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**XENOPHOBIC TFGDV AGAINST RACIALIZED
WOMEN AND 2SLGBTQI+ PEOPLE IN CANADA**

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This briefing exposes harmful xenophobic and racist narratives that are being used to target racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people on digital spaces in Canada. It reveals how they are targeted through attacks both on their gender identity, race and their perceived migration status; the weaponization of gender-based narratives to target racialized migrants; and the deeply troubling impacts of such harmful narratives being amplified and normalized in digital spaces.

Cover Page: Illustration by Nala Haileselassie

1. GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
2SLGBTQI+	This term has been used to refer to a broad category of people, including those who identify as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, although we recognize that there are many terms around the world that are used by people to define their sexual orientation or gender identity.
Migrant	The term 'migrant' has been used to refer to all persons who move away from their country of origin across an international border with the purpose of living temporarily or permanently in another country. ¹
Racialized Migrants and others perceived as such	<p>This briefing focuses on racialized migrants and others perceived as such, based on the inextricable link between xenophobia and racism and Amnesty International's documentation of increasing xenophobic discrimination linked to systemic racism², including in this briefing. There is an intrinsic intersection between xenophobia and racism. Xenophobia involves processes of racialization and structural patterns of racism and hierarchization, which is linked with the legacy of colonialism and slavery, including systemic asymmetries between and within regions and countries.³</p> <p>The term 'others perceived as such' encompasses all persons who are affected by racial discrimination or intersecting forms of discrimination in the context of xenophobia, such as persons and groups who are perceived, treated or regarded as outsiders or foreigners or 'others', simply based on their race and irrespective of their actual migration status.⁴ Structural racism underpins the root causes of social and political processes that perpetuate such othering. This results in unequal and discriminatory treatment, including in the enjoyment of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.</p> <p>The term 'racialized migrant/migrants' has been used throughout the briefing as a shorthand to refer to 'racialized migrants and others perceived as such'.</p>
Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV)	Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV) encompasses any act of violence, or threat thereof, perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and/or amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, that disproportionately impacts women and girls but can also impact other people based on their real and/or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and/or expression or sex characteristics, causing physical, psychological, economic or sexual harm.

¹ The meaning of the term 'migrant' as used in this briefing draws on the definition proposed in the joint general recommendation No. 39 (2025) of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and general comment No. 8 (2025) of the Committee on Migrant Workers. In line with the joint general recommendation/comment, the term 'migrant' in this briefing "is applicable regardless of the reason for leaving their country, their status in the country of transit or destination or the grounds on which they apply for or obtain a residence permit, such as family ties, employment, studies, asylum or other forms of protection, or regional agreements."

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW), Joint general recommendation No. 39 (2025) of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and General Comment No. 7 (2025) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1 December 2025, UN Doc.CERD/C/GC/38-CMWC/GC/7, para 8.

² Amnesty International, Submission to the UN CERD-CMW joint general comment/recommendation: Obligations of state parties on addressing and eradicating xenophobia and its impact on the rights of migrants, their families, and other non-citizens affected by racial discrimination (Index Number: IOR 40/7898/2024), 4 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/7898/2024/en/>

Index Number: IOR 40/7898/2024

³ CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 38 of CERD and General Comment No. 7 of CMW (previously cited), para 16.

⁴ CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 38 of CERD and General Comment No. 7 of CMW (previously cited), para 12.

WORD

DESCRIPTION

Two-Spirit (2S)

'Two-spirit' is a term used by some Indigenous Peoples to describe their spiritual, sexual, gender, cultural, and community identities. It is a term created by and for Indigenous Peoples and should only be used by Indigenous Peoples. It moves beyond colonial understandings of gender and sexuality and centres the reclamation of roles and identities disrupted by the colonization of land and language.⁵

While the term Two-Spirit (or Indigiqueer) is widely used today, it remains a broad term that, for many, does not capture or replace the diverse identities, teachings, and expressions that exist within specific Indigenous Nations.

'Two-Spirit' is not a direct translation of terms like 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual,' or 'transgender'. Instead, it signifies a spiritual and cultural identity that encompasses gender, sexual orientation, and often, specific ceremonial and social roles, and thereby focuses on the spiritual underpinning of gender identity, rather than a purely sex-based perspective.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is a phenomenon whereby migrants and persons belonging to various social groups or minorities are portrayed and perceived as others, outsiders or enemies owing to prejudices, stereotypes and negative perceptions and the belief that they threaten the predominant culture, heritage and wealth.⁶ This narrative is used to justify their exclusion and marginalization, leading to discrimination on the basis of their status as non-nationals, and other intersectional grounds. Xenophobia violates human dignity, and the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

⁵ Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance, Understanding The Term "Two-Spirit", <https://w2sa.ca/two-spirit-library/understanding-the-term-two-spirit> (accessed on 2 February 2026); Native Women's Association Of Canada, Intersections: Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, https://faq-qnw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2S_Intersections_Booklet_V2.pdf (accessed on 2 February 2026); Canadian Museum for Human Rights, What Is Two-Spirit? Part One: Origins, <https://humanrights.ca/story/what-two-spirit-part-one-origins> (accessed on 2 February 2026); Yellowhead Institute, Zaagi'diwin Inakinogewin I Love Law: A Policy Note For Protecting Two-Spirit, Non-Binary & Trans Indigenous Peoples, 2 August 2022, <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2022/zaagidiwin-inakinogewin-love-law-a-policy-note-for-protecting-two-spirit-non-binary-trans-indigenous-peoples/> (accessed on 2 February 2026).

⁶ CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 38 of CERD and General Comment No. 7 of CMW (previously cited), para 2.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CONTENT WARNING

This briefing contains descriptions and examples of content which include racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, transphobic language, and graphic calls for violence and discrimination against a number of marginalized communities, which may be distressing for some readers.

Racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+⁷ people and others perceived as such⁸, have successfully used digital spaces to share their experiences, challenge violence, facilitate transnational activism, foster community, exchange resources and build collective resilience. It has also been a critical tool in challenging hegemony and erasure of their lives by directly engaging with and sharing their viewpoints with different audiences.

However, amid rising anti-migrant sentiment and rhetoric in Canada,⁹ digital spaces have become critical sites where gendered, homophobic, transphobic, racist and xenophobic narratives are being amplified. This has had deeply harmful impacts on racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

Between May 2024 and September 2025, Amnesty International undertook interviews and in-depth social media analysis to understand the forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV)¹⁰ faced by women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists and journalists from Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in Canada. Twenty five scoping interviews were conducted between May 2024 and August 2024 with Indigenous, Black, and other racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists/advocates, human rights defenders, journalists, as well as with spokespersons or representatives of organizations that serve these communities. Six of these scoping interviews were used to inform final findings of this research,¹¹ based on written consent from the participants obtained in July 2025. Amnesty International conducted 22 additional interviews between July and September 2025. In total, this research is informed by 28 interviews with people from the provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

⁷ The acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and the "+" acknowledges all other gender identities and sexual orientations.

⁸ This briefing focuses on racialized migrants and others perceived as such, based on the inextricable link between xenophobia and racism and Amnesty International's documentation of increasing xenophobic discrimination linked to systemic racism, including in this briefing. Xenophobia is both a systemic driver of racial discrimination and a consequence of structural forms of racism and discrimination against migrants and others perceived as such.

The term "others perceived as such" encompasses all persons who are affected by racial discrimination or intersecting forms of discrimination in the context of xenophobia, such as persons and groups who are perceived, treated or regarded as outsiders or foreigners or 'others', simply based on their race and irrespective of their actual migration status. Structural racism underpins the root causes of social and political processes that perpetuate such othering. This results in unequal and discriminatory treatment, including in the enjoyment of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. (CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 38 of CERD and General Comment No. 7 of CMW (previously cited))

The term 'racialized migrant/migrants' has been used throughout the briefing as a shorthand to refer to 'racialized migrants and others perceived as such'

⁹ Environics Institute for Survey Research, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2024, https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final-report94fae631-0284-4ba5-b06a-e0aeeab5daf3.pdf?sfvrsn=9f47b717_1

¹⁰ Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV) encompasses any act of violence, or threat thereof, perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and/or amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, that disproportionately impacts women and girls but can also impact other people based on their real and/or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and/or expression or sex characteristics, causing physical, psychological, economic or sexual harm

¹¹ Of the 25 scoping interviews conducted by Amnesty International, informed consent to use their testimonies to inform the findings of this report were received from six of the 25 participants that were initially interviewed and have therefore been included in developing the analysis of this research.



In addition, Amnesty International analysed social media data collected from three sets of sources. The primary data source were posts across social media platforms that were made by accounts and handles promoting anti-rights narratives, which were identified by Amnesty International due to their large online following and influence, their history of spreading harmful narratives targeting women, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities, and their ability to reach and shape conversations well beyond their immediate audiences. These accounts belonged to political figures, media personalities and controversial social media influencers. In a second step, Amnesty International studied 32 popular hashtags, comprising of widely circulated terms being used to target women, 2SLGBTQI+ people and Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities. Lastly, Amnesty International reviewed 31 Twitter/X posts made by 22 racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists belonging to Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities, and the comments received in response to their posts.

The data collected by Amnesty International reveal multiple thematic patterns and narratives through which women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists and journalists from Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities are targeted. However, this briefing focuses on a subset of xenophobic narratives from the interviews and the social media analysis, given that themes around migration were one of the most intensely targeted ideas in the social media data studied by Amnesty International.

