipate, prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters, serious accidents, crime, and terrorism." The [Safety and Security Program](#) supports research primarily in the science and technology domain, including the need to better understand the psychological and behavioral aspects of domestic violent extremism. (Source: [Defence Research and Development Canada](#))

The Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security was created in 2005 to explore radicalization and violent extremism and their effects on Canada. The Roundtable brings together community leaders to engage the government and Canadian communities in long-term dialogue on security matters and the diversity of Canada's democratic and pluralistic community. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

In 2017, the Canadian government launched the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and the Prevention of Violence (Canada Centre) to counter radicalization and violence. In December 2018, the Canada Centre launched the National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence. The strategy outlines the Canadian government's approach and key priorities in countering and preventing radicalization to violence, focusing on explaining radicalization, building and sharing knowledge, addressing online radicalization, and supporting interventions. The center specifically targets its efforts on early prevention, at-risk prevention, and disengagement from violent ideologies. Early prevention targets the general public to prevent harmful behavior. At-risk prevention targets individuals and groups in the early stages of radicalization, while disengagement targets those already involved in ideologically motivated violence. The Canadian government recognizes that the prevention of radicalization is a relatively new area of focus for it and thus seeks to create and build partnerships and networks across Canada to share best practices and knowledge. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

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The Canada Centre oversees the Community Resilience Fund to “support research and programs to build the evidence base along with local capability and capacity to counter radicalization to violence in Canada.” The fund has \$7 million (Canadian) available for new and existing program in 2019-2020. Using the Community Resilience Fund, the center employs multi-agency intervention programs drawing from police, health and social services, and the education sector to manage radicalized individuals. The Canada Centre funds multiple organizations across the country that provide radicalization interventions. These organizations comprise NGOs, academics, social workers, police, and communal organizations that work to document and counter violent radicalization through personal interventions encompassing mental health and other forms of counseling and social services. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

The Canada Centre seeks to engage Canadian youth as well as tech companies to recognize and combat online radicalization. In May 2019, in the wake of the March 2019 attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and other global leaders in adopting the Christchurch Call to Action, a global pledge to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online. The following month, the Canadian government launched two new initiatives to counter the spread of online extremism. The government committed to provide up to \$1 million (Canadian) to Tech Against Terrorism, a U.N. initiative working with the tech industry against online extremism. (Sources: [Public Safety Canada](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#), [Tech Against Terrorism](#))

The Canadian government remains concerned that Canadian foreign fighters may return to the country to facilitate attacks or inspire others. As such, the government is committed to arresting and prosecuting any Canadian involved in terrorism or violent extremism. The Canada Centre also funds intervention programs for Canadian foreign fighters and their families. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

### *Countering Terrorism Financing*

Canada is a member of various international bodies designed to reduce the threats from money-laundering and terrorism financing, including bodies like the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering. Canada’s financial intelligence unit—the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada—is also a part of the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units. The U.S. State Department has described Canada’s anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism financing (CTF) efforts as “rigorous.” The FATF, in its 2016 report, noted that Canadian authorities have a “good understanding” of Canadian AML/CTF law. However, the FATF notes that high-risk areas like legal counsels, legal firms, and Quebec notaries are not addressed within the confines of existing Canadian AML/CTF law, characterizing the issue as a “significant loophole in Canada’s AML/CFT framework.” (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#))

## **International Counter-Extremism**

### *ISIS*

Canada actively participated in airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria under former Prime Minister Steven Harper. The country’s contribution to the U.S.-led coalition, dubbed Operation Impact, was launched in September 2014 when Canada sent 100 Canadian Special Forces to Iraq in an advisory capacity. Canadian airstrikes began in Iraq in early November 2014 and in Syria in late March 2015. (Sources: [CBC](#), [BBC News](#), [CBC](#), [BBC News](#))

The country’s military strategy toward the terror group shifted in November 2015 when Justin Trudeau assumed office and immediately announced his intention to pull Canadian jets from the coalition. Trudeau withdrew all jets in February 2016 but left three aircraft in the Middle East and drastically increased the number of Special Operating Forces in the region, for the purposes of advising and assisting Kurdish forces to liberate territory from ISIS. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) ended airstrike operations in Iraq and Syria in March 2016. Since 2016, Canada’s Operation Impact has acted as part of a national strategy to provide security, stabilization, humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic engagement in Iraq, Syria, and the region. Canada provides training, advice, and assistance to the Iraqi security forces, and support to the Global Coalition and NATO. Canada has committed Operation Impact forces to aid the NATO mission in Iraq through at least March 2021. Since 2016, Canada has contributed more than \$2.1 billion (Canadian) toward security, stabilization, and humanitarian and development assistance in Iraq and Syria, as well as to mitigate the effects of the conflict on Jordan and Lebanon. (Sources: [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [CBC](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CBC News](#), [Toronto Sun](#), [Star](#), [Guardian](#))

