

# Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Response Conference

Final Report

February 12-13, 2015

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Midaynta Community Services and the Somali Action Alliance Educational Fund teamed up to deliver the *Broken Dreams* Project on violent extremism. The documentary film, *Broken Dreams*, tells the story of Somali immigrants in Minneapolis, Minnesota, who escaped the civil war in Somali over twenty years ago, only to find their children taken from them by terrorist organizations who brainwashed them. In particular, the film showcases the plight of the families whose sons had joined Al-Shabab. The social issues and some of the stories raised in the film are common to Somalis in both Canada, the United States of America and throughout the Diaspora. As such, one of the primary objectives was to dialogue, and provide through opportunities for Somali communities in Ontario and Minnesota to learn from one another, and share strategies for community and policy mobilization around countering violent extremism.

From February 24, 2014 to March 1, 2014, we delivered a series of screenings followed by facilitated discussions. On Tuesday February 25, 2014, we held a Breakfast Screening and Roundtable Discussion for educators, community and faith leaders and law enforcement at the Jane Street Hub in Toronto. This was followed by a Special Youth Forum on February 28, 2014 and an Open Community Forum on March 1, 2014. In Ottawa, we did a Screening and Roundtable Discussion in Parliament Hill in the morning of Thursday, February 27th, 2014, followed by an

Open Community Forum at the Heron Road Community Centre later in the afternoon. The purpose of the *Broken Dreams* project was to discuss violent radicalization, a seldom discussed aspect of the crisis facing Somali youth, with a focus on the roots of what is leading some of our young people to join violent extremist groups. By opening a discussion with Somali community leaders, local Canadian law enforcement, all levels of Canadian government officials, settlement service agencies, educators and social workers, we wanted to generate strategies to counter the violent extremism that is impacting our community.

The *Broken Dreams* Project, in particular the stories of the grieving Somali mothers and fathers, really moved community members in the audience of our screenings and awoke many to grim reality of violent extremist groups preying on our youth. We managed to open up dialogue in a previously taboo subject of discussion. As we entered spring and summer 2014, we realized how timely our efforts had been, especially as hundreds of young Canadians were reported to have left to join violent extremist groups abroad. The incidents in autumn 2014 in Ottawa and Quebec for us highlighted the need to continue the dialogue we had started earlier in the year, this time with a focus to finding workable solutions through an in-depth discussion with community and other key stakeholders. We knew that we had to bring a diversity of credible voices (i.e. academia, the faith community, law enforcement, youth, etc.) in

order to shed some light on the causes of and solutions to the problem of young people going abroad to join violent extremist groups.

Midaynta Community Services, with the support of the Ontario Institute for Studies (OISE) in Education, the Ontario Government, and the U.S. Consulate in Toronto, and the Toronto Police Service, co-organized *Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Response Conference* from February 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The conference had been thought of and prepared in the midst of the certain international and local events that have involved violently radicalized young people. We realized that the nature and scale of violent extremism today is broad and deep, requiring the joining of global and local efforts as well as the collaboration of stakeholders from multiple sectors and disciplines. As a result, we brought together a variety of local and international dignitaries, academics, law enforcement, policymakers, community leaders, faith leaders, as well youth and women's groups to examine the causes and propose solutions to the problem of young people who have become radicalized, with many going abroad to fight for extremist groups, while some others have committed acts of violence within Canada.

We gathered a number of expert speakers with the requisite research and professional experience of working with young people to speak to the sources of the problem and suggest new directions to help steer Canadian youth from the lure of violent extremism. Dr. Berns-McGown underscored that individuals rather than

communities become radicalized, stressed the need to address young people's sense of grievance by tackling systemic discrimination and racism through the *muscular inclusion* of marginalized social groups in Canadian society through the strengthening of inclusion and equity. A number of other panelists emphasized the importance of placing the problem of violent extremism in the broader context of youth violence.

If the strongest protection against radicalization is muscular inclusion aimed at demolishing barriers and increasing youth opportunities, for Dr. Hamid Slimi "we need programs run by people who understand the problem." This point about the necessity of community led counter violent extremism initiatives was further expounded by Deputy Chief (now Chief of Police) Mark Saunders, who explained that the only way we can keep our communities safe is through strong partnerships between police and local community. In particular, Deputy Chief Saunders emphasized the need to divert young people in the pre-criminal space of the radicalization continuum. He underscored the value of taking a multi-sector approach, dealing with social services, academics, imams, helping to redirect young people at the pre-criminal stage.

The presentations and discussions reinforced for many the fact that adherents of violent extremist ideologies come from different social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and underlined that our perennial goal as a society and as communities has been to thwart the resort to violence and the sowing of division and hate. Doing

so requires the applicable law enforcement response to safeguard community safety as well as the engagement and the empowerment of local communities, faith and non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, through initiatives aimed at preventing and diverting young people from violent extremism. A sustainable response to violent extremism requires constant intellectual and educational engagement with the ideas and realities of youth marginalization and its implications for the society. There was a general consensus among participants and panelists that halting the violent radicalization of young people will require that we address the underlying issues of youth alienation and community marginalization.

Overall, the conference emphasized the need to build competency for addressing violent extremism across the board, particularly among educators, parents, peers, social service providers and law enforcement. At the same time, there was consensus that we need to provide safe spaces for youth to be free to discuss and dialogue, and by the same token counter violent extremist narratives on the internet and social media. Importantly, we also need to continue the dialogue and engagement with global partners to counter violent extremism, especially in the most affected countries in Africa and Asia.

### **ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

The purpose of ‘*Youth Radicalization*’: *Policy and Education Response Conference*, held February 12-13<sup>th</sup> at OISE/University of Toronto, was to find



practical ways of preventing young people from becoming radicalized in the first place, and in so doing, shield our communities and society from the harms of violent extremism. We brought on-board a collaborative of academics, government, law enforcement, schools, faith groups, parents and guardians, youth and women's groups and members of the community-at-large from Canada, the United States, and Somalia to examine the push and pull factors of youth radicalization and find solutions to help young people overcome the risks of violent extremism.

Our objectives for the conference were to:

- a. Deepen our understanding of the complex meanings of 'Youth Radicalization';
- b. Map-out, rethink and improve the existing policies, strategies, and projects on 'Youth Radicalization';
- c. Build networks of concerned stakeholders interested in developing comprehensive responses to 'Youth Radicalization';
- d. Formulate research, development, and education programs and projects to address 'Youth Radicalization'

The conference was attended by 150 participants on the first day and 90 participants on the second day. In the first day, there were four panel discussions, examining various aspects of youth radicalization. The second day was devoted to developing practical recommendations in a number of areas to address youth

radicalization through multi –agency programmatic interventions (see the attached agenda).

At the conference, we received greetings from a number of high level dignitaries, representing the federal and Ontario governments as well as members of the opposition, the United States Government, Turkish Government, and the University of Toronto. All the dignitaries highlighted the critical and timely significance of the conference, and the role of the Midaynta Community Services and the co-organizer, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, in spearheading community led counter violent extremism. As well, the dignitaries expressed long term support for the efforts aimed at countering violent extremism at home and abroad. After the brief welcome speeches, the podium was given to the panelists.

After the event, participants and panelists noted how the conference provided a rare occasion for key stakeholders to have an open and honest conversation about the problem of violent extremism and the wider social and economic challenges confronting members of the Somali and Muslim Canadian communities. As a result, we had an overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and panelists.

### **WELCOMING REMARKS**

*Mahad Yusuf, Executive Director, Midaynta Community Services*

Mahad Yusuf welcomed the audience and dignitaries in attendance, representing the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, as well as the

governments of the United States, Turkey and Somalia. Mr. Yusuf also thanked the organizing team, in particular OISE and the U.S. Consulate in Toronto. Mahad noted how this conference was particularly poignant given his recent his leadership tour to Rwanda, where he attended a Somalia Diaspora conference examining the post-conflict reconciliation of the people, as well as the demobilization of armed groups and reconstruction of the country. Mahad also talked about his subsequent trip to Somalia for the first time in decades and the shocking experience of his hotel being hit by a suicide attack, though he was lucky to have been away at the time. He wished the conference well and looked forward to an open dialogue and the opportunity to transform the crisis.