Within the body of social media posts analysed by Amnesty International in this research, visibly racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ were found to be targeted through a combination of racial animus with sexist, homophobic and transphobic content to attack their identity both as women and as racialized individuals. They were found to be targeted through many of the same tropes aimed at wider migrant communities, through language rooted in racist and xenophobic themes.

Migrants, and racialized migrants in particular, were depicted as “mooches”, “parasites”, and “grifters” who come to Canada for “free stuff”, and “handouts”, through deliberate conflation of legitimate economic concerns with racist scapegoating. Within these social media narratives, racialized migrants were often portrayed as economic burdens, looking to “exploit” Canada’s social safety net and as “undeserving drains” on national resources, which falsely places the blame for “the economic failures of Governments and the global neoliberal order”¹² on migrants. They were also targeted with dehumanizing language which used animalistic and debasing terms to refer to racialized migrant communities, including racist language which deemed them as “savages”, “animals”, “vermin” and “parasites”. The language in the sample social media posts studied by Amnesty International was equally found to be steeped in misogyny. Racialized women who were vocal online were subjected to slurs like “sl*t”, “b*tch”, “ska*k”, and “e-tho*s” and severe, gendered slurs like “c**t”. Their physical appearance was often a focus of attack, with terms like “fat” and “ugly” used to demean them.

¹² UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Report, 25 April 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/38/52, para 60.

FROM DEHUMANIZING LANGUAGE TO CALLS FOR EXTERMINATION: AN ONLINE PIPELINE OF HATE AND VIOLENCE

In the interviews conducted by Amnesty International and the social media posts that were analysed as a part of this research,¹³ a number of deeply harmful sexist, racist and xenophobic narratives were found to be circulating online.

For instance, a dominant narrative theme that emerged is the idea that “mass immigration” poses an existential threat to Canada and specifically to its white “legacy” population, often framed using the language of the “great replacement”¹⁴ or “white genocide”.¹⁵ Proponents of this theory claim that white Christian populations are being deliberately replaced by non-white migrants, particularly Asian and African, at an ethnic and cultural level, through migration policies and the growth of minority communities.¹⁶

Within this framing, racialized migrants are framed not as people seeking safety and better opportunities but as “invaders”, “foreign troglodytes”, and “3rd world gimmigrants”¹⁷ who threaten an ethno-nationalist idea of the nation.¹⁸ For instance, in the social media posts reviewed by Amnesty International, the presence of Muslims was painted as a deliberate and hostile “invasion” or “conquest.” The South Asian community in Canada was also severely targeted through this narrative, with one commentator noting, “Take in 4 million over a few years here and the results have been nothing short of catastrophic.”¹⁹

Amnesty International also found several ways in which this narrative is gendered. With racialized migrants repeatedly being painted as an invasive threat to Canadian economy, values, culture and society at large, in the social media posts analysed by Amnesty International, there were numerous calls asking for women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized communities to be deported, or they were told that they don’t belong in Canada and that they must ‘go back’, even when they were Canadian citizens. Many of the interviewees also reported being subjected to the same rhetoric.

Any public visibility of marginalized groups was seen as constituting an existential threat to a white, Christian, patriarchal order, perceived as representative of the entirety of Canadian society. Women from racialized migrant communities were targeted as symbols of a perceived “invasion”, and their presence in public life was framed as a hostile takeover of Canadian institutions. This narrative marks them as outsiders with no right to speak on national issues, invalidating their perspectives.

For instance, in 2022, journalist Saba Eitizaz, was subject to a violent and organized hate attack.²⁰ She told Amnesty International, “**the hate seemed to be more directed, just anger that I even had a voice in Canadian media.**” She faced a second wave of targeted attack and vitriolic hate in 2023 for her coverage of the genocide in Gaza.²¹ Saba told Amnesty International: “**An e-mail I remember which kind of talked about in great detail how they could break my jaw so I wouldn’t be able to talk, but then they wouldn’t kill me.**” One of the emails was also filled with racial slurs directed at her different identities of being Muslim and migrating from Pakistan, along with other more generic racist slurs.

¹³ As noted in the Methodology section, for the purpose of this research, Amnesty International looked at selective posts across X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Telegram and one post on YouTube.

¹⁴ Southern Poverty Law Center, “The Racist ‘great replacement’ Conspiracy Theory Explained”, 17 May 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/hatewatch/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained/>; The Conversation, “What is the ‘great replacement theory’? A scholar of race relations explains”, 15 March 2024, <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-replacement-theory-a-scholar-of-race-relations-explains-224835>.

¹⁵ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, White genocide Conspiracy Theory, 2022, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/White-Genocide.pdf> (accessed on 20 January 2026).

¹⁶ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “The Great Replacement”: A conspiracy claiming white Europeans are under threat”, August 2022, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-Great-Replacement-ISD-External-August2022.pdf>.

¹⁷ The term ‘gimmigrant’ is a derogatory combination of gimme (short for ‘give me’) and immigrant, used to portray immigrants as people supposedly draining the welfare and public services.

¹⁸ The construction of an ethno-nationalist identity and the delineation of “outsider” communities is based on the organization of the Canadian society around white supremacy. Settler-colonialism has shaped the formation of Canada as an extension of Britain and its institutions and as a white nation, “White Canada”, institutionalizing racial hierarchies and white supremacy. See: Henry Yu, “Reckoning with the Realities of History: The Politics of White Supremacy and the Expansion of Settler Democracy in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries”, in Julien Mauduit and Jennifer Tunnicliffe (editors), *Constant Struggle: Histories of Canadian Democratization*, 2021; John Price, “Canada, white supremacy and the twinning of empires”, December 2013, *International Journal*, Issue 68 Volume 4, pp.628-638, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24709363>; Enaksi Dua, Narda Razack & Jody Nyasha Warner, “Race, Racism and Empire: Reflections on Canada”, 2005, *Social Justice*, Issue 32, Volume 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29768333>

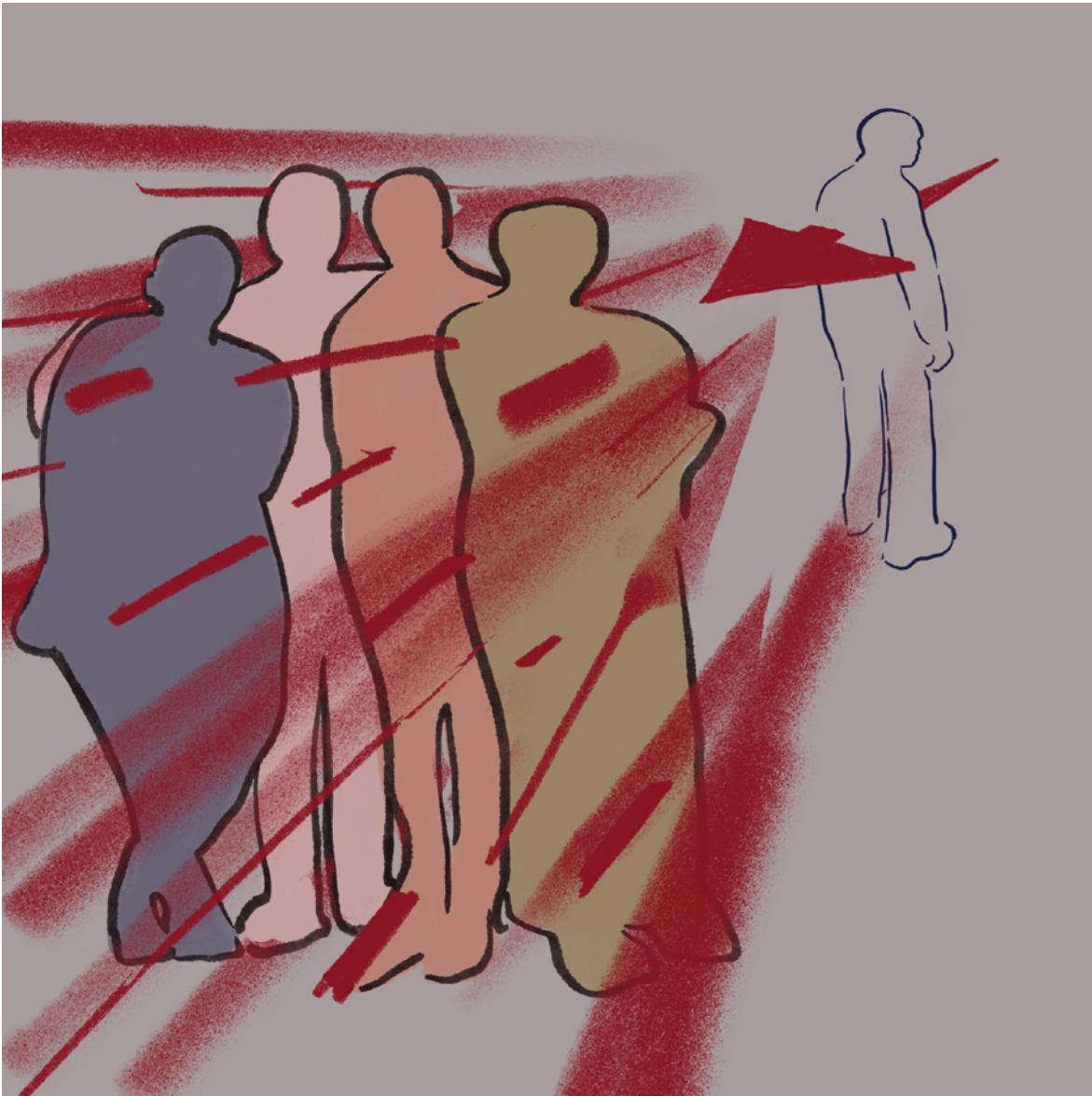
¹⁹ Joe, X post: “We could move the entire population of Canada into India and with 1.5 billion Indians, we’d be a rounding error”, 13 July 2025, <https://x.com/notthatjoe/status/1944521820792828038>