In the fall of 2018, Canada took command of the newly formed NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), a non-combat mission to strengthen Iraq’s military education system, reform the country’s security sector, and improve training of Iraq’s security forces. Canada assumed the leadership of NMI in

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2018 for a one-year period. Canada committed up to 250 military personnel, aircraft, and armored vehicles. Canada accepted a second one-year leadership role of NMI through November 2020. In April 2020, Canada temporarily redeployed a “significant” number of its forces from Iraq to Kuwait in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. According to Canadian officials, the pandemic left fewer Iraqi forces available for training. (Sources: [Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#), [Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#), [NATO Mission Iraq](#), [Government of Canada](#), [CBC](#))

After the creation of ISIS’s physical caliphate in 2014, Canada engaged in espionage to infiltrate ISIS smuggling networks bringing foreign fighters into ISIS-held territory in Syria. In August 2022, the BBC reported a Canadian intelligence agent had smuggled British ISIS bride [Shamima Begum](#) into Syria through an ISIS smuggling network based out of Raqqa, Syria. When Begum initially left Britain in 2015 with school friends Amira Abase and Khadiza Sultana, they traveled to Istanbul, Turkey. At the Istanbul bus station, they met Mohammed Al Rasheed, who facilitated their journey to ISIS-controlled Syria. According to the BBC, Rasheed had smuggled multiple Britons into Syria for at least eight months while sharing their passport information with Canadian authorities through the Canadian embassy in Jordan. Rasheed often photographed identification papers or filmed travelers on his phone. He reportedly mapped the locations of the homes of Western foreign fighters in Syria. He also collected IP addresses and the locations of Internet cafes in ISIS-held territory. Turkish authorities arrested Rasheed in Sanliurfa days after he smuggled Begum into Syria. Rasheed claimed he had gone to the Canadian embassy in Jordan in 2013 to seek asylum. The embassy allegedly told him they would grant him asylum if he collected information on ISIS. (Source: [BBC News](#))

### *Other Foreign Military Engagements*

Since 2011, Canadian forces have been stationed throughout the Sahel region of Africa as part of Exercise Flintlock, a counterterrorism initiative designed to bring stability to North and West Africa and reduce sanctuary for extremist organizations. Canadian forces have trained African forces in reconnaissance, land navigation, marksmanship and other military skills. The exercise aids in the campaign against extremist Islamic militants who have taken over a large swathe of Mali. (Sources: [United States Africa Command](#), [Public Safety Canada](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

Canada participated in the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan to help in the defense of the Afghan government and forces. For more than 12 years, Canadian forces trained Afghan national security forces in developing its leaders and establishing “enduring capacity in order to enable accountable Afghan-led security.” Canada’s engagement also focused on promoting regional diplomacy and delivering humanitarian assistance. The deployment officially ended in March 2014. Since the beginning of the mission, more than 40,000 Canadian forces have been deployed to Afghanistan. (Sources: [National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces](#), [CBC](#), [National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

As of April 2020, Canada was active in 27 international missions in South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific. In addition to Operation Impact in Iraq and Syria, Canadian forces are committed to five peacekeeping operations around the Middle East:

- Operation Calumet: Canada participates in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. Canada has participated in MFO since 1985.
- Operation Artemis: Canada provides maritime security and counter-terrorism operations in the Arabian Sea. Deployments include the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, and the Indian Ocean.
- Operation Foundation: CAF personnel work with U.S. and other international forces to combat terrorism. CAF personnel are deployed in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. Operation Foundation is rooted in Canada’s 2001 Operation Apollo, the country’s first contribution to the international campaign against terrorism.
- Operation Jade: Canada has contributed to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) since 1954 to monitor armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Operation JADE is Canada’s longest running overseas commitment.
- Operation Proteus: Canadian forces contribute to the work of the Office of the United States Security Coordinator to build the capacity of Palestinian Authority Security Forces.

(Sources: [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#), [Government of Canada](#))

### *Iran*

On October 3, 2022, Canada imposed sanctions on Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and affiliated individuals in response to “gross human rights violations that have been committed in Iran, including its systematic persecution of women and in particular, the egregious actions committed by Iran’s so-called ‘Morality Police,’ which led to the death of Mahsa Amini while under their custody” in September 2022. Amini died three days after she was detained by Tehran’s morality police, the Guidance Patrol, for allegedly wearing a hijab improperly. In response, protests



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erupted across the country against Iran's theocratic rule. Imposed under the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations, the new sanctions targeted IRGC officials Major-General Mohammed-Hossein Bagheri; Major-General Hossein Salami; and Quds Force commander Ismail Ghaani; as well as the IRGC's Cyber Defense Command. Canada also sanctioned Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS); Seyyed Mohammed Saleh Hashemi Golpayegani, secretary of Iran's Headquarters for the Office of Enjoining Right and Forbidding Evil; Iran's Morality Police; and Mohammad Rostami Cheshmeh Gachi, head of the Morality Police. Canada further added to the sanctions, and on October 7, Ottawa announced that it would ban the top 50 percent—around 10,000 officers and senior members—of IRGC's leadership from entering the country. Additionally, the country promised more targeted sanctions due to Tehran's treatment of women and the 2020 downing of a Ukrainian civilian airliner. According to Ottawa, 138 of the 176 victims had ties to Canada. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Government of Canada](#))