*Dr. Julia O’Sullivan*

Professor Julia O’Sullivan is Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Dean Julia O’Sullivan welcomed the visiting dignitaries as well as the participants. Professor O’Sullivan also paid tribute to the presence of different levels of Canadian and international governments, as well as representatives of law enforcement, the universities, community, youth and women’s groups, noting that “the conference is unique in that it brings into the dialogue about youth radicalization all the multiple perspectives that are needed to address the question in a comprehensive, realistic and optimistic way.” She stressed that “all those perspectives are needed if we want to have a thorough, comprehensive

discussion and solution development.” The following is the remainder of the Dean’s welcoming remarks:

I am really proud that OISE is the co-host of this conference. About 18 months ago, Mahad and Mohamed came to see me to tell me about their community, about their youth and their aspirations for their youth, especially around education. And I told them about the unique role that I believe that universities have to play in discussion and solution planning in these critical areas. We have a unique role to play and a responsibility to play it because universities are the one institution on the face of the earth dedicated to the creation and sharing of knowledge. This is the institution where all perspectives, all opinions, are welcomed. People should feel free to speak and air their views, knowing they will be greeted with respect and without intimidation and without ridicule. This is the perfect arena for a conference like this. And it’s not a one-off [event] where we go home and forget about it. The organization and the organizers have in mind that this conference will lead to a network that will continue to work, addressing issues, developing solutions for policy and practice, and services that will promise a better tomorrow for all of us, including the youth of the Somali community here in Toronto. So within this atmosphere in the conference, we go forward and I expect there will be fantastic participation and wonderful outcomes that will lead to a better future for everyone here and for everyone concerned with this issue around the world. I want to thank most sincerely everyone involved in the planning, the group here at OISE and the students, Mohamed and Mahad, and everyone else involved in their community organization. This is a tremendous contribution to the country! Thank you very much.

### **GREETINGS FROM HIGH LEVEL DIGNITARIES**

*Mr. Jim Dickmeyer, U.S. Consul-General in Toronto*

Mr. Jim Dickmeyer, the U.S. Consul-General in Toronto, brought his greetings on behalf of the Government of the United States. Mr. Dickmeyer pointed out that Canada and the United States have shared interests, borders and even family ties. The Consul-General recalled how both countries are a “nation of immigrants,” and indicated that the United States has a lot to share about how to integrate new communities especially as it has been doing this for well over two centuries. Mr.

Dickmeyer said that he was delighted to be supporting the conference and was looking forward to the dialogue.

*Ambassador Ahmed Abdisalam Adan, Somali Ambassador to Ethiopia, the African Union and UNECA*

Ambassador Adan, a Somali Canadian, mentioned how he started his career in the social services sector in Ottawa-Carleton, working as a youth counselor and manager, and recalled how the issues of integration and youth employment remain relevant. For Ambassador Adan, the link between what is going on in Somalia and Canada is obvious, especially in a globalized world where security problems know no boundaries. He argued that we need to solve the problems of Somalia if we also want to solve the problem of radicalization in Canada.

*Senator Don Meredith of Ontario, Member of the Canadian Senate*

We also received greetings from Senator Don Meredith on behalf of the Government of Canada. The Senator highlighted the significance of coming together as a community to touch the lives of young people. Senator Meredith was pleased to see the coming together of leaders to address youth radicalization. The Senator reminded us that we must remain resolute to ensure youth remain engaged in our societies, and the importance of always reinforcing the message that diversity is our strength, and uniting around those good things that we have in common.

*Ted Opitz, Member of Parliament, Etobicoke-Centre*

MP Ted Opitz thanked the community in taking on the responsibility of trying to find the solution to the problem, and thanked in particular the organizers of the conference, noting how “Our government asked you to step up and look into these issues within your own communities – and you’re doing that.” M.P. Opitz offered his support, noting “we have a shared concern and responsibility to work hard to make sure that Canada is a country that everybody can live in freely, together, and hand-in-hand. That’s really the goal of it all.”

*Mike Sullivan, Member of Parliament, York-South Weston*

M.P. Mike Sullivan pointed out that most Canadians think youth radicalization is simply about the youth joining ISIS, when in fact we need to discuss how we can prevent those young people from becoming radicalized by looking at how our education, immigration and job support systems are functioning. This is to ensure that our youth feel that they belong and that they do not act out by joining extremist groups.

*Dr. Kirsty Duncan, Member of Parliament, Etobicoke-North*

M.P. Dr. Kirsty Duncan said that the community can find a partner in her and the other dignitaries in the audience. Dr. Duncan mentioned the importance of tackling youth violence in addition to youth radicalization, and recalled how she has

advocated on the issue of the more than fifty murdered Somali Canadian youth by bringing the issue to parliament.

*Laura Albanese, Member of Provincial Parliament, York-South Weston*

M.P.P. Laura Albanese mentioned how youth radicalization is an important issue to tackle and find solutions, and looks forward to knowing about those solutions. Albanese mentioned how she represents a large number of Somali Canadians, particularly in her riding, and recalled how the issue of youth violence is near and dear to her heart. M.P.P. Albanese said that we have to band together and find a way to the future, and wished the conference well.

*Ali Reza Guney, Turkish Consul-General in Toronto*

The Turkish Consul General mentioned how three Somali girls attempted to make their way into Syria via Turkey, but they were prevented by the collaboration of Turkish and Canadian security and police agencies. Mr. Guney mentioned the importance of Turkey's efforts to provide humanitarian support to the Somali people in order to "make tomorrow much better than yesterday."

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

*The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues*

The keynote address was delivered by the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Children and Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Women's

Issues in the Government of Ontario. The Honourable Minister brought her greetings on behalf of Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Government of Ontario. She noted the presence of a diversity of community at this event, and thanked Midaynta Community Services for “making a difference to newcomers and beyond by providing culturally appropriate programs and services to build vibrant communities.” The Minister, in recalling the community of Dixon, which is known by many as Little Somalia, emphasized that the Somali culture is a part of Ontario’s and Canada’s history and culture. Minister MacCharles expressed how she is “heartened by the passion brought by this community” and recognized that there are “issues that persist” in the community, in particular “poverty, lack of jobs, [and] access to recreation.” However, the Honourable Minister reassured that “we can play a role as government but we can’t do it alone.”

The Minister stated that “our government is committed to building a fair and equitable society” and reinforced the commitment to “seeing youth succeed and laying the groundwork for their achievement.” The Honourable Tracy MacCharles stated that underpinning her government’s efforts was a commitment to the vision of unity, noting that “every step we take starts with one belief as one Ontario, one province, one community, and [that] we have a common purpose for children and youth.” The Minister said that we must continue to build “a society where your name isn’t an impediment to success” and “where you don’t have to be affluent to reach



your potential.” Minister MacCharles noted that key to realizing that vision is the promotion of tolerance and inclusion.

The best way to build a more peaceful and united society is to promote tolerance, expanding inclusion, and fostering a mutual understanding among all communities. No community should be stigmatized or scapegoated because radicalization and violence does occur. We know it doesn’t happen in one specific place, or one type of building. By focusing on the core purpose, we can decrease anyone’s desire to act in a hostile or inappropriate way. Canada is indeed a country with a proud history of immigration and multiculturalism. We have rich stories of people coming here across oceans and from everywhere to make this country their home.

In making this statement, Minister MacCharles set the tone for the whole conference, especially her caution that communities should be not stigmatized for radicalization and violence, and that addressing it requires a focus on our common purpose of preventing people from becoming violent. As well, the Minister reinforced the importance of including different communities by noting our history as a country of immigrants and multicultural co-existence. The Minister’s sentiments of the significance of unity and inclusion as guiding principles were widely shared by many of the other local and international dignitaries.

The Minister also noted the importance of seeing the problem of youth radicalization in the broader context of youth issues, noting similarities between the roots of youth radicalization and youth violence in general.