²⁰ Coalition for Women in Journalism, “Canada: Right-wing populist leaders weaponize social media to silence journalists”, October 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/615e9c03e618583383cc9786/t/61712a380a413d644bd9f935/1634806331124/Canada%2BReport%2C%2B0ct%2B2021%2B%283%29.pdf>

²¹ Coalition for Women in Journalism, “Canada: Surge of Threats Target Journalist Saba Eitizaz Amid Israel-Gaza War”, 18 October 2023, <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/canada-surge-of-threats-target-journalist-saba-eitizaz-amid-israel-gaza-war>

Moreover, not only are racialized migrants characterized as an existential threat to a generalized white Canadian social order, but the texts in social media posts analysed by Amnesty International indicate that women's and 2SLGBTQI+ people's rights have often been instrumentalized to further cast racialized migrant populations as a threat to public safety and, in particular, white "traditional" families

For instance, while analysing targeting faced by South Asian communities in Canada, it was found that Indian men, in particular, were stereotyped as inherently dangerous, criminal, and sexually predatory. The phrase, "They would probably rape and murder us. Then rape us some more," was repeated in multiple comments in the social media data gathered by Amnesty International. References to "rape gangs" and "grooming gangs", supposedly run by Black and brown men, found in the social media data gathered by Amnesty International, could be seen as creating a potent sense of fear and moral panic, and invoking a sense of imminent sexual threat, particularly to white women and children from racialized migrant men.



© ↑ An attack rooted in racist tropes aimed at racialized men extends outward, harming and attempting to silence broader communities of racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

© Illustration by Nala Haileselassie

This narrative was found to be weaponized in multiple ways. In the first instance, the harmful racist trope of Black and brown men being sexually deviant predators was used to justify hatred towards and calls for expulsions of racialized migrants in a bid to supposedly "protect white women and children". Simultaneously, the same narrative was often used to force vocal racialized women into silence. For instance, Samira Mohiyeddin, a journalist, broadcaster and producer, told Amnesty International that the weaponization of her sexuality as a lesbian and being of Iranian origin is often used to attack her coverage of the genocide in Gaza. She noted,

“

I mean a lot of them (hateful comments) have to do with, you know, when you're reporting truthfully on what is happening in Gaza, then your sexuality is weaponized against you. So, a lot of the commentary is if Hamas got a hold of you, they would rape you or one of the comments was you can't wear a dildo in Gaza or what roof are you going to be thrown off of? You know, after they rape you, they're going to throw you off a roof.²²

”

Another trend observed in the social media analysis was the weaponization of 2SLGBTQI+ people to scapegoat racialized migrants, thereby pitting two marginalized communities against each other. In the social media content studied by Amnesty International, for instance, there was co-option of language of queer liberation to attack Muslims. Islam was claimed to be “anti queer in its very existence” and that its followers must be deported to “save” Western liberal values.

This framing also allows commentators to seemingly position themselves as defenders of rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Far from this being true, Amnesty International’s analysis found that many of the same accounts that target racialized migrants, also advocated for exclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ people, portraying queer lives as “unnatural” and a “threat to social order.” The commentary points to an understanding where both the presence of racialized migrants and 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canadian society was seen as a symptom of “moral decay” and “national ruin.”

This is a frequently used strategy among anti-rights groups whereby the supposed defence of one marginalized group (in this case, queer people and women) is used as a rhetorical weapon to justify profound hatred against another (in this case, Muslims and South Asians), all while simultaneously undermining any efforts to advance their rights and targeting progressive movements that actually advocate for the rights of marginalized groups.

Another prominent tactic used to target racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people in the social media posts analysed by Amnesty International, was to systematically dehumanize racialized migrants, as a way of justifying their mass expulsion and violence against them. Data analysed by Amnesty International found that Muslims were found to be constantly referenced through dehumanizing language of “parasites”, “scum”, “trash”, “rodents”, “vermin”, and “animals”, with some social media posts explicitly stating that “Muslims are not humans”. Black people were also found to be described as “little more than animals” within the social media posts analysed by Amnesty International and people of South Asian origin, particularly Indians, were referred to with dehumanizing slurs such as “pajeets”²³, “jeets”, “savages”, “animals”, “parasites” and “cockroaches”.

²² Online interview with Samira Mohiyeddin, 12 August 2025.

²³ ‘Pajeet’ is an invented name which sounds ‘Indian’ and which emerged among anti-rights accounts as a derogatory term to refer to Indians. See: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “The rise of anti-South Asian hate in Canada”, 1 April 2025, https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/the-rise-of-anti-south-asian-hate-in-canada/

Amnesty International’s analysis found that poor hygiene was a recurring and dominant theme targeting South Asians, with comments being replete with references to harmful stereotypes about South Asians having strong body odour as well as being hairy and unsanitary. Comments using the term “smelly” have frequently flooded South Asian women in digital spaces.²⁴ South Asian women were also portrayed as “unattractive,” a continuation of the harmful trope casting South Asians as “unsanitary”. The long hair kept by South Asian women, in particular Sikh women, was found to be replete with associations of dirt, smell, being unclean and unhygienic, which in turn was used to paint them as less feminine and unattractive.

The language and imagery used within social media spaces covered by Amnesty International, was replete with references of racialized migrants being fundamentally “uncivilized” and “undesirable” in stark juxtaposition to a more “civilized” white population. These stereotypes are reminiscent of colonial-era tropes that associated non-western populations with filth, disease and savagery, which was often used to justify legal exclusion and colonial violence, including against Indigenous Peoples and racialized populations in Canada.²⁵ In the present, the use of this language similarly seeks to dehumanize entire populations of racialized migrants as being less than human, that can then be used to justify violence against them, call for their removal from Canada or even elimination of entire communities.

A HEAVY TOLL WITH NO RECOURSE

The online ecosystem of racist and xenophobic hate wherein racialized migrants are routinely subjected to dehumanization narratives, and hateful and vile stereotypes, has impacted the lives of racialized communities in a plethora of harmful ways.

Interviewees told Amnesty International that being regularly subjected to anti-migrant rhetoric, both through direct attacks, as well as through circulation of popular xenophobic messaging on social media, has taken a massive toll on their mental, emotional and physical health as well as their professional growth. In the aftermath of receiving emails which claimed to know where journalist Erica Ifill lived, she was forced to leave her house for fear of being personally attacked. She told Amnesty International that she fell into deep depression in 2022, when the online hate campaign started, and this continued well into 2023.

“

IT WAS SUPER DIFFICULT. IT WAS DEPRESSING. IT WAS VERY SHOCKING... I LIKE TO CALL IT A DIGITAL LYNCH. I GOT DIGITALLY LYNCHED

Erica Ifill, Black-Caribbean journalist ²⁶

”

²⁴ Online interview with Joyita Sengupta, 19 August 2025.

²⁵ Daniel N. Paul, *We Were Not The Savages*, *First Nations History: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*, 4th edition., October 2022. See also: Cole Harris, *Making Native Space Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, 2002; Pamela Palmater, “Genocide, Indian Policy, and Legislated Elimination of Indians in Canada”, June 2014, *Aboriginal Policy Studies Issue 3*, Volume 3. See Section 4.1. for details below.

²⁶ Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025.

Self-censorship has been another key impact of the racist and xenophobic targeting that women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized communities or those perceived as such, faced. Given the ever present threat of being subjected to xenophobic, racist and misogynistic attack, a number of interviewees told Amnesty International that prolonged exposure to such messaging has forced them to rethink what they post online. Many reported they had to make their accounts private, disable comments, and avoid reading comments and posts to protect their mental health.

Fears about the safety implications of being vocal online are not unfounded. The hate circulating online is not limited to posts and comments that remain behind screens. For instance, Statistics Canada's report on hate crimes found that in 2023, 44.5 per cent of reported hate incidents in Canada were motivated by race or ethnicity with South Asian and Black people facing higher rates of hate-based threats and assaults.²⁷ Hate crimes towards South Asian communities was found to have increased by 143 per cent from 2019 to 2022.²⁸ Between 2022 and 2023, there was also a significant increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims.²⁹

Yet, despite the deeply harmful and concerning impacts of racist and xenophobic TfGBV on racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people, they have seldom found any support in the various institutions that have an obligation to address this.³⁰

Across the board, interviewees told Amnesty International that they often did not see much value in filing a police complaint for most instances of TfGBV they faced, as they did not believe their complaints about online harassment would be taken seriously. Their hesitation to approach law enforcement must be situated within broader histories of racist policing of marginalized communities. Law enforcement in Canada has repeatedly been accused of subjecting Black, Indigenous and racialized communities to systemic racist violence and discrimination in various forms.³¹

When those Amnesty International interviewed did reach out to law enforcement, their experiences only confirmed what they feared. A number of interviewees told Amnesty International that when they reported instances of TfGBV, including threats of violence, to the police, they were told that they should just block the perpetrators or "be careful" or that there is nothing that the police could do about online hate.³² While in most instances police failed to lodge a report, even in the rare instances when this was done, interviewees told Amnesty International that no action was taken, which violates Canada's obligations under international human rights law.³³

Yet, despite facing such harms and not receiving any support from the State, racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ persons and those perceived as such, have continued to find ways to navigate and resist such violence and remain resilient in the face of such vitriolic hate. Their strategies have ranged from practical steps to ensure safety, protect their mental health, while also building networks of support and solidarity amongst each other.

