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## 'He coughed or spit on my scarf,' says teen as Calgary signs anti-Islamophobia charter

Calgary was one of six Canadian cities to endorse a charter Monday vowing to eliminate anti-Muslim hate crimes, as community leaders expressed concern about a rise in the number of Islamophobic hate crimes.

"It's a step to first acknowledge that this is a challenge and this is a real issue, said Hida Fadol of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, a civil liberties group.

"We can't even address the problem if we don't acknowledge it exists," Fadol added.

Statistics Canada says hate crimes targeting Muslims have increased, with 99 incidents reported in 2014, roughly double the number in 2012.

### Teen speaks out

Other cities signing the charter include Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, Windsor and London. Leaders from the six cities held simultaneous news conferences on Monday.

- **PUBLIC SPACE** | [Stand up to Islamophobia, urges Calgary doctor](#)
- [How Islamophobia is driving young Canadian Muslims to reclaim their identity](#)

Calgary resident Sarah Buzreba, 16, spoke out in favour of the new Charter for Inclusive Communities after becoming a victim of an Islamophobic attack.

Buzreba said she no longer feels safe using transit, after a bad experience with another passenger on the C-Train.

"As they were leaving, one of the guys, he got really close to my face. He called me an 'ISIS bitch' and then as he was leaving, he yelled 'Allahu Akbar' and then he either coughed or spit on my scarf. I really didn't want to look at him because I didn't want to provoke him in any way," the veiled teen said.

Buzreba says there were other passengers on the train who witnessed it, but no one said anything.

## Anti-Muslim graffiti

Aside from attacks on hijab-wearing women, there have been other anti-Muslim incidents in the city.



Cars and property were spray painted with racist statements at the Tuscany LRT station. (CBC)

For instance, last December the [Tuscany LRT station was vandalized](#) with racist graffiti that said "kill the muslims [sic]", alongside symbols of white supremacy. [One man pleaded guilty](#) to charges of mischief and inciting hatred. Another faces mischief charges.

Despite the attacks, Mayor Nenshi said Calgary remains an "incredibly" diverse and welcoming place.

"We're very lucky that issues of hatred or xenophobia against any group — whether Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-immigrants feeling, racism, you name it — are very, very rare and in fact met with general condemnation from the city of Calgary," Nenshi said.

"But I also think that this is something you've got to constantly be vigilant about, that you've constantly got to fight, and that good decent people really have to stand up against this sort of thing, and so good on them for doing it," he added.

In March, the Alberta Muslim Public Affairs Council started the 1-800-607-3312 hotline to help people report incidents of vandalism or discrimination related to Islamophobia.

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