We recognize that some of the roots of radicalization mirrors what drives youth to violence and crime and that includes alienation, loss of hope, and not having a connection to community. We recognize the challenges associated with these issues and they’re complex and not easy to solve sometimes. But I believe if we keep doors open to youth, then the doors to the issues and problems will continue to close. Constantly expanding opportunities for youth and promoting inclusion, not just tolerance, are very important to pre-empting the radicalization of youth. Working together we can create an Ontario that’s diverse, inclusive, prosperous and peaceful.

In addition, the Minister noted the work of her government to increase opportunities for youth to decrease the risk factors for problem behavior, highlighting the role of the Youth Outreach Workers Program, with a staff of more than one hundred youth workers helping to “connect youth to opportunities in their communities, [and] giving them a sense of hope.” Minister MacCharles also noted the \$295 million investment in the Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy to help young people find employment or start their own business. The Honourable Minister underscored that “programs like that do help give [youth] a sense of hope and purpose and pride in their accomplishments.” The Minister mentioned Stepping Up, a strategic framework developed by her Ministry as a follow up to the Ontario Youth Action Plan to help young people succeed. As well, Minister MacCharles emphasized the importance of assessment, noting the importance of “looking at the programs that don’t work and how we can change things.”

The Minister’s keynote address was well received and touched on some of the key developments of the conference, notably, a focus on placing the issue of youth radicalization in a social context, by looking at what we can all do to help young people overcome the social-marginalization and alienation that can play a crucial role in radicalization.

## EXPLORING COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

*Farhia Abdi*

Farhia Abdi's presentation emphasized the importance of understanding young people's and their community's experience of settlement, adjustment and integration. Ms. Abdi started her talk by mentioning how she had arrived in Canada in 1989 at a time when there were very few people of Somali descent in Toronto. At the time she attended Emory Collegiate Institute and took classes to learn English. Those were very difficult times for herself as well as the other young people who were in her class, noting how "[we had] parted ways with family and had to adjust to life in Canada while supporting family back home." At the time, her classmates paid no attention to what was happening to the larger community in Toronto, particularly as many more Somali refugees came to Canada in the early 1990s. Yet the narratives which had emerged about the Somali community were a bit problematic at the time, emphasizing the need to frame "the integration of the Somali community as one that is a multidimensional story of integration." Farhia noted how there really is not "a single but multiple narratives of integration" and that the Somali community "has gone through a transformation since its arrival in late 1980s."

In the early 1990s, when most of the community came here, many made their homes in Rexdale, a northwestern area of Toronto. She noted how "if you went anywhere [else] in Toronto then, you'd be hard pressed to find a Somali." Today, as there are many thousands of Somali Torontonians, "everywhere you look you'd find a

Somali person.” However, Ms. Abdi noted the challenges that many Somalis faced being black, Muslim and refugees, and how many people in the Somali community continue to find novel ways to overcome barriers to upward social mobility, including the story of a former officer in the Canadian military who felt he had to adopt his wife’s European surname in order to advance his career.

*Margaret Parsons*

Similar to the preceding speaker, Margaret Parsons, Executive Director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic, argued for broadening the scope of the conversation to include the social marginalization that she feels is a significant contributing factor to not only the gun violence that has affected black youth but also the radicalization of some young Canadians. Like the Honourable Minister, Margaret argued for drawing some parallels between youth violence and violent radicalization, focusing in particular on the similar social causes of alienation, hopelessness, and disconnection from community.

Margaret Parsons suggested the need for a larger conversation about radicalization “and in fact, several conversations on why black youth feel the need to respond to their issues with such violence.” Although “governments and mainstream media call it radicalization,” Margaret noted that “African-Canadians call it a cry for help in the loudest voice possible from our children.” In a sense, this crisis of young people going abroad to join violent extremist groups presents us an opportunity to

have a healthy debate about the narrowing opportunities for youth and its consequences rather than the current national conversation about youth radicalization which focuses largely on policing and legal responses to the detriment of prevention. On this point, Margaret advised that “this discourse on a particular response from youth without a discussion of the larger social context is damaging and misleading,” arguing that a decontextualized discussion could lead to “an increased military response and heavy handed legislation such as the government’s mandatory minimum sentences [which] is equally damaging and equally radical.”

In cautioning against hasty responses, Margaret also recalled how “the policies of the Mike Harris government “directly contributed to the radicalization of black youth,” by removing supports for youth and by implementing policies and practices which disproportionately affected African-Canadian youth, including Somali youth. As a result, for Margaret, the problem of young people, including black youth, feeling the need to join criminal groups and resorting to violence “didn’t occur in a vacuum, isn’t a recent phenomenon and has been happening for some time – for about twenty years.” Moreover, the social conditions which have led many black youth to join local area gangs is, Margaret contended, not all that different from the circumstances of many of the young people, themselves from marginalized backgrounds, who have gone on to join violent extremist groups.

The circumstance of that led to the radicalization of black youth whether they’re joining the Bloods, Crips or the Galloway Boys isn’t much different to the circumstances and conditions

that currently exist that are resulting in other African-Canadian youth – Canadian born youth – joining ISIL, Al Qaeda and other global terrorist networks.

Margaret ended her presentation by issuing a call for more dialogue, particularly at the national level and with the federal government, about seeing how we can address the problem of young people turning to violence through a discussion with the affected communities, especially African-Canadians.

*Dr. Rima Berns-McGown*

Professor Rima Berns-McGown, in reflecting on the ongoing national conversation about youth radicalization, noted the danger of ramping up the rhetoric, in particular querying the impact of Islamophobic rhetoric on the then recent shooting of three unarmed Muslim American students at the university in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Dr. Berns-McGown mentioned some of the work that she has done in the field including a research project with Public Safety Canada’s Kanishka Project that looked into the perception and reality of the concept of “imported conflict.” In that research project, more than 220 people from different conflict afflicted regions were interviewed at length. The conclusion of that research was that though there were no imported conflicts in Canada, “we do import trauma which we then do a terrible job helping people to treat and we then exacerbate by re-traumatizing people with systemic racism and exclusion.”

Dr. Berns-McGown also noted that “our study showed conclusively that communities do not radicalize; individuals radicalize,” a deduction confirmed by

other scholarly work including ones by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). A consensus of scholarship points out that to find the solution to violent extremism; we need to reach affected individuals.

In order to treat the problem, you have to figure out how to get at individuals. And what you definitely don't want to do is target communities. That's because the strongest protection we have against radicalization is what I call muscular inclusion. Real inclusion – not the tokenistic, for show stuff – but real muscular inclusion aimed at demolition barriers to full participation in Canadian society economically, politically and socially. The kind of inclusion that creates a society in which real power is held by people of every background, faith, colour, gender identity, and sexual preference. Muscular inclusion would tell people they belong in Canada in meaningful ways, including African Canadians. It would help people become invested in Canada as a political, social and economic space. Not one where they exist in the margins, but one in which they have a full-fledged right and ability to make policy, as well as a duty to live by it. Instead, too many young people, especially people of colour, especially black people, especially Muslims, experience racism and exclusion on a daily basis. And by racism and exclusion I don't mean casual idiots calling them names. I mean systemic, institutional racism. The kind that permeates schools in ways that are often invisible to trustees, officials, principals and teachers but are nonetheless deeply hurtful to racialized students.

Berns-McGown's point about ensuring that young people are a part of the social, economic and political fabric of this country was shared by many in the audience during the question and answer period as well as the breakout discussions. Many members of the community mentioned barriers to employment as well the criminalization of black youth through discriminatory police practices and marginalization in schools through bias and disparate application of procedures. She also noted how different forms of oppression intersect, especially anti-black racism and Islamophobia, particularly for Somali Canadians, who “as black Canadian and as black Muslims, [experience] double the racism, [and] double the exclusion.”

