

IMPORTED CONFLICT 'NOT AN ISSUE IN CANADA'

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Toronto Correspondent, 24 March 2014

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John Monahan, executive director of the Mosaic Institute said: "Virtually everyone we interviewed told us how their relationships to the conflicts they came from have changed since coming to Canada. It shows us that living in Canada transforms the way we see the world."

The study asked Canadians about their understanding of the prevalence of 'imported conflict' and how they believe it manifests itself in Canada, as well as their views on what the government should do about it. It then did extensive in-depth interviews with 220 Canadians who come from, or whose families come from, eight regions that either have experienced, or are currently experiencing conflict: North and South Sudan; the Horn of Africa; the Middle East; Armenia/Turkey; the countries of former Yugoslavia; Sri Lanka; and India/Pakistan.

While 'new' Canadians don't import violent conflict, they do import trauma, said Rima Burns-McGowan, research director for the Mosaic Institute's study. "That trauma is a heavy burden, and can transcend generations. How we treat it will have a major impact on our social cohesion."

The study found that a majority of Canadians believe that people who have experienced conflict hold onto intercommunity tensions after coming to Canada, and many fear that those tensions may result in violence. However, the study showed that communities of Canadians who come from

conflict—regardless of community, conflict generation—repudiate violence in Canada as a means of resolving or responding to conflict.

The Mosaic Institute survey also concluded that Canada dramatically transforms their perceptions of those overseas conflicts, as well as their view of possible solutions. These transformations reflect Canadian modes of dealing with diversity and fostering social cohesion.

A sidebar conclusion was that systemic racism and exclusion that prevent people from fully participating economically, socially, or politically in Canadian life can cause them to withdraw attachment to Canada. Similarly many Canadians suffer from untreated conflict-related trauma, and untreated trauma can impede people's ability to integrate and begin to reframe their perspectives of conflict. These challenges, not 'imported conflict' damage social cohesion.

The survey has developed 15 recommendations for Public Safety Canada which touch on such areas as implementing specific proposals to combat racism and exclusion in the labour market and public institutions; mobilizing healthcare resources to address conflict-related trauma; establishing a national strategy related to conflict and its effects; and encouraging Canadians from all sides of overseas conflicts to engage in constructive dialogue.

While the survey's recommendations have the potential to reduce the trauma experienced by 'new' Canadians, who have come from conflict areas, the 110-page survey summary starts on a jarring note and lacks balance. The page is a reprint of six quotes from the interviewees. Of the six, THREE are from Armenians... and of the three two would be rejected by most Canadian-Armenians.

The first from "D., Armenian woman, 27, born in Toronto, 2nd generation": "...But the Canadian mentality is to understand everyone's problems. When you do that, the hatred you were taught calms down."

The second, from "A., Armenian woman 27, born in Montreal, second generation": "There is no way I would be so open-minded if I lived in Lebanon or Armenia. My fresh-off-the-boat cousins' views are so different from mine."

However, the quotes from Armenians and Turks within the brief reflect widespread Armenian and Turkish views on their conflict. The Armenians see Turkey's admission of the Genocide of Armenians as the solution to their conflict. Turks repeat the standard Turkish denial of being culpable in the Genocide. Several of the Turks also accused Armenians of committing violent acts against the Turks during the First World War.

