



Muslim leaders want 'radical elements' removed

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Muslim religious leaders promise to report any suspicious behaviour from their followers to authorities and abide by a zero-tolerance policy against preaching hatred in the wake of last week's terror arrests.

Leaders representing more than 30 mosques and Muslim organizations throughout Canada gathered in Toronto on Saturday to deliver the message -- and remind Canadians not to discriminate against Muslims.

The leaders admitted there are pockets of radical fundamentalists within their community who believe in violence, but said co-operation by the Muslim community led to the arrests of 17 terror suspects.

The alleged bombing plot in southern Ontario was a wakeup call to Muslims, leaders said.

"They were sleeping and didn't realize it was a real issue," said Ahmed Amiruddin, who taught at a Mississauga mosque where some of the accused men worshipped.

"They would sometimes appear in the mosque with military fatigues, and there's more than one witness for this. Many people have seen them," he said.

"The only thing that concerned me is they tried to shut themselves out to anything we tried to preach to them," added Asad Dean of the Canadian Council of Ahl Sunnah wal Jamaah.

"Canadian youth of Muslim faith have been unduly influenced by radical thought," said Yasmin Ratansi, a Liberal MP.

The alleged ringleader, 43-year-old Qayyum Abdul Jamal, was a role model for teenagers at the Al-Rahman Islamic Centre in Mississauga, which was also attended by six of the other terror suspects.

"Let's make sure that we take a second look at who we are allowing to come and preach, what books are allowed into our centres," said Dean.

"We will have to become more vigilant as well in the Muslim community, that if we see any signs of this that we immediately pay attention and take action to address this issue."

The Council of Ahl Sunna wal Jamaah (CCAS) blamed the Toronto terror plot, as well of terror attacks in London and Madrid, on a small minority of Muslims who subscribe to a "vile doctrine of literalistic ideology."

The group emphasized the "vast majority" of Canadian Muslims follow a moderate form of Islam.

"The (CCAS) is convinced that the time has come for Muslim Canadians to adopt a different approach in view of the reality it now finds itself in," said spokesman.

Liberal MP Wajid Khan said he is tired of hearing Muslim speakers emphasizing that Islam is not to blame for the arrests.

"Nobody is saying it is (Islam)," he said. "Why are we talking about these 17 people based on faith?"

"Let's not take the temperature up so high," he said. "There is an issue and we have to address it as a nation."

At a Saturday night speech in Toronto to Indo-Canadian business leaders, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said terror threats must not divide Canadians.

"Let us never forget that such people today, as in the past, make use of symbols of culture and religion but represent neither," he said.

"They represent nothing but hatred."

With a report from CTV's Denelle Balfour and files from The Canadian Press

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