Dr. Berns-McGown ended her presentation on a hopeful note, reminding us that “we have the ability to fix this” by “understanding that strength lies in

belonging,” and that “no amount of increased police protection is going to target every traumatized, self-radicalized loner.” Instead, what we need to do is remove the systemic barriers which privilege some and exclude others. She emphasized the need for a strong sense of belonging and concluded that “ISIS loses if and when Muslims feel they belong in Canada.”

*Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi*

Like the preceding speakers, Dr. Hamid Slimi, Imam of the Sayeda Khadija Centre passionately spoke about some of the causes of youth radicalization (e.g., job-related discrimination through nepotism and favoritism and the fear of ridicule by wearing Islamic dress that exist among the youth leads to alienation and a sense of betrayal and mistake of migrating to West). He critiqued some of the existing programs and projects at home and abroad for being self-serving rather than making a difference in the lives of the marginalized communities and questioned the need for increased policing, Islamophobia and harassment.

Dr. Slimi also argued that mosques and Islamic centers should not be blamed for they are not radicalizing youth. “No terrorist is created by a mosque or Islamic center,” noted Imam Slimi. He agreed with Berns-McGown that communities do not radicalize, but individuals do. He pointed out that there is no youth engagement facilities in Etobicoke to keep the young people occupied, leading to a lot of unsupervised time on their hands. Imam Slimi also mentioned that the current



Islamophobic sentiments lead girls to not attending public schools because of the possible ridicule for wearing Islamic attire. He also commented on the current social media hypocrisies in differentially treating similar acts of violence. “When a Muslim does an act of violence, he is repeatedly called a terrorist; when a non-Muslim perpetuates such an act, he is called mentally ill or an angered by parking.” Many Muslims, Dr. Slimi suggested “daily overcome a triple struggle; for being Muslim, black, and Arab”. As well, Imam Slimi appreciated the Obama administration’s recent redefinition of certain violent acts from “Islamic terrorism” to violent extremism.”

### **DEVELOPING A NEW FRAMEWORK OF ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

*Deputy Chief Mark Saunders (now the Chief of Police)*

Deputy Chief Mark Saunders (now the Chief of Police) pointed out that the Toronto Police Service also has a national security portfolio in thwarting threats especially with the upcoming Pan-Am Games, but stressed that “The only way we can keep our communities safe is through strong partnership” between police and community. Deputy Chief Saunders emphasized how in recent years, there has been a “Game shift – a shift in power from law enforcement to community,” underscoring the need to work with communities. In the older approach, law enforcement took a leadership role in arresting and putting individuals before courts, and sometimes, “that’s not the best solution,” as 95% of those arrested are coming back to our

community – impacting the safety of the larger community. For Deputy Chief Saunders, arrests are not the only solution, emphasizing the scaling up of the fight against the ideology of extremism and the development of a counter narrative.

As police entities, we have to, yes, do the pursuits and apprehension piece, but we also have to have an equal ownership on the ideology piece too. The narrative out there is what the issue is. If you're not fighting the narrative with the investigative piece, you're not going to be successful in law enforcement, and this is something that's becoming more of an occurrence throughout the world. We are all starting to realize the arrest piece is not the measure of success. We have to educate our people, we have to be more aware of what's going on and we have to teach our people. If there's no counter narrative to correct, we are going to fail.

As well as countering extremist narratives, Deputy Chief Saunders also spoke about the need for stronger communication between the community and police. He also proposed a multi-agency cooperation strategy, dealing with social services, academics, and imams, looking at people in the pre-criminal space, and doing the right kind of intervention to divert the person from resorting to criminality and violence.

#### *Alia Hogben*

Alia Hogben from the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) spoke about their initiatives with Public Safety Canada's Kanishka Project, stressing civic engagement and creating safe spaces for the young people. She critiqued the upcoming anti-terrorism act (Bill C- 51) and mentioned that social isolation leads to terrorism. Hogben also pointed some critique at the Muslim communities in and outside of Canada. She suggested that Muslims need to do some soul searching and need to answer why some non-Muslims feel uncomfortable with Muslims being

around them. Muslims need to proactively reach out to others and accept the differences. Schools have a captive audience of young people and can do more to instill a sense of tolerance and acceptance among the youth, including Muslims. Hogben noted that the Muslim community remains diverse and is not monolithic. She also spoke about the need to examine the sectarian conflicts and intra-Muslim mistrusts.

*Stephane L. Pressault*

Her colleague Stephane Pressault spoke about his project which sought to create safe spaces for dialogue. Conversations through this project revealed that many Canadian Muslim youth feel discouraged and demoralized, helpless about affecting government policies, and have no safe space to talk about local and global issues. Pressault noted that the use of the word ‘extremism’ when working with youth is a failed start. Echoing the earlier speakers, he also observed that young people between 18-22 years of age feel lost, often have no role models; and feel stigmatized. Pressault problematized the term ‘radical’ as defined and redefined through the eye of the beholder.

*Dr. Jasmin Zine*

Professor Jasmin Zine from Wilfred Laurier University eloquently connected the internal and external discourses that lead to youth radicalization. She spoke about the history of Muslim marginalization, but also mentioned the algebra of global

violence against Muslims since September 9, 2001. Dr. Zine said that the causes of radicalization are not in Muslims and Islam per se, but in racism and Islamophobia, particularly the intersectional forms of oppression and discrimination. She proposed that the tropes and narratives should change, querying “Does how we construct a problem determines how we go about solving the problem?”

Dr. Zine also mentioned drone attacks, the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, global incursions and hyper-masculinity as global forms of militarism and imperialism where Muslims are once again projected as “savaged warriors” and the Westerners as “noble warriors.” Through the personal example of her son, who is also a leader of the Muslim Students Association at his school, Dr. Zine spoke about the challenges of trust between Muslim youth and CSIS. At the end, Dr. Zine mentioned a number of projects she is involved in Europe around the topic, among them projects such as MENTORs and art- based approaches by Muslims.

### *Yusra Siddiquee*

Yusra Siddiquee from the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association spoke about the need to change the paradigm of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ She mentioned that the government and the Muslim community are not monolithic blocks but can be “mixed bags”. This characterization can create positive ideas and actions. She endorsed more active engagement of both the youth and the government so as to know them better and deeper and see the complexity. She spoke about non-Muslim supporters of

Muslim empowerment among her colleagues and lawyers and proposed to have a positive outlook and open arms and minds for us to move forward.

*Dr. Mohammad Fadel*

Professor Mohammad Fadel of the University of Toronto was the moderator for the second panel discussion, and he highlighted the erosion of trust as a result of state surveillance and the misconstruction of intelligence gathering in a democracy. Dr. Fadel argued that this issue needs a critical examination, particularly around how surveillance can affect the already weak trust between the Muslim community and the law enforcement agencies.

### **LOCAL TO GLOBAL: LESSONS LEARNED FROM ABROAD**

*Ambassador Ahmed Abdisalam Adan*

Ahmed Abdisalam Adan, the Somali Ambassador to Ethiopia, the African Union and UNECA highlighted the local and global connections, the nightmare of the parents, the rampant poverty which breeds disillusionment, and how Al-Shabab has tried to change the Somali culture and identity. He also mentioned the availability of funding and international support, but warned against ‘parachute’ and unsustainable programs.

*Jabril Abdulle*

Jabril Abdulle, Executive Director of the Center for Research and Dialogue, talked at length about the role of his organization to address the root causes of why young people join violent extremist groups, pointing to the role of poverty and the lack of access to educational and employment opportunities. He mentioned why addressing these issues is a priority for Somalia, particularly as 70% of that country's population is under the age of thirty. Mr. Abdulle discussed the important role of culture as a method of countering radicalization, especially as extremist groups such as Al Shabab have been undermining the indigenous Somali culture. In drawing lessons between his conversations between a mother in Somalia and another in Toronto, and noting how both were concerned that their kids might one day leave and disappear, Jabril suggested that we need to address the root causes of poverty, marginalization and alienation, both in Canada and back home in his native Somalia.

*Hashi Shafi*

Hashi Shafi, Executive Director of the Somali Action Alliance Education Fund, spoke about the transformation of the Somali community in Minnesota, where the community by engaging police and government, has managed to change the narrative from one based on the community's deficits to a positive one of action. He mentioned the success of Somali-Minnesotans, noting how the high school graduation among the Somali-Americans increased to a rate of 80%, resulting in over 4 000

Somali students at state universities and community colleges. As well, the socio-economic situation of the community is steadily improving. Overall, Hashi emphasized the role of research, training, and engagement in further countering violent extremism. He problematized the notion of ‘radical,’ saying that U.S. laws do not specifically criminalize radical thoughts, but forbids violent actions.

*Abdirizak Farah*

Abdirizak Farah is a Senior Policy Advisor with the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As a policy shop, his office is responsible for providing advice on the intersection of civil rights and national security to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the leadership of the U.S. government, meaning that any new laws or regulations of the Department of Homeland Security have to come through the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to ensure that the civil rights, civil liberties and protections of all people are incorporated into the Department’s policies.

His office meets on frequent basis with different communities and people throughout the United States in roundtable discussions to seek feedback, share information and learn lessons. These roundtables were formed at a time when the U.S. government’s outreach efforts were directed at Muslim, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian and Sikh communities, who might have been impacted by the policies of the Department, and Mr. Farah noted that these roundtables continue to exist. Mr. Farah also noted that these government-community roundtables “have

nothing to do with intelligence gathering but have a lot to do with information sharing, exchange of policy debates and discussions.” These roundtables serve as a conduit for the Department to solve problems as they arise, and very often “communities and government agencies [would] come together, negotiate on behalf of their communities and fix some of the challenges which [come] out of policy discussions.” For Mr. Farah, this demonstrates “why engagement matters.”

## **INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH RADICALIZATION**

*Abdulhalim Rijaal*

Abdulhalim Rijaal from the Digital Outreach Team of the U.S. Department of State spoke about his extensive and painful experiences of watching and analyzing violent extremist acts conducted by some extremist groups in Africa and the Middle East in his role of countering extremist narratives. He emphasized the role of parents in preventing their children from becoming brainwashed when surfing extremist websites and social media accounts. Mr. Rijaal spoke about the importance of a counter narrative in the fight against extremist ideologies (e.g., counter-messaging and exposing the hypocrisy of Al-Shabab and ISIS; their anti-Somali work such as promoting hate of the Somali language, culture, tradition).

*Shanifa Nasser*

Shanifa Nasser, a freelance journalist from Toronto built on Rijaal’s idea about the radicalizing impact of the internet and how the government is often reactive



by avoiding looking at the root causes. Nasser also noted that in the whole discussion, the role of religion as a counter weight to extremism is avoided and that is a mistake. Engaging religious discourse, including theology, is critical for undermining ISIS' narrative of a global Muslim utopian community.

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLENARY SESSION**

The interactive discussions of the Day 2 Breakout Session resulted in very fruitful discussions on solutions. One such outcome of the conference was the recognition that education is central to the process of youth de-radicalization in at least three ways: (i) education provides hope and opportunity for decent employment and improved life, thus channeling youth to pursue constructive life style; (ii) education, when it is of quality, relevance, and challenging, provides youth with critical thinking skills to sort out the personally and socially-harmful messages and activities; and (iii) educationally-active, engaging and constrictive pedagogies should be the approaches to all stakeholders for engaging youth and mutually valuable ways.

We have listed below key recommendations. We believe these key recommendations address some of the root causes of violent radicalization among our youth in Ontario and Canada, many of whom experience alienation of some kind, including underlying mental illness in many instances.

**Overall Objectives:**

- A. Address underlying issues of youth alienation and community marginalization
- B. Build competency for addressing violent extremism across the board
- C. Create opportunities for youth to make positive national and international connections
- D. Counter violent extremist narratives on the internet and social media

**Short Range Recommendations:**

1. Conduct frequent inter-sectoral roundtable meetings to share information, address concerns, enhance communication, build trust, and facilitate collaboration between government, law enforcement, academia, youth, and faith and community leaders. It is suggested that Midaynta Community Services and other members of the formed quarterly roundtable take ownership of this recommendation.
2. Provide safe spaces for young people to discuss and dialogue about issues of concern to them and their community as opportunities for expression and release – i.e. Debate clubs, developing Muslim Students Associations with a dedicated staff mentor at middle and high schools.
3. Train young people on the safe uses of the internet and social media – i.e. Develop a curriculum resource unit to be integrated into the various aspects of the Ontario Curriculum on teaching media literacy.

4. Build the capacity of parents, peers, community members, educators and service providers to intervene and divert young people away from violent extremism – i.e. Capacity building project or summer institute for educators, parents and guardians, peers, and social service providers.
5. Create a mental health and addiction outreach program to build capacity, raise awareness, address stigma and encourage access to treatment and services among Somali Canadians.

**Medium Range Recommendations:**

6. Develop a culturally appropriate youth leadership and civic engagement program as a conduit for young people to discover and express their voices – i.e. Youth leadership training program for students of Somali or Muslim heritage.
7. Develop community based intervention programs to divert ‘at-risk’ young people from violent extremism – i.e. Leveraging resources to address the underlying mental health, social and educational needs of individuals at risk of violent extremism.
8. Establish a prison outreach, education and re-integration program for Somali and Muslim Canadian youth that is culturally appropriate, holistic and which connects them to job training and further education.

9. Develop a combined national and international cultural exchange program for young people to experience and appreciate different social and cultural environments and as a medium for intercultural dialogue and understanding.
10. Establish a scholarship program to provide young people who take part in the civic engagement and cultural exchange programs to further their capacity for intercultural dialogue and understanding as they enter the world of postsecondary education and work.
11. Develop a digital outreach program similar to the U.S. Digital Outreach Program to counter extremist narratives and raise awareness on the internet and social media platforms.
12. Formulate a research project to assess the needs of the community, and develop an educational curriculum and materials for counter violent extremism initiatives.

**Long Range Recommendations:**

13. Establish a center of excellence to research, develop curriculum and provide training on intervention, diversion, and other community led counter-violent extremism efforts particular to the Canadian context.
14. Enhance efforts to diversify the workforce of local, provincial and federal police agencies, with a special attention to recruiting qualified candidates from Somali and other Muslim communities.

**APPENDICES**

## WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to *Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Conference*, happening February 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 at the OISE/University of Toronto. We are delighted you can join us to share your knowledge and provide input into the discussions and activities happening on these two days. Many of you have travelled from overseas and out of town. Welcome to Toronto! Bienvenue à Toronto!

This conference is a follow up to last year's Broken Dreams Breakfast Roundtable and Open Community Forum on the subject of youth radicalization. It has also been thought of and prepared in the midst of the certain international and local events that have involved radicalized youth. Yet the nature and scale of the current radicalization is much broader and deeper, requiring the joining of global and local efforts as well as the collaboration of stakeholders from multiple sectors and disciplines. To that end, the conference will focus on youth radicalization but also speak to the broader societal issues, bringing together government, law enforcement, education, civil society and academia stakeholders from Canada, the United States, and Somalia.

We hope that an occasion which brings such important and diverse participation will result in the formulation of solutions to address youth radicalization within the existing laws and policies of Canada and Ontario, and also serve as a model for tackling the challenge of radicalization across the board. We look forward to your participation and input and wish you a superb conference experience and a memorable stay in Toronto. Thank you! Merci!



CONSULATE OF THE UNITED STATES  
Toronto, Canada



## **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS:**



**The Honourable Tracy MacCharles** was first elected to the Ontario legislature in 2011 as the MPP for Pickering-Scarborough East. She was re-elected in 2014. MacCharles currently serves as Minister of Children and Youth Services, and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

MacCharles has more than 20 years of experience in human resources management in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. She was Vice-President of Human Resources at Manulife Financial for the Corporate and Information Technology Divisions. In 2004, she established her own Human Resources practice focused on health care, community health, education, employment, human rights, discrimination prevention and business effectiveness.

