

## International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**March 21, 2017**

For many months Canadians have watched the political climate across the border, seen the polarization of the American people and gaped in shock as events unfolded. While our attention was diverted, we somehow failed to perceive the deepening personal and political divisions of people in Canada. If not outright apathetic, we were willfully or ignorantly blind to the rise of fear and of hate in our country, perhaps because we thought we were immune.

The attack on the mosque in Quebec City that left 6 racialized, Muslim men dead was a shocking event that left many wondering how this could happen? How in Canada, a country known for its peace and politeness, could there be a killing of 6 innocent people in a place of worship, of refuge and sanctuary? This crime of hate against racialized, Muslim Canadians, because they were racialized and Muslim, seemed unimaginable.

We were forced from our complacency by the violent truth of these acts of hate. Much of the country responded with support. There appeared to be a common understanding that when we shut our eyes and our hearts to the injustices perpetrated against others racism and discrimination flourish. We took to the streets, we wrapped our arms and hearts around places of worship, we demanded a world where fear and hate, bigotry and racism are not allowed to impoverish the world and divide humanity against itself.

Our words and our actions following the attacks at the mosque are not enough. Racial discrimination and hate-motivated actions and crimes remain prevalent in Canada and around the world. Social media continues to abound with anti-Muslim, anti-migrant, anti-refugee rhetoric. Our would-be political leaders attend public forum and talk about “Canadian values” while calling for “screening” of immigrants and refugees ignoring that everyone who steps foot in Canada is screened. They construct an “us” against “them” story that is taking root, causing people to believe they are defending something not being attacked.

On March 21, 2017, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we call for a national conversation about racism and the rise of hate. We call on trade unionists, social justice activists and advocates, political parties, non-governmental actors and grass roots organizations to engage with one another, to create a forum where we can begin the process of reweaving the social fabric that binds us all together.