The intersectional nature of the TfGBV faced by racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from migrant communities requires imaginative solutions that centre their voices, specific vulnerabilities, needs and realities, which have so far gone unattended within efforts to address TfGBV in Canada. Given the deeply harmful impacts stemming from the normalization of dehumanizing language and calls for violence against racialized migrants noted in this research, policymakers must take urgent steps to prevent, protect and holistically address xenophobic and racist narratives circulating online, including the TfGBV faced by women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized migrant communities.

²⁷ Statistics Canada, "Police-reported information Hub – Hate crime in Canada", 29 September 2025, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>

²⁸ Statistics Canada, "Police-reported hate crime 2022", 13 March 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240313/dq240313b-eng.htm>

²⁹ Statistics Canada, "Table 6 - Police-reported hate crimes, by detailed motivation, Canada, 2020 to 2023", 21 August 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240725/t006b-eng.htm>

³⁰ Under international and regional human rights treaties and instruments, states are required to ensure that individuals whose rights have been violated by TfGBV have access to remedy. See for instance: Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), Article 8; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Article 2(3); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 2; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Article 6; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 2; Convention Against Torture (CAT) Article 14; American Convention on Human Rights, Article 25, among others.

³¹ Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on systemic racism in policing in Canada found evidence of systemic racism in how policing is carried out in Canada. The report points to the over-representation of Indigenous and racialized people within the criminal justice system and described over-policing, practices of racial profiling and discriminatory use of force against these populations. It also noted that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people are particularly impacted by systemic discrimination in policing, experiencing both over-policing and under-policing (i.e. a lack of police assistance) when they are the victims of criminal acts. House of Commons, Systemic Racism in Policing: Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, June 2021, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/parl/kc76-1/XC76-1-1-432-6-eng.pdf

³² Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025; Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025; Online interview with Deepa Mattoo, 10 July 2025.

³³ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025; Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025; Online interview with Samira Mohiyeddin, 12 August 2025.

Amnesty International, therefore, calls on the Government of Canada and the Provincial and Territorial governments to take urgent steps to address racist and xenophobic TfGBV, including through the following measures:

- Strengthen comprehensive legislative and policy measures to prevent and address TfGBV:
 - Enact comprehensive legislative and policy measures to recognize, prevent, document, investigate and address all forms of TfGBV, including xenophobic and racist TfGBV, through meaningful consultations with diverse women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized migrant communities;
 - Prohibit amplification of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence against racialized migrant communities, and those perceived as migrants both online and offline;
 - Situate efforts to address xenophobic TfGBV within broader efforts to tackle and address systemic discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, through an intersectional and structural lens;
- Ensure survivor-centred support and access to justice:
 - Provide redress and holistic support for survivors, that is racially and culturally relevant and accessible, and do not rely on traditional criminal justice systems;
 - Decentralize redressal efforts by championing leadership and outreach by community-based organizations;
- Commit to shifting xenophobic narratives online and offline in collaboration with municipalities:
 - Publicly acknowledge the harms caused by false and misleading statements and circulation of messages that perpetuate and incite stigma, discrimination and violence against racialized migrant communities, and those perceived as such;
 - Disseminate accurate and timely information to stop the spread of misinformation and efforts to misrepresent marginalized communities;
 - Undertake public education that seeks to build deeper understanding of and empathy for racialized migrants and their contribution to society.



3. METHODOLOGY

This briefing is based on a combination of desk research, interviews and social media analysis conducted by Amnesty International between May 2024 and September 2025. Based on literature review and consultations with community organizations, the research focuses on forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)³⁴ faced by women and 2SLGBTQI+³⁵ activists and journalists from Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in Canada.

This briefing is primarily based on interviews conducted by Amnesty International and detailed computational text analysis of social media posts. In addition to first person narratives and experiences documented through interviews, Amnesty International commissioned detailed analysis of social media posts to gather insights on public discourse and attitudes surrounding Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in Canada, especially references to women and 2SLGBTQI+ persons within these communities. This involved review of posts on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Telegram and YouTube.

In addition to interviews and social media analysis, the research involved review of academic literature, reports by civil society organizations, media reports, and reports by United Nations agencies and mechanisms. Amnesty International also analysed relevant national legislation and regional and international human rights law and standards.

While the data collected by Amnesty International reveal multiple thematic patterns and narratives through which women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists and journalists from Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities are targeted, this briefing focuses on a subset of xenophobic narratives from the interviews and the social media analysis, given that themes around migration were one of the most intensely targeted ideas in the social media data studied by Amnesty International. Attacks on migration and Canada's policy of 'multiculturalism'³⁶ emerged as one of the most intensely targeted ideas in the social media data studied by Amnesty International. They were consistently framed as an existential threat to Canada's national identity, economic stability, and social cohesion, with migration being described as an "invasion" and a "deliberate act of destruction", and rhetoric suggesting it is a form of "biological warfare" and "white genocide".

³⁴ Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) encompasses any act of violence, or threat thereof, perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and/or amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, that disproportionately impacts women and girls but can also impact other people based on their real and/or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and/or expression or sex characteristics, causing physical, psychological, economic or sexual harm

³⁵ The acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and the "+" acknowledges all other gender identities and sexual orientations.

³⁶ Multiculturalism was introduced as a government policy in 1971 within a bilingual framework. Multiculturalism was intended to preserve the cultural freedom of individuals and provide recognition of the cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Canadian society. The government committed to support multiculturalism by assisting cultural groups in their development, assisting individuals in overcoming discriminatory barriers, encouraging intercultural exchange and assisting migrants in learning French or English. (Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Canadian Multiculturalism Policy of 1971, <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-multiculturalism-policy-1971>, (accessed on 5 February 2026). However, anti-racism scholars have pointed out that "Multiculturalism tolerates cultural difference but does not challenge an unjust society premised on white supremacy. The anti-racism movement mobilized by racialized communities in Canada indicates that multiculturalism has failed to respond to racialized communities' pressing demand for social change and action for social justice", pointing to the policies failure in addressing systemic and structural racism underpinning discrimination and violence faced by Black, Indigenous and other racialized groups. See: Ling Lei and Shiba Guo, "Beyond multiculturalism: re-imagining a model of pandemic anti-racism education in post-Covid-19 Canada", 2022, International Journal of Anthropology and Ethnology, Volume 6, Issue 1.



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Moreover, as the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance notes, groups that have historically faced discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or gender identification are “more likely to be subject to xenophobia precisely because of their place ‘outside’ the dominant community identity,”³⁷ it becomes imperative to focus on the intersectional nature and manifestation of xenophobic hate. This briefing therefore seeks to contribute to evidence on the intersectional nature of xenophobic targeting, through the lens of TfGBV faced by women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized migrant communities.

The wider findings from the research will be detailed in a forthcoming report.

Amnesty International shared its findings with Meta, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and Telegram on 23 March 2026. Amnesty International also addressed a right of reply letter to the prime minister of Canada, copying various relevant ministers³⁸, on 23 March 2026. Only Meta replied to the right of reply letters and its response is annexed with the briefing (Annex B).

3.1 INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Amnesty International conducted 25 scoping interviews between May 2024 and August 2024 with Indigenous, Black, and other racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists/advocates, human rights defenders, journalists, as well as with spokespersons or representatives of organizations that serve these communities. Six of these scoping interviews were used to inform final findings of this research,³⁹ based on written consent from the participants obtained in July 2025. This includes two South Asian participants, two East Asian participants, one Black participant, and one participant identifying as both Black and Indigenous (Mi'kmaq/L'nu).

Between July and September 2025, Amnesty International's team conducted 22 additional interviews. This included 11 interviews with women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists, community organizers and journalists from Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities who directly experienced various forms of TfGBV, nine interviews with academics and lawyers who have extensively written on the issue of TfGBV and two experts on violations faced by migrant communities, including gender-based violence. Of these 22, seven participants identified as South Asian, four as East Asian, four as South West Asian, two as Black, one as Indigenous (Gitksan), and four as white.

In total, this research is informed by 28 interviews as detailed above. Eight of the interviewees identified as queer cis women and one person identified as two-spirit. While the interviewees included a range of communities and locations, not all provinces or racialized groups were represented. The interviewees were from provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Alberta only.

All the interviews were conducted online using digitally secure platforms and channels. Various security and well-being processes were followed keeping in mind feminist ethics of care⁴⁰ in research. Informed consent processes were observed, and interviewees were informed about the research plan and objectives, how information would be used, and explicit informed consent obtained for each interview. Interviewees were given the option to pause or stop the interview, rescind consent, be off the record, and were also informed that mental health support was available to them, if required. Data was stored on encrypted software only available to the research team. Based on various factors, including migration status and risk of further exposure to TfGBV, interviewees were also given the option to have their testimonies anonymized. Pseudonyms have, therefore, been used in instances where individuals chose to do so. Lastly, the research findings and recommendations were shared with interviewees whose testimonies informed the briefing, for their input. All inputs are reflected in the briefing.

³⁷ UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (UN Special Rapporteur on Racism), Report, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/50 13 May 2016.

³⁸The following ministers were copied on Amnesty International's right of reply letter: Marc Miller (Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture); Evan Solomon (Minister for Artificial Intelligence and Innovation), Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety), and Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality).

³⁹ Of the 25 scoping interviews conducted by Amnesty International, informed consent to use their testimonies to inform the findings of this report were received from six of the 25 participants that were initially interviewed and have therefore been included in developing the analysis of this research.

⁴⁰ For more on using feminist ethics of care in the context of documentation of TfGBV see: Association for Progressive Communications (APC), The Left Out Project report: The case for an online gender-based violence framework inclusive of transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse experiences, 22 July 2023, apc.org/en/pubs/left-out-project-report-case-online-gender-based-violence-framework-inclusive-transgender-non

3.2 COMPUTATIONAL TEXT ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Computational social media analysis focused on text data collected from three sets of sources.

The primary data source were posts across social media platforms that were made by accounts and handles promoting anti-rights narratives, which was identified by Amnesty International due to their large online following and influence, their history of spreading harmful narratives targeting women, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities, and their ability to reach and shape conversations well beyond their immediate audiences. These accounts belonged to political figures, media personalities and controversial social media influencers.

This primary dataset included social media posts and their corresponding engagement metrics from several social media platforms: Facebook (4 accounts), X (24 accounts), YouTube (1 post), and Telegram (21 accounts). Data collection captured both public-facing content as well as the extensive networks of replies and quotes. Tweets from individual and institutional accounts were collected from 1 January 2025 onwards, whereas group posts on Telegram and Facebook were collected going back up to 1 January 2021. Only posts in English were included in the analysis.

For accounts on X, the data under investigation consisted of the most recent 500-1000 tweets per account, along with extensive samples of replies to these posts.⁴¹ Amnesty International further studied 20 specific posts on X targeting Indigenous Peoples, migrants and South Asian community in Canada, to highlight the social media discourses targeting these communities. Over 10,000 tweets were reviewed during the study period, representing a diverse ecosystem of inflammatory discourse, ranging from individual influencers posting several hundred tweets to highly active accounts generating nearly 2,000 posts.

The Facebook data encompassed posts from political and other influential figures, including video content with thousands of comments. YouTube data consisted of video comments from a single post by a prominent politician that generated significant anti-trans hate.⁴²

In a second step, Amnesty International identified popular hashtags that were being used to target women, 2SLGBTQI+ people and Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities. For this second data source, 32 hashtags were studied as a part of this research (See Appendix A). Each comprised of widely circulated and highly targeted terms in Canada. The data collected was capped at approximately 800 English language tweets per hashtag.

In a third step, Amnesty International reviewed 31 Twitter/X posts made by 22 racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists belonging to Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities and the comments received in response to their posts. The majority of the posts were from the period between 2024 and 2025, with some dating back to 2021. The tweets were primarily selected based on high engagement (minimum 100 comments, 100 retweets, and 200 likes), though some exceptions were made to include posts demonstrating harmful content toward activists, even if engagement thresholds were not met.⁴³

The data was coded both inductively and deductively. Inductive codes emerged from the data, capturing language features such as insults (“clown”, “muppet”), diagnostic language (“mentally unstable”), and conceptual phrases (“groomer cult”, “common sense”). Deductive codes were based on research questions about language targeting women, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and racialized communities, as well as links to transnational narratives and connections between online abuse and offline activism. The analysis considered both explicit content and underlying meanings, focusing on coded language, dog whistles, euphemisms, and moderation-evasion tactics like brackets, asterisks, and altered spellings.

⁴¹ Using TW Replies Export tool by Extensions Fox, replies to a given tweet up to the maximum volume the API (Application Programming Interface) tool permit, were collected. Where a post had relatively modest engagement, capture rates were high, whereas when posts went viral with thousands of replies, capture rates were lower because the tool couldn't retrieve the full volume before hitting API rate limits.

⁴² 1190 comments were collected from one video posted on YouTube and included in the analysis.

⁴³ The account names and specific posts are not being shared to ensure the safety of the Black, Indigenous and other racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ authors of the posts and to mitigate risks of further targeting.

The research used CommuAnalytic, a social media analytics platform, to collect data and analyse discourse patterns. Its Civility Analyzer assessed toxicity and prosocial behaviour using Perspective API and Detoxify, generating scores from 0 to 1 for insults, threats, and identity-based attacks. Posts were processed after removing usernames and links, with results showing content targeting marginalized groups often scored above 0.7 for toxicity, suggesting that seven out of ten readers would perceive these interactions as harmful. Sentiment analysis, using VADER and TextBlob, identified positive, negative, or neutral tone and revealed strong negative sentiment around topics like gender identity, migration, and racial justice. This computational approach uncovered patterns and narrative links not easily visible through manual review.

The analysis applied critical discourse analysis to examine how language constructs power and legitimizes ideology, revealing patterns such as misgendering, framing migration as invasion, and appeals to “common sense” to undermine expertise. An intersectional lens highlighted how multiple forms of prejudice intersect and are weaponized, for example using women’s rights rhetoric to justify Islamophobia. Platform-specific dynamics were considered, noting how Twitter/X fosters brevity and hashtags, Facebook enables longer narratives, and Telegram facilitates extreme echo chambers, with narratives migrating across platforms. Temporal and contextual factors were integrated to track discourse during key political events, such as Canadian federal and US presidential elections, and its adaptation of global anti-rights narratives to Canadian contexts. Finally, a technology-facilitated gender-based violence framework documented gendered harassment tactics—such as doxxing and coordinated abuse—and their feedback loops between online attacks and offline activism, showing how online abuse strategically constrains offline participation.

LIMITATIONS

The analysis has important limitations. Social media users are not representative of the general population, and the findings reflect only the specific accounts Amnesty selected—high-profile handles with a history of spreading harmful narratives—rather than social media content overall.

Content volatility (deletions, edits, suspensions) and lack of direct engagement limit interpretation, while public posting norms may encourage performative extremes.

The process of computational text analysis faced practical challenges in gathering data, with the most hostile tweets proving hardest to capture. Twitter/X’s system restricts how quickly researchers can download posts, and when tweets attracted thousands of replies, the platform’s interface made systematic collection extremely difficult. This pattern suggests harmful material may be systematically under-represented in datasets, potentially obscuring the full scope of online hostility targeting marginalized communities. These platform limitations mean the findings illustrate patterns rather than provide exhaustive documentation.

Lastly, data collection from Telegram presented distinct challenges as 14 of 21 identified channels had been deplatformed during the research period, requiring analysis of archived materials while revealing platform governance responses to hateful content.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 UNPRECEDENTED SURGE IN ANTI-MIGRANT RHETORIC

While Canada is often touted as having positive attitudes towards migrants,⁴⁴ for several years anti-migrant sentiment and rhetoric has been on the rise in Canada. By 2024, 58% believed the country accepts too many migrants, up 14% from 2023, and 17% the year prior.⁴⁵ This marks the highest level of xenophobia⁴⁶ since 1998.⁴⁷

Economic anxiety,⁴⁸ linked to issues around housing, cost of living, the economy, overpopulation, and pressure on public finance, has often been referenced in the growing surge of anti-migrant rhetoric in Canada.⁴⁹ This is exemplified by the growing number of Canadians who believe that those claiming refugee status are not “genuine” refugees,⁵⁰ as well as the belief that the contribution of migrants to the economy is steadily declining.⁵¹ As Amnesty International found while conducting this research, within certain sections of social media narratives, migrants, and racialized migrants in particular, are depicted as “mooches”, “parasites”, and “grifters” who come to Canada for “free stuff”, and “handouts”. In these social media narratives, racialized migrants are, thus, often portrayed as economic burdens, looking to exploit Canada’s social safety net and as undeserving drains on national resources.

⁴⁴ Neli Esipova, Julie Ray and Dato Tsabutashvili, “Canada No. 1 for Migrants, U.S. in Sixth Place,” Gallup, 23 September 2020, news.gallup.com/poll/320669/canada-migrants-sixth-place.aspx

⁴⁵ Environics Institute for Survey Research, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2024 (previously cited).

⁴⁶ Xenophobia is a phenomenon whereby migrants and persons belonging to various social groups or minorities are portrayed and perceived as others, outsiders or enemies owing to prejudices, stereotypes and negative perceptions and the belief that they threaten the predominant culture, heritage and wealth. See: CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 38 of CERD and General Comment No. 7 of CMW (previously cited), para 2.