MacCharles is a champion for disability advocacy. She is a former Chair of the Ontario Accessibility Standards Advisory Council and also served on the Durham Board of Education's Special Education Advisory Committee. She has been an active volunteer in her community and at the provincial level for numerous charities, including the Canadian Cancer Society – Scarborough Unit and the Ontario Division Board, the Big Sisters Association of Ajax-Pickering, the United Way and as Chair of her local School Community Council.

MacCharles is also an active volunteer in numerous charities. She received the City of Pickering's Civic Award and the Volunteer of Distinction Award from Rosebank Road Public School. MacCharles and her husband, Stephen, live in Pickering with their two children, Travis and Geneviève.

### **PLENARY SESSION:**

#### **Panel Discussion I: Exploring Community Experiences**

*Moderator: Fowzia Duale, Youth Outreach Worker, Midaynta Community Services*

**Ms. Margaret Parsons** is the Executive Director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic. Ms. Parsons received her LL.B from the University of Windsor. She has also

served as an Adjudicator at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. Under her leadership, the ACLC has appeared in precedent setting cases at the Supreme Court of Canada and the Ontario Court of Appeal. She has led several delegations to the United Nations to present both written and oral submissions to critical treaty bodies such as the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In 2007, 2008 and 2011 she was invited by the United Nations as an Expert to participate on a panel in the areas of anti-racism, racial profiling and migrants. In recent years, Ms. Parsons' leadership was instrumental in establishing and co-ordinating the African Canadian Youth Justice Program which provides programming and supports for African Canadian youth in conflict with the law, the Youth Justice Education Program for high risk youth and the African Canadian Justice Program, a direct accountability program for adults.

Ms. Parsons currently sits on the following justice related advisory bodies: the Advisory Council on Youth Justice to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Inter-Ministerial Youth Justice Advisory Panel, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' Advisory Council on Adult Corrections, the Roy McMurtry Youth Centre Partnership Advisory Committee and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health's Justice Collaborative on Children and Youth Mental Health. Ms. Parsons is strongly committed to a youth centred justice system that is inclusive and responsive, at all levels, to the needs and issues of children and youth.



**Dr. Rima Berns-McGown** is Associate Director of the Centre for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures and a Jack & Doris Shadbolt Fellow in the Humanities. Prior to her arrival at SFU, she was the senior project advisor, research director, and principal author of The Mosaic Institute's recently released study on "The Perception & Reality of 'Imported Conflict' in Canada." She is also an adjunct professor of diaspora studies with the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto at Mississauga and the immediate past-president of the Couchiching Institute on Public Affairs. Dr. Rima holds a PhD from the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, an MA from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University, and a Bachelor of Journalism and Political Science from Carleton University. Her book *Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali Communities of London and Toronto* compared the political culture of London and Toronto as spaces of integration and explored the renegotiation of identity and religion that Somali refugees undertook in the first years



after moving into the West. She has published a number of articles and chapters arising from interviews with Somali Canadians, most recently “‘I am Canadian’: Challenging Perceptions about Young Somali Canadians.” She publishes in both academic and popular venues, including Torontoist.com, most recently on Toronto’s racial divide. Dr. Rima was born of a mixed background in Apartheid South Africa, which has fueled her lifelong interest in the creation of socially just diverse societies.



**Dr. Hamid Slimi** is Chairman of the Canadian Centre for Deen Studies, President of Faith of Life Network, and Imam of the Sayeda Khadija Centre. He has been serving as an Imam, Chaplain, Educator and Consultant in Canada for over 17 years in different religious and educational institutions. He is also, The Founder and President of Faith of Life Network, The Founder and Chairman of the Canadian Centre for Deen Studies, The Former Chairman of the Canadian Council of Imams (2006-2013), Lecturer at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Consultant on National and International issues related to religion and spirituality, Islam and Islamic Law, religious dialogue and Social issues, Board member of different Interfaith and Community bodies/groups, and TV Host & Producer of Faith of Life TV Shows and documentaries.

Dr. Slimi's traditional and academic specialty is in Islamic Studies and Law as well as Comparative World Religions. In addition to the traditional degrees known as *Ijazah*, he holds two Masters degrees with High Honors in both disciplines from Morocco and the U.S. and a PhD in Islamic Law from the U.K. He received both his traditional and academic learning in Morocco and attended other renowned institutions and universities in other parts of the world. Dr. Slimi has been educated in Arabic, French and English since his early age as a little child. He received intensive training and learning in many Islamic disciplines including Aqeedah, Fiqh, Usul-ul-Fiqh, Maqasid, Tafseer, Seerah, Qur'an and Hadith Sciences and 'Ulum al-Lughah. Both his Ijazah and Graduate Shahadat are in Fiqh - Islamic Jurisprudence - and Usul-ul-Fiqh - Fundamentals of Jurisprudence. His extensive research has been in the field of Jurisprudential Rules, the Science of Maqasid (Objectives of Law) as well as al-Fiqh al-Muqaaran (Comparative Jurisprudence) in the Four Madhabs. Dr. Slimi has been representing the Muslim community at many Multi-Faith Councils and in the continuous Interfaith Dialogues. He is also an adviser and consultant for a good number of different local and national institutions. He has authored a few books and articles in Arabic and English specifically in Usul-al-Fiqh and Muslim Outreach and he wrote a few papers in French mainly in Islamic Jurisprudence. His book published in 2001 and 2002 "Terrorism: An Islamic Perspective" has been widely distributed

among thousands of readers in North America and did receive very positive responses and encouragement. To this date, Dr. Slimi has hosted and produced over 200 TV Shows and over 200 DVDs and hundreds of CDs on different subjects related to faith and life matters.



**Ms. Farhia Abdi** is currently pursuing a PhD degree in the Faculty of Education at York University. She is also a part-time Professor at the School of Social and Community Services of George Brown College. In addition to studying and teaching in Toronto, Farhia has recently taught in Dadaab (the largest refugee camp in the world) and is currently facilitating an online course for the students in Dadaab, Kenya. Farhia's early schooling took place in Mogadishu, Somalia where she completed secondary school in 1989 before making her journey to Canada. Her current research interest is in the area of refugee education and she has previously written about the academic challenges Somali students face in Toronto's public schools.

**Panel Discussion II: Developing a New Framework of Engagement with Local Communities: Building Government, Law enforcement, School and Community Competencies for Preventing Youth Radicalization**

*Moderator: Dr. Mohammad Fadel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto*



**Deputy Chief Mark Saunders** is in his 32<sup>nd</sup> year with the Toronto Police Service and is currently in charge of Specialized Operations Command. As Deputy Chief of Specialized Operations Command, he oversees 1,258 police officers, 164 civilian members, and manages a budget of \$175 million. Specialized Operations Command is comprised of various investigative squads, and some of the Toronto Police Service's most critically important units, which support Divisional Policing Command and work hand in hand with municipal, provincial, and federal agencies. In addition to frontline uniform policing, Deputy Chief Saunders has extensive

experience in a variety of specialized policing roles including the Professional Standards Unit, Urban Street Gang Unit, Intelligence, Drug Squad, and the Emergency Task Force. He has also served as the Unit Commander of the Homicide Squad, which is the largest of its kind in Canada.

Deputy Chief Saunders holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Justice Studies from Guelph-Humber University, a diploma from Humber College, an Incident Command System Certificate from the Justice Institute of British Columbia, as well as being a Canadian Police College certified Chief Hostage Negotiator. He has also completed the Leadership in Counter Terrorism Course (LinCT) which involved study in Scotland and Ireland. Deputy Chief Saunders is the co-chair of the CACP Organized Crime Committee. He is committed to community service and is a United Way Leadership Member. He is a highly sought after public speaker. Of the many awards bestowed on Deputy Chief Saunders, he is most proud of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal for Outstanding Community Contributions, the Police Exemplary Service Medal, and the Black History Month Community Award to name a few. Deputy Chief Saunders is a resident of Toronto and is proudly raising his family here. Deputy Chief Saunders continues his personal commitment to provide inclusive, unbiased policing in order to foster and enhance the critically important relationship between the Toronto Police Service and the communities he serves.



**Ms. Alia Hogben** is a social worker and currently the Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW). CCMW was founded in 1982 and its objectives are to assist Canadian Muslim women and their families to learn about Islam and to participate actively in all aspects of living in Canada. Alia has been involved with CCMW since its establishment; first as a board member and now as the Executive Director, a position that she has dutifully held for more than a decade. While working with the CCMW, she has led campaigns, which promote the equal status of women and interfaith-dialogue, presented at international conferences and helped develop community projects, publications and initiatives, which empower Muslim women and their families. She worked with various social services and was a program supervisor with the Ontario government, supervising agencies who provide services to children, adults with developmental handicaps and women who are abused. She taught at a community college and is now a regular columnist for the Kingston Whig Standard, writing about Islam and women. An Honorary Doctorate recipient from Queen's School of Divinity, in 2012 she became the second Canadian

Muslim woman to be awarded the Order of Canada for her work in the area of women's rights.



**Dr. Jasmin Zine** is Associate Professor of Sociology & the Muslim Studies Option at Wilfred Laurier University. Her publications include numerous journal articles on Islamic feminism and Muslim women's studies and Muslims and education in the Canadian diaspora. Her books include: *Canadian Islamic Schools: Unraveling the Politics of Faith, Gender, Knowledge and Identity* (2008, University of Toronto Press) the first ethnography of Islamic schooling in North America and in *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada* (2012, University of British Columbia Press) and a recently co-edited a book (with Lisa K. Taylor) *Muslim Women, Transnational Feminism and the Ethics of Pedagogy: Contested Imaginaries in post-9/11 Cultural Practice* (2014, Routledge Press). She has recently completed a national study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) on the impact of 9/11 and the 'war on terror' on Muslim youth in Canada. As an education consultant she has developed award winning curriculum materials that address Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism and has worked with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (ODHIR/OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on developing international guidelines for educators and policy-makers on combating Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims.



**Ms. Yusra Siddiquee** of Ontario was called to the Bar in 1996. She graduated from the University of British Columbia law school and holds a Bachelor's degree from McGill University. Ms. Siddiquee is a partner at the law firm of Norton Rose Fulbright and leads the Business Immigration and International Mobility practice group in Toronto. She has been selected as a leading specialist in her field by international publications. Ms. Siddiquee is a founding member and Chair of the Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association. She has been actively involved in human rights, refugee protection and immigration awareness issues for over 20 years. Ms.

Siddiquee has made representations on civil liberties issues to the Senate sub-committee, and has spoken and written on immigration and human rights issues domestically and internationally.

### **Panel Discussion III: Local to Global: Lessons Learned from Abroad**

*Moderator: Marva Wisdom, Consultant, Director of the Black Experience Project, a study initiated by the Environics Institute with partners, Ryerson University and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation*



**His Excellency Ahmed Abdisalam Adan** is currently the Ambassador of Somalia to Ethiopia, and the Permanent Representative to the AU (*African Union*), IGAD (*Intergovernmental Authority on Development*) and the UNECA (*United Nations Economic Commission for Africa*). Ambassador Ahmed is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ambassador Ahmed served as the former Minister of National Security in 2010, and as a Deputy-Prime Minister and Minister of Information, Youth & Sports for the Transitional Government of Somalia in 2008/9. In this capacity, Mr. Adan was instrumental to the Djibouti Peace Process that facilitated reconciliation between the transitional government (TFG) and the rival armed insurgency (ARS), as the leader of the government negotiating team. The Djibouti Agreement laid the foundation for the current Federal Government of Somalia. In 1999 Mr. Adan co-founded the first independent broadcast media ‘HornAfrik Media Inc.’ in Mogadishu, Somalia. HornAfrik’s growing public support attracted global recognition including 2002 CJFE Press Freedom Award for its work in the face of adversity. After decade long operation, HornAfrik became victim to the incessant violence, lawlessness and extremism in Somalia and was shut down by Al-Shabaab insurgents in 2010, following targeted assassinations of a number of its journalists and management, including one of the co-founders.

In 2001 Mr. Adan co-founded the Centre for Research & Dialogue (CRD), an independent national research Centre based in Mogadishu, Somalia and served as its first Director from 2001 to 2002. In 1990 Mr. Adan settled in Canada and started working for the city of Ottawa assuming various responsibilities as a Social worker, Counselor and Manager of Employment Center for the next 10 years. In the 1980s, Mr. Adan worked for the Somali Government in various capacities including the Director of the Higher Education Department from 1987-1989. Mr. Adan earned M.A degree (Social Research) from the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK in 1987 and

MSW (Social Policy) from McMaster University, Canada in 1986. In 1981, Mr. Adan completed his B.A from the Somali National University, Somalia.



**Mr. Jabril Ibrahim Abdulle** is Executive Director of the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) in Mogadishu and a leading civil society figure in Somalia. In his work at CRD he has overseen numerous studies peace building, governance, economic recovery, civil society, and the diaspora. The CRD Program is designed to assist local and national actors as well as the international community in responding more affectively to the challenges of overcoming conflict, preventing its re-occurrence and building a lasting peace in Somalia. Over the past 20 years, Jabril has worked with public and private sector groups including universities, local and regional governments, schools, religious institutions, and community organizations. Jabril has coordinated and assisted in drafting the latest UNDP Somalia Human Development entitled “Empowering Youth for Peace and Development”.

In July 2012, with the support of USAID and IOM Jabril has launched BARAARUG – Youth Grant, in Somalia. The initiative seeks young Somalis to apply for small grants worth between \$1,000 to \$5,000 USD to kick-start new innovative youth led projects, empowering the youth to engage in productive activities and encourages them to become an agent of change. As a part of an effort to re-engage Somalis in Diaspora, Jabril was asked by CARE Somalia and South with USAID funding to facilitate extensive public dialogue among Somalis inside Somali and outside Somalia. Jabril has visited over 20 counties across four continents where he hold meeting and dialogue among Somali and hoist countries, these dialogue was later aired through local Somali TVs a radios. Prior to returning to Somalia to help Somalia’s recovering process, in 1995, Jabril was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Trillium Foundation where he oversaw the dissemination of \$100 million actually to communities across Ontario. In 1995, in partnership with Carleton University Department of Law and Legal Studies, he helped found the Neighbourhood Coalition for Conflict Resolution, first non-profit, multi-cultural community based conflict resolution program in an Ottawa that provides mediation and conflict resolution services in the Ottawa-Carleton region, Canada's National Capital. He has published numerous articles, reports, and contributed to chapters of various books. He obtained his advanced education from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He holds degrees in Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology.



**Mr. Hashi Shafi** is the Founder and Executive Director of the Somali Action Alliance Education Fund, an organization dedicated to civic and social change. He is a professional community organizer, having led several efforts to help global engagement on civic participation electoral organizing and community led countering violence extremism in the United States, Europe, and Canada. He organized and convened a number of high profile accountability public meetings with US Senate officials including the late Senator Paul Wellstone, and Senators Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar.

In Minnesota, Mr. Shafi led the effort to build a strong relationship between law enforcement agencies and the Somali and Muslim community by hosting countless meetings between law enforcement agencies and community. These efforts resulted in the formation of a working group of community and faith leaders that engages with law enforcement agencies in an effort to reduce negative perceptions held or perceived by both sides, promote better relationships with each other, and rally the state's new citizens to understand that they are part of the wider American public where entire communities are not put under suspicion for crimes committed by individuals. Hashi also established the Young Somali-American Advisory Council with former Minnesota District US Attorney, Mr. B. Ted Jones. Mr. Shafi organized the first Somali Day at the Minnesota State capitol on 12 March 2009 to encourage Somalis to become civically engaged and involved in the process of democracy. Mr. Shafi has Mr. Shafi is a sought speaker and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management, as well as Executive Director leadership program from the University of St. Thomas and the Civic leadership at University of Southern California. Hashi successfully graduated as a Public Policy Fellow from the University of Minnesota.