Canada continued to sanction against the Iranian regime and affiliated individuals on October 31, 2022. The sanctioned individuals and entities were targeted due to their ongoing role in committing human rights violations and continuing to destabilize peace and security in Iran. Among those included in the sanctions list were Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF); Hossein Rahimi, the police commander of Tehran; Ahmad Fazelian, Iran's Deputy Attorney General; Asadollah Jafari, the head of the judicial administration in North Khorasan province; and Seyed Morteza Mousavi, the deputy head of the judicial administration in Mazandaran Province. As of October 31, 2022, Canada has imposed sanctions on 93 Iranian individuals and 179 Iranian entities, including the IRGC and the regime's security, intelligence, and economic apparatus. (Source: [Government of Canada](#))

### *Diplomatic and Financial Endeavors*

The Canadian government works on terrorism issues with the United Nations, NATO, the G-7, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, and Interpol. Canadian expertise also contributed to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) policing manual for countering violent extremism, released in February 2014. (Sources: [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

The Canadian government is a founding member of both the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) as well as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF has recommended that its member nations adopt various measures including the criminalization of terrorist financing, the freezing of terrorist assets, and policies designed to ensure that terrorists cannot exploit non-governmental organizations. Canada also co-chairs the Sahel Region Capacity-Building Working Group within the GCTF Forum, which stresses the importance of community engagement to counter violent extremism. (Sources: [FATF](#), [Public Safety Canada](#))

Since 2010, Canada has invested more than \$17 million (Canadian) in Interpol, which has benefited "more than 3,000 law enforcement officials globally." The investments also supported regional operations in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Americas. (Source: [Public Safety Canada](#))

### *Border Security*

Canada works with closely with the United States to ensure border security between the two countries, particularly under the umbrella of the bilateral Beyond the Border Initiative and Cross Border Crime Forum. Canada also works to protect its borders through advanced passenger screening methods at international transit points, including biographic and biometric screening. To further screen passengers, Canada checks passenger names and other details against terrorist watchlists, and engages in information sharing with other countries. Canadian agencies tasked with border security include Canada's Border Enforcement Security Task Force and its Integrated Border Enforcement Teams. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

## **Public Opinion**

A 2019 Ipsos Public Affairs poll of 1,002 Canadians on behalf of Global News found that almost half of Canadians (47 percent) believed racism is a serious problem in Canada. This represents a decline of 22 percent since 1992. Conversely, 49 percent believed racism is not a major problem in Canada. A majority (59 percent) believed Muslims to be the most likely target of racism, which remained consistent from 2017, while 26 percent believed it had become acceptable to be prejudiced against Muslims or Arabs. A net of 30 percent of Canadians agreed that Muslims follow sharia law over Canadian law. Asked about Jewish stereotypes, 19 percent agreed that Jews control the media and finance. While 56 percent disagreed, 24 percent stated they were uncertain. A majority (76 percent) disagreed that facts about the Holocaust have been exaggerated, but 11 percent of Canadians agreed with the statement and 13 percent said they were uncertain. According to the poll, 37 percent of respondents agreed that immigration posed a "threat" to white Canadians. A minority of Canadians believed that over the past five years it had become more acceptable to discriminate against Muslims (26 percent), immigrants (23 percent), refugees (21 percent), Jews (15 percent), East Indians (15 percent), Aborigines

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(13 percent), Asians (13 percent), blacks (12 percent), and Hispanics (10 percent). (Source: [Ipsos](#))

A 2018 poll by the Department of National Defence found that only 4 percent of Canadians considered ISIS among the biggest threats to Canada's national security, compared with 19 percent in 2016. While Canadians did not appear worried about ISIS specifically, the 2018 poll found that a majority (29 percent) considered terrorism to be the biggest security threat to Canada. This marked a decrease from 40 percent in 2016. (Sources: [Roland Paris](#), [Library and Archives Canada](#))

In 2017, a slight majority of Canadians considered ISIS a national security threat, with 55 percent characterizing ISIS as a "major threat" to the country and 34 percent characterizing ISIS as a "minor threat," according to polls from the Pew Research Center. In August 2016, polls released by market research firm Ipsos found that 60 percent of Canadians feel like the government is doing enough to protect them from terrorism, and that 61 percent of Canadians feel safe in Canada. That same month, an Ipsos poll found that nearly half—or 47 percent—of Canadians feel desensitized to news of terrorist attacks and violence. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [Ipsos](#), [Ipsos](#))