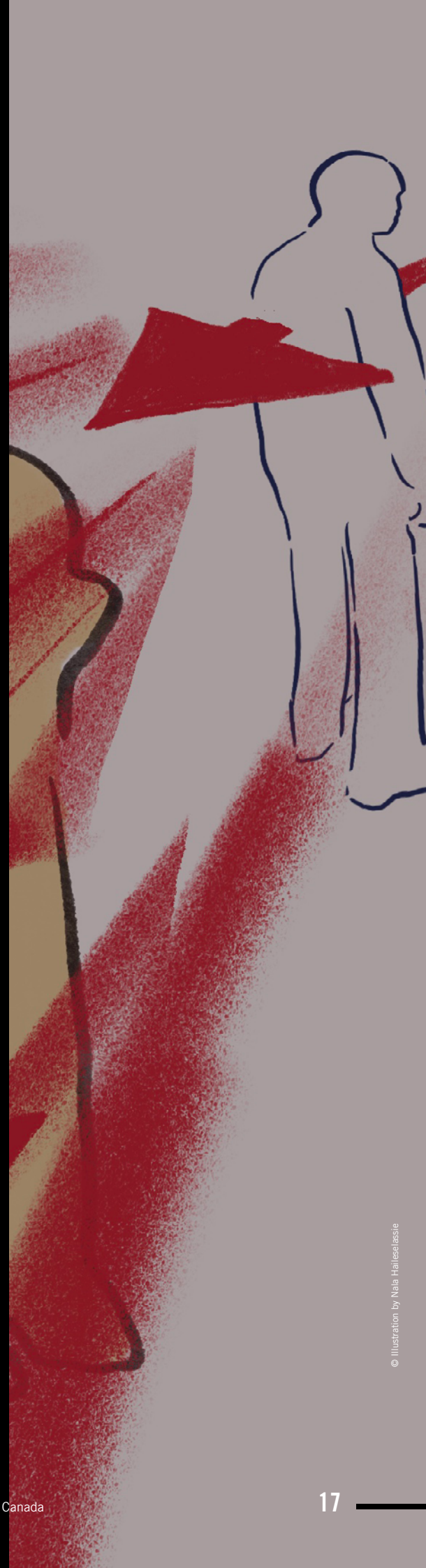
⁴⁷ Environics Institute, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2024 (previously cited)

⁴⁸ While the rise of anti-migrant sentiment is often linked to rise in housing prices and cost-of-living crisis, many scholars suggest that economics is only a small part of what is influencing attitudes of Canadians towards migration. Research done by University of Utah, for instance, found that perception of changes in Canada’s economic performance is more influential than objective factors like income or status. The research also notes that factors such as increasing political polarization, and a perceived threat to cultural preservation and ethnic identity based on differences in religion, ethnicity, and immigration status, also affect anti-migration sentiments. The Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University, Public Attitudes Toward Immigration in Canada: Decreased Support and Increased Political Polarization, 2 April 2024, <https://www.thecgo.org/research/public-attitudes-toward-immigration-in-canada/>

⁴⁹ Environics Institute, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2024 (previously cited), p. 7. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in her report on xenophobia has also noted that “[p]erceived and actual material scarcity, heightened by economic crises, has in some cases contributed to increased manifestations of xenophobia, as “insiders” seek to exclude “outsiders” whom they view as undeserving competitors for public and private resources.” UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Report, 13 May 2016 (previously cited) para 31.

⁵⁰ Environics Institute, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees (previously cited), p. 2.

⁵¹ Environics Institute, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees (previously cited), p. 1.





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These perceptions are often largely driven by politicians and reinforced by media portrayals of migrants, which scapegoat migrants for economic instability.⁵² As the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance notes, this scapegoating places the “blame for the economic failures of Governments and the global neoliberal order” on migrants, refugees and other non-nationals.⁵³ Moreover, in the context of Canada, Canadian scholars and research institutes, have shown how such scapegoating camouflages and diverts blame away from decades of government failure to invest in social housing, reduced public expenditure on welfare and over reliance on private markets, as drivers of economic insecurity.⁵⁴

⁵² Queen's University, “Anti-immigrant politics is fueling hate toward South Asian people in Canada”, 7 November 2024, queensu.ca/artsci/news/anti-immigrant-politics-is-fueling-hate-toward-south-asian-people-in-canada. Since at least 2024, the Canadian Government has proactively been reducing its yearly immigration levels for certain categories of migrants under the guise that this will “ease” strains on the economy. Canada’s 2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan included – for the first time ever – a cap on the number of temporary residents, specifically international students and foreign workers, as well as permanent residents, as a way of allegedly “alleviat[ing] pressures on housing, infrastructure and social services”. These statements contribute to anti-immigrant rhetoric. Government of Canada, “Government of Canada reduces immigration”, 24 October 2024, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/10/government-of-canada-reduces-immigration.html>; City News Vancouver, “Carney says temporary foreign worker program needs a ‘focused approach’”, 10 September 2025, <https://vancouver.citynews.ca/2025/09/10/former-immigration-minister-says-poilievre-is-rallying-anti-immigrant-views/>.

⁵³ UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Report, 25 April 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/38/52, para 60.

⁵⁴ Adam D. K. King, “Blame Governments, Not Immigrants, For the Housing Crisis”, 9 October 2024, readthemaple.com/blame-governments-not-immigrants-for-the-housing-crisis/; Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, “Fifty Years in the Making of Ontario’s Housing Crisis – A Timeline”, 26 May 2022, housingrightscanada.com/fifty-years-in-the-making-of-ontarios-housing-crisis-a-timeline/; Jason Kirby, Mark Rendell, and Matt Lundy, “Why Canada’s Economy Is Facing a Turbulent Four Years”, 1 November 2024, [The Globe and Mail, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-why-canadas-economy-is-facing-a-turbulent-four-years-regardless-of-a/](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-why-canadas-economy-is-facing-a-turbulent-four-years-regardless-of-a/). At a global level, in unearthing the reasons behind unavailability of affordable housing, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing notes, “The following developments have affected the availability of affordable housing: a misguided belief in market self-sufficiency without responsible State intervention, a notable decline in public housing provision by national and local governments, limited State capacities to address affordability concerns, diminished public support for enabling low- and middle-income families to secure suitable housing, inadequate legal safeguards for tenants, renters and mortgage holders facing excessive housing costs, rapid urbanization expedited by the climate crisis, increased ownership concentration among a few financial entities, escalated housing and land speculation, and the financialization of housing.” UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Report, 15 August 2023, UN Doc. A/78/192, para 3.

Beyond economic anxiety, negative perceptions of racialized migrants have also increased owing to circulation of narratives linking them to criminal activity, lack of 'integration' into Canadian society and lack of adoption of "Canadian values",⁵⁵ which is predicated on enforcing and preserving a mythical uniform national identity, as detailed below. For instance, a survey by Environics Institute from 2025 found that 36% Canadians agree that migrants increase the level of crime in Canada, 60% felt that too many migrants are not adopting "Canadian values", and 39% believe that the country accepts too many migrants from 'racial minority groups'.⁵⁶

Moreover, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has noted that such arguments hinging on preservation of a 'national identity' are often really attempts to promote a racially and ethnically "pure" nation based on ethno-nationalist ideas.⁵⁷ This ethno-nationalist identity, popularized through public discourse, including social media, is then used to legitimize the exclusion, rejection and expulsion of those deemed as "outsiders" by virtue of their race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation.⁵⁸

In the context of Canada, the construction of an ethno-nationalist identity and the delineation of "outsider" communities is based on the organization of the Canadian society around white supremacy. However, as many Canadian historians have noted, this has been a historical project and not a recent one.⁵⁹ Settler-colonialism has shaped the formation of Canada as an extension of Britain and its institutions and as a white nation, "White Canada", institutionalizing racial hierarchies and white supremacy.⁶⁰ As historian Henry Yu notes, "the political power of white supremacy was built through excluding those considered non-white from political representation and by the inequitable allocation of resources and opportunities that such representation created."⁶¹

For instance, through the portrayal of Indigenous Peoples as "heathen savages" and "barbaric" people, incapable of self-governance, Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed from their land and disenfranchised through voting exclusion.⁶² By the nineteenth century, along with Indigenous Peoples, Chinese migrants were also excluded from voting, with one legislator noting that he did "not wish to put ourselves shoulder to shoulder with the untutored savage" to justify the passage of legislation barring Indigenous Peoples and Chinese migrants from voting.⁶³ As migration from other parts of Asia continued, so did the categories of people excluded from voting. As historian John Price notes, "In the eyes of the law, all Asians became part of the unassimilable other."⁶⁴ These policies of exclusion have continued throughout, especially through migration policies.⁶⁵

⁵⁵ Environics Institute, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2024 (previously cited), p. 2, 11-12.

⁵⁶ Environics Institute for Survey Research, Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees, 2025, https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final-report44eb1832-9558-43df-b707-ba3c43890c0b.pdf?sfvrsn=8ebac64_1

⁵⁷ Ethno-nationalism, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has noted, is "defined in terms of assumed blood ties and ethnicity". UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Report, UN Doc. A/HRC/38/52, 25 April 2018, para 39.

⁵⁸ UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Report, 13 May 2016 (previously cited), para 41.

⁵⁹ Henry Yu, "Reckoning with the Realities of History: The Politics of White Supremacy and the Expansion of Settler Democracy in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", in Julien Mauduit and Jennifer Tunnicliffe (editors), *Constant Struggle: Histories of Canadian Democratization*, 2021; John Price, "Canada, white supremacy and the twinning of empires", December 2013, *International Journal*, Issue 68 Volume 4, pp.628-638, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24709363>; Enaksi Dua, Narda Razack & Jody Nyasha Warner, "Race, Racism and Empire: Reflections on Canada", 2005, *Social Justice*, Issue 32, Volume 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29768333>.

⁶⁰ Vashanti Venkatesh, *Rethinking the Temporary, Reconstituting the Citizen: Rights Mobilization by Temporary Foreign Workers in Comparative Perspective*, Thesis, 2018, p. 30, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0bd93844>; Nalinie Mooten, *Racism, Discrimination and Migrant Workers in Canada: Evidence from the Literature, Policy Research, Research and Evaluation Branch, IRCC*, July 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/research/racism-discrimination-migrant-workers-canada-evidence-literature.html>; Amnesty International, "Canada has destroyed me": Labour exploitation of migrant workers in Canada (Index: AMR 20/8807/2025), 30 January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr20/8807/2025/en/>, pp. 17-20.