**Mr. Abdirizak Farah** is a Senior Policy Advisor with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Secretary, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), where he serves as a key expert and advisor on homeland security, civil liberties, and countering violent extremism. He represents CRCL at high-level meetings with executives from other government agencies, private sector, and non-governmental agencies providing expert analysis and recommendations that support leadership decisions. Additionally, Abdi provides

training and high level briefings for department leadership and conducts CVE training for DHS personnel and other law enforcement agencies. Prior to joining the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Abdi worked for the City of Columbus as Coordinator where he developed and participated in the execution of a long term strategy that encompassed improved compliance of Title Six of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the successful integration of immigrant or refugee communities into the social and commercial fabric of Columbus life, with a marked improvement in the coordination of resources between the City and State to enhance the delivery of vital public services. He was also the host of the TV Show, Global Columbus on Government Channel-3. Before joining Mayor Michael B. Coleman's team, Abdi demonstrated his leadership skills while working for the United Nations as Political Officer where he worked on national reconciliation, grass-root level institution building and other capacity building initiatives, including conflict resolution, economic development and disarmament efforts.

**Panel Discussion IV: Internet, Social Media and Youth Radicalization**

*Moderator: Alimamy Bangura, PhD Candidate, OISE, University of Toronto*

**Mr. Abdulhalim Rijaal** is a Strategic Communications Analyst for U.S. Department of State. He is currently working on the Countering Violent Extremism program with the Digital Outreach Team under the State Department's Centre for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. He works closely with the Somali team as well as with the Arabic and Urdu team and the Video team. Abdulhalim is the person responsible for their Somali Facebook to counter Al-Shabaab and their message online. For the past 3 years, they took their FB page from 250 to 10,196 and it is growing. His experience is countering Al-Shabaab's radical messages and anyone who is susceptible to their narrative. Strategically, his team counters Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and AQ and disrupts their efforts of influencing the youth inside Somalia, Horn of Africa region and within the global diaspora, especially Europe, Canada and the U.S.



**Ms. Shanifa Nasser** is a Journalism Fellow at the Munk School of Global Affairs covering issues facing Muslims in North America and religion in the public sphere more broadly. She spent three years in a PhD program in Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto before pursuing journalism full-time. She has written on the theme of radicalization for CBC News as well as other topics for the National Post and VICE. (Twitter: @shanifanasser)



## CONFERENCE AGENDA

**Youth Radicalization: Policy and Education Response** (February 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2015)

OISE/University of Toronto – 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

| Time                       | DAY I: Thursday February 12, 2015                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Location |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>8:30 - 9:00 AM</b>      | <b>Registration and Continental Breakfast</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |          |
| <b>9:00 - 9:10 AM</b>      | <b>Welcome &amp; Opening Remarks</b><br><i>M.C.: Mohamed Jama, Youth Outreach Worker, Midaynta Community Services</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mahad Yusuf, Executive Director, Midaynta Community Services</li> <li>▪ Professor Julia O’Sullivan, Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |          |
| <b>9:10 - 9:30 AM</b>      | <b>Greetings from Dignitaries</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |          |
| <b>9:30 - 10:00 AM</b>     | <b>Keynote Address</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |          |
| <b>PLENARY SESSION</b>     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |          |
| <b>10:00 AM - 11:30 AM</b> | <b>Panel Discussion I: Exploring Community Experiences</b><br><i>Moderator: Fowzia Duale, Youth Outreach Worker, Midaynta Community Services</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Margaret Parsons, Lawyer, Executive Director, African Canadian Legal Clinic</li> <li>▪ Dr. Rima Berns-McGown, Associate Director, Centre for Comparative Study of Muslim Societies &amp; Cultures, Simon Fraser University</li> <li>▪ Dr. Hamid Slimi, Chairman of the Canadian Centre for Deen Studies, President of Faith of Life Network, Imam of Sayeda Khadija Centre</li> <li>▪ Farhia Abdi, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, York University</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                         |          |
| 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM        | <b>LUNCH BREAK (Dhuhr Prayer)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Screening of <i>Broken Dreams</i> documentary film</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |          |
| <b>12:45 - 2:15 PM</b>     | <b>Panel Discussion II: Developing a New Framework of Engagement with Local Communities: Building Government, Law enforcement, School and Community Competencies for Preventing Youth Radicalization</b><br><i>Moderator: Dr. Mohammad Fadel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mark Saunders, Deputy Chief, Toronto Police Service</li> <li>▪ Alia Hogben, Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women</li> <li>▪ Stephane L. Pressault, Project Coordinator, Canadian Council of Muslim Women</li> <li>▪ Dr. Jasmin Zine, Associate Professor of Sociology, Wilfred Laurier University</li> <li>▪ Yusra Siddiquee, Lawyer, Chair of Canadian Muslim Lawyers Association, Member of Cross Cultural Roundtable on Security</li> </ul> |          |
| <b>2:15 - 3:15 PM</b>      | <b>Panel Discussion III: Local to Global: Lessons Learned from Abroad</b><br><i>Moderator: Marva Wisdom, Consultant, Director of the Black Experience Project</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ H.E. Ambassador Ahmed Abdisalam, Somali Ambassador to Ethiopia, AU, IGAD and UNECA</li> <li>▪ Jabril Abdulle, Executive Director, Center for Research and Dialogue</li> <li>▪ Hashi Shafi, Executive Director, Somali Action Alliance</li> <li>▪ Abdirizak Farah, Policy Advisor, Office of Civil Liberties, U.S. Department of</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |          |

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  | Homeland Security                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3:15 - 3:30 PM                   | Coffee Break (‘Asr Prayer)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3:30 - 4:00 PM                   | Panel Discussion III Continued                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>4:00 - 4:45 PM</b>            | <b>Panel Discussion IV: Internet, Social Media and Youth Radicalization</b><br><i>Moderator: Alimamy Bangura, PhD Candidate, OISE, University of Toronto</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Abdulhalim Rijaal, Strategic Communications Analyst, Digital Outreach Team, U.S. Department of State</li> <li>▪ Shanifa Nasser, Journalist, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>4:45 - 4:50 PM</b>            | <b>Closing Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mahad Yusuf, Executive Director, Midaynta Community Services</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| DAY II: Friday February 13, 2015 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>8:30 - 9:00 AM</b>            | <b>Registration and Continental Breakfast</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>9:00 - 9:45 AM</b>            | <b>Reflections on Day I</b><br><i>Facilitator: Dr. Sarfarozi Niyozov, Associate Professor, OISE, University of Toronto</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:45 - 10:00 AM                  | Break & Transition to Action Groups                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| BREAKOUT SESSION                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>10:00 AM - 11:45 AM</b>       | <b>Addressing Youth Radicalization - Solutions and Action Plans</b><br>Action Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Law Enforcement &amp; Criminal Justice [Mark S., Steve B. – Library]</li> <li>▪ Education &amp; Youth [Fowzia D., Monica Shank – Library]</li> <li>▪ Community &amp; Faith [Alimamy B., Sarfarozi N. – Library]</li> <li>▪ Local &amp; Global Collaboration [Lucy E., Fisseha B. - 5<sup>th</sup> Fl., Rm 210/220]</li> <li>▪ Internet &amp; Social Media [Arif A., Sameena E. - 5<sup>th</sup> Fl., Rm 210/220]</li> </ul> |
| 11:45 - 1:00 PM                  | LUNCH BREAK (Jummah Prayer)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>1:00 - 2:30 PM</b>            | <b>Reporting and Discussing Action Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Dr. Sarfarozi Niyozov, Associate Professor, OISE, University of Toronto</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Marva Wisdom, Consultant, Director of the Black Experience Project</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>2:30 - 2:40 PM</b>            | <b>Closing Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mahad Yusuf, Executive Director, Midaynta Community Services</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services

The United States Consulate in Toronto

The Honourable Tracy MacCharles

Dean Julia O’Sullivan

Professor Sarfaroz Niyozov

Chief Mark Saunders of the Toronto Police Service

Faculty, Staff and Graduate Students of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Staff of Midaynta Community Services

Staff of Somali Immigrant Aid Organization

All the Speakers, Participants and Volunteers