⁶¹ Henry Yu, "Reckoning with the Realities of History", 2021 (previously cited), p. 391.

⁶² Daniel N. Paul, *We Were Not The Savages, First Nations History: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*, 4th edition, October 2022. See also: Cole Harris, *Making Native Space Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, 2002; Pamela Palmater, "Genocide, Indian Policy, and Legislated Elimination of Indians in Canada", June 2014, *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, Issue 3, Volume 3.

⁶³ John Price, "Canada, white supremacy and the twinning of empires" (previously cited). See also Timothy J. Stanley, "Anti-Chinese Racism and the Structure of White Supremacy: An Anti-essentialist Antiracist Perspective on Canadian History", March 2024, *The Canadian Historical Review*, Volume 105, Issue 1, pp. 55-73.

⁶⁴ John Price, "Canada, white supremacy and the twinning of empires" (previously cited).

⁶⁵ Whether it is the targeting of Sikhs through the operation of Continuous Journey Regulation (see: Environics Institute for Survey Research, *South Asian Experiences with Racism in Canada*, 3 July 2025, [environicsinstitute.org/insights/insight-details/south-asian-experiences-with-racism-in-canada](https://www.environicsinstitute.org/insights/insight-details/south-asian-experiences-with-racism-in-canada)) or the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act (see: Government of Canada, "Exclusion of Chinese Immigrants (1923-1947) National Historic Event", parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/evenement-event/exclusion-chinois-chinese), or exclusion of Black people based on fictitious claims that Black people could not adapt to Canada's climate (see: Satzewich, Vic, "Business or Bureaucratic Dominance in Immigration Policymaking in Canada: Why was Mexico Included in the Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program in 1974?", 2007, *International Migration & Integration*, Volume 8, pp. 255-275), Canada has a checkered history of anti-immigration policies.

Further, to preserve the “whiteness” of Canadian settler society, the Canadian government actively encouraged white migration, with a hierarchy of preference for those migrants who were closer to what was perceived as “British character” - those from Northern and Western Europe, as well as the US.⁶⁶ Instrumental in this endeavour were racist immigration laws and policies that, between the late 19th century and until the aftermath of the Second World War, excluded Black, Asian and Jewish people.⁶⁷

These legacies of white supremacy, settler-colonialism and racism are not relics of the past and continue to shape Canadian society and racist xenophobic narratives even today.⁶⁸ As the Special Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, rightly notes, “xenophobia must also be understood as rooted in particular histories and political projects...Hence, vestiges of slavery, systems of apartheid, colonialism, and the displacement or genocide of indigenous peoples in the construction of the nation State are proper intersections to consider in addressing the phenomenon of xenophobia, where whole peoples were left outside the national project or marginalized.”⁶⁹

These historical patterns are also mirrored in contemporary forms of discrimination and online hate targeting racialized migrants today, as detailed in the following chapters.

Lastly, owing to these racist roots of the anti-migrant rhetoric, xenophobic sentiments are not seen to apply to white or white-passing migrants, but instead just to the “visible immigrant”, irrespective of their citizenship status.⁷⁰ As the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance notes, xenophobia and racism rooted in ethno-nationalism, do not just harm non-citizens but “also make formal citizens who are ethnic, racial or religious minorities vulnerable to discrimination and intolerance.”⁷¹ Thus, the category of the “migrant” is construed narrowly to primarily include racialized groups, irrespective of their migration status. Xenophobic hate, therefore, is yet another way of upholding systemic racism in Canada.

SPECIFIC TARGETING OF SOME COMMUNITIES

Within the overall spike in anti-migrant rhetoric during the time frame covered in this research (2022-2025), certain communities were found to be disproportionately targeted. Data from 2024, for instance, indicates that Black people, Arabs and South Asians were the top three communities facing the highest number of reported hate crimes based on race and ethnicity.⁷² A number of developments underpin this surge.

Rupinder Liddar, a PhD candidate at McGill University researching anti-South Asian hate, told Amnesty International that the drastic increase in targeting of South Asian communities,⁷³ is happening against a backdrop of reliance on racialized labour from South Asian countries in Canada, primarily as frontline workers.⁷⁴ Yet, she noted, that the same state that relies on racialized workers for economic survival later blames them for economic instability.

⁶⁶ While Canada's immigration policy was explicitly racist until 1962, notions of “whiteness” would change over time and expand to include previously non-desired European Eastern and Southern agriculturalists - Italian, Polish, and Ukrainian people - who would arrive in Canada since the late 19th century, with the aim of meeting the labour demands. Lisa Jakubowski, *Immigration and the Legalization of Racism*, 1996, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁷ Government of Canada, “Exclusion of Chinese Immigrants (1923–1947) National Historic Event”, <https://parks.canada.ca/culture/designation/evenement-event/exclusion-chinois-chinese>; Nalinie Mooten, *Racism, Discrimination and Migrant Workers in Canada* (previously cited); Harold Troper & Irving Abella, *None is too many*, 2012; David Matas, “Racism in Canadian Immigration Policy”, 1985, *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, Volume 5, Issue 2, <https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/21485>; Amnesty International, “Canada has destroyed me”: Labour exploitation of migrant workers in Canada (Index: AMR 20/8807/2025) 30 January 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr20/8807/2025/en/>, pp. 17-20.

⁶⁸ John Price, “Canada, white supremacy and the twinning of empires”(previously cited); Timothy J. Stanley, “Anti-Chinese Racism and the Structure of White Supremacy (previously cited); Henry Yu, “Reckoning with the Realities of History” (previously cited); Pamela Palmater, “Resisting the Resurgence of White Supremacy”, in Cynthia Levine-Rasky and Lisa Kowalchuk (editors), *WE RESIST: Defending the Common Good in Hostile Times*, 2020.

⁶⁹ UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Report, 13 May 2016 (previously cited), para 29.

⁷⁰ The Tribune Editorial Board, “Canada's New Immigration Restriction Promotes Racism and Xenophobia”, 5 November 2024, [The Tribune thetribune.ca/opinion/canadas-new-immigration-restriction-promotes-racism-and-xenophobia-05112024/](https://www.tribune.ca/opinion/canadas-new-immigration-restriction-promotes-racism-and-xenophobia-05112024/).

⁷¹ The report further notes that ethno-nationalist sentiments underpinning xenophobic hate “have also reinforced and escalated discrimination against indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent through various measures relating to citizenship and immigration status, even when these communities have deep and enduring ties to the nations in which they reside.” UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Report, 25 April 2018 (previously cited), para 44.

⁷² These figures are based on reported incidents only and likely underrepresent the true scale of hate crimes, as systemic barriers - including mistrust of law enforcement, fear of retaliation, language barriers, and lack of accessible reporting mechanisms - discourage many victims, particularly from racialized communities, from reporting. Statistics Canada, “Police-reported information Hub – Hate crime in Canada”, 29 September 2025, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>

⁷³ Queen's University, “Anti-immigrant politics is fueling hate toward South Asian people in Canada”, 7 November 2024, <https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/news/anti-immigrant-politics-is-fueling-hate-toward-south-asian-people-in-canada>

⁷⁴ Online interview with Rupinder Liddar, 19 August 2025.

In the months following 7 October 2023, hate crimes targeting Muslims increased drastically. For instance, the number of hate incidents targeting Muslims or Palestinians reported to the National Council of Canadian Muslims increased by 1,800% in the year following 7 October 2023.⁷⁵ In addition to hate-motivated violence, threats and other forms of harassment, there has also been a huge spike in cases of Islamophobic, anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab discrimination,⁷⁶ doxing and blacklisting in employment experiences and in the provision of services.⁷⁷

This spike in hate has been mirrored in digital spaces. For instance, online anti-South Asian rhetoric in early 2025 generated over 1.2 million engagements in the lead-up to the federal elections in Canada, providing a clear display of the impact of political discourse on immigration sentiments.⁷⁸

4.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS TFGBV IN CANADA

Amnesty International understands technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV)⁷⁹ to be any act of gender-based violence, or threat thereof, perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and/or amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media. It disproportionately impacts women and girls but can also impact other people based on their real and/or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and/or expression, or sex characteristics, causing physical, psychological, economic, social and sexual harm.

CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

International human rights law obliges states to uphold the right to live free from gender-based violence. The definition of gender-based violence also covers violence “occurring online and in other digital environments”.⁸⁰

As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Canada is required to take all necessary steps to protect those subjected to GBV including TfGBV,⁸¹ investigate these offenses, bring perpetrators to justice, and provide survivors with access to justice and timely and appropriate reparation.⁸² In addition, there is obligation to undertake measures to prevent TfGBV, including by raising awareness about this issue and establishing support services for everyone who has faced GBV, including TfGBV.⁸³ While doing so, states are required to adopt an intersectional approach, including how factors such as race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation and/or gender identity and/or expression, socio-economic status, can shape specific experiences of TfGBV in varying contexts.⁸⁴ States must also account for and directly address these intersectional forms of discrimination exacerbated through emerging forms of technologies, instead of trying to tackle online harms through a “race neutral approach”.⁸⁵

⁷⁵ Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, House of Commons, Islamophobia on the rise: Taking action, confronting hate and protecting civil liberties together, December 2024, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/JUST/Reports/RP13263244/justrp26/justrp26-e.pdf>; Islamophobia Research Hub, Documenting the 'Palestine Exception': An Overview of Trends in Islamophobia, Anti-Palestinian, and Anti-Arab Racism in Canada in the Aftermath of October 7, 2023, 2025, <https://www.yorku.ca/laps/research/islamophobia/wp-content/uploads/sites/874/2025/09/documenting-the-palestine-exception-2025.pdf>

⁷⁶ The interchangeable use of “Muslim,” “Arab,” and “Palestinian” in public discourse often obscures the distinct forms of discrimination each group experiences. This brief focuses on the experiences of migrants and others perceived within these categories, while a forthcoming report will provide a more in-depth analysis of how technology-facilitated gender-based violence manifests and affects these communities.

⁷⁷ Islamophobia Research Hub, Documenting the 'Palestine Exception' (previously cited).

⁷⁸ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, The Rise of anti-South Asian Hate in Canada (previously cited). See also: Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, “Online Racism Targeting South Asians Skyrockets”, 8 May 2024, <https://globalextrremism.org/post/online-racism-targeting-south-asians-skyrockets/>; CBC, “South Asian newcomers to Canada say online hate is taking a toll”, 22 June 2024, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/south-asian-newcomers-to-canada-say-online-hate-is-taking-a-toll-1.7243057>

⁷⁹ The term 'technology-facilitated gender-based violence' is being used by many civil society organizations, including Amnesty International, to refer to the range of ways that different types of technology are being used to cause particular kinds of harm to women, girls and LGBTQ people, both within and beyond online spaces. TfGBV, therefore, encompasses forms of GBV which rely on technology but do not necessarily happen 'online', including the use of spyware (when someone uses software to gain covert access to information from a target computer system or device), non-consensual video and image recording or sharing through Bluetooth and non-internet-based devices, and is therefore wider in its scope than 'online GBV'.

⁸⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992), 26 July 2017, CEDAW/C/GC/35, para. 20. See also UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Report: Online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective, 18 June 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/38/47, para 22.

⁸¹ UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Report: Online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (previously cited), para 67.

⁸² CEDAW, General recommendation No. 35 (previously cited), para 29.

⁸³ CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 35 (previously cited), para 31 (iii).

⁸⁴ CEDAW, General recommendation No. 35 (previously cited), para 12.

⁸⁵ UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Racial discrimination and emerging digital technologies: a human rights analysis, 18 June 2020, UN Doc. A/HRC/44/57.

Furthermore, Article 1 of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), prohibits racial discrimination in law and in practice. Article 4 of CERD imposes strong limitations on the propagation of racist and xenophobic expression and requires states to take action against advocacy of national, racial or religious prejudice that amounts to incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

General Recommendation 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination further notes that the guarantees against racial discrimination must be applied to non-citizens, regardless of their immigration status and that states must take steps to address xenophobic attitudes and behaviour towards non-citizens, in particular hate speech and racial violence. It also calls on states to take concrete action to counter the targeting, stigmatization, stereotyping or profiling, on the basis of race, skin colour, descent, and national or ethnic origin, of citizens and non-citizens. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has also provided concrete guidance for states on the adoption of legislation combating racist speech through General Recommendation No. 35.

In joint general recommendation No. 39 (2025) of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and general comment No. 8 (2025) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, further guidelines have been provided on steps that states must take to eradicate xenophobia towards migrants and others perceived as such.⁸⁶ It calls on states develop a comprehensive policy to address xenophobia, through developing and disseminating a human right and evidence-based narrative on migration. This requires states to abstain from directly or indirectly producing or spreading narrow, biased, prejudiced and stereotyped narratives and discouraging and countering any misinformation and disinformation disseminated by media and digital platforms, which could lead to stigmatization, stereotyping and criminalization, and could promote justification of unequal treatment and discrimination. It also calls on states to “refrain from associating a particular nationality with particular crimes, and from using expressions such as “migrants are criminals”, “migrants steal jobs”, “migrants disproportionately use social services”, “migrants do not pay taxes” and “migrants bring diseases”.”⁸⁷ In addition, states also have positive duties to formulate and implement rights-based narratives on migration.

In 2025, Canada also signed the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (the Belém do Pará Convention), which requires states to take action to ensure that women have the right to live free from violence and to enact mechanisms to protect and defend women’s rights.

EXISTING FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS TFGBV IN CANADA

In 2022, Canada put in place the 10-year National Action Plan (NAP) to End Gender-Based Violence, through which it aims to address the social and economic factors that contribute to GBV, ensure reliable and timely access to culturally appropriate and accessible protection and services, and provide multi-faceted support to survivors.⁸⁸ It has five pillars: support for victims, survivors, and their families; prevention; responsive justice system; implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and addressing social infrastructure and creating an enabling environment.

While the NAP notes that prevention work must occur in a range of contexts, including online, no Canadian law specifically addresses TfGBV through an integrated and holistic lens, though acts like online stalking, harassment, libel, voyeurism, and non-consensual image sharing are criminal offences or can be pursued through civil claims.

Federally, Bill C-63, the Online Harms Act, was not passed into law due to the dissolution of Parliament in January 2025. The Act would have covered the regulation of online platforms to prevent and address harmful content, including content that foments hatred, incites violence and violent extremism or terrorism. The Act would have also established a Digital Safety Commission and related offices, to oversee and enforce the framework.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ CERD and CMW, Joint general recommendation No. 39 (2025) of CERD and General Comment No. 8 of CMW, 2026 (previously cited).

⁸⁷ CERD and CMW, Joint general recommendation No. 39 (2025) of CERD and General Comment No. 8 of CMW, 2026 (previously cited), Para 4.

⁸⁸ Government of Canada, The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/national-action-plan-end-gender-based-violence.html> (accessed on 3 March 2026)

⁸⁹ BILL C-63, An Act to enact the Online Harms Act, to amend the Criminal Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act and An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/bill/C-63/first-reading>

However, the Act has been noted to suffer from severe drawbacks,⁹⁰ including failure to explicitly recognize substantive equality and human rights as guiding principles; lack of more immediate and direct support to those experiencing TfGBV; and over reliance on law enforcement and the criminal justice system without providing alternative remedies.⁹¹

Some provincial mechanisms currently exist for survivors of TfGBV, specifically sharing of non-consensual intimate image sharing, such as the British Columbia Intimate Images Protection Act.

However, there is seldom an intersectional analysis integrated in the legislative framework or service provision around any form of TfGBV, which fails to account for differences in lived experiences of different marginalized communities and in turn affects access to justice and support for survivors, as required under international human rights law.

⁹⁰ Amnesty International, "Joint Letter urges Justice Minister to split the Online Harms Act (Bill C-63)", 7 May 2024, [amnesty.ca/human-rights-news/joint-letter-urges-justice-minister-to-split-the-online-harms-act-bill-c-63/](https://www.amnesty.ca/human-rights-news/joint-letter-urges-justice-minister-to-split-the-online-harms-act-bill-c-63/)

⁹¹ LEAF, Submission to Canadian Heritage on the Federal Government's Proposed Approaches to Address Harmful Content Online, 25 September 2021, [leaf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-09-25-LEAF-Submission-re-Harmful-Online-Content.pdf](https://www.leaf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-09-25-LEAF-Submission-re-Harmful-Online-Content.pdf)



5. DOMINANT GENDERED AND XENOPHOBIC NARRATIVES TARGETING RACIALIZED WOMEN AND 2SLGBTQI+ PEOPLE



CONTENT WARNING

The findings in this chapter contain descriptions and examples of content which include racist, xenophobic, misogynistic, transphobic language, and graphic calls for violence and discrimination against a number of marginalized communities, which may be distressing for some readers.



The hate is intersectional. And because some of us sit at all of those intersections, it's never just about one thing. It's never going to be just about Islamophobia. It's never going to be just about me being a woman or just about being South Asian. But it'll be together... I have always had very sexualized targeted violence [directed at me] and then it talks about my religion or there will be Taliban references or references to like, 'where is your hijab' or 'in Pakistan you will wear a hijab and be on a camel and then be raped'. And then all of this ends with like 'go home, you're not even Canadian'. So yeah, I mean, it is intersectional

Saba Eitizaz, South Asian Journalist ⁹²



⁹² Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025.



Digital spaces have been a double-edged sword for racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people who are migrants or perceived as such. On one hand, they create space for dialogue, awareness and provide greater visibility to diverse perspectives that are often sidelined in mainstream media. On the other hand, they are an extension of the 'offline' world and can mirror and amplify dominant discourses about gender, race, migration and their intersections.

Racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people have successfully used digital spaces as way to share first-hand information about their experiences, center their needs for survival and justice within complex and intermeshed systems of inequalities, share stories, challenge violence, promote awareness, facilitate transnational activism and advocacy, foster community and connections, exchange resources and build collective resilience. It has also been a critical tool in challenging hegemony and erasure of their expertise and lived experiences in many fields, including academia, media, politics and public service, and has allowed them to share their viewpoints and engage with audiences directly.

At the same time, these spaces enable the circulation of gendered, homophobic, transphobic, racist and xenophobic discourses and stereotypes. This is evident in the language across the three bodies of data sets of social media posts studied by Amnesty International. As detailed earlier (see Section 3.2.), this included a combination of social media posts made by accounts with a history of spreading harmful narratives targeting women, 2SLGBTQI+ people, and Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities; popular hashtags used to target women, 2SLGBTQI+ people and Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities; and specific posts by racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ activists belonging to Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities. Amnesty International's data analysis found that within these posts visibly racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people were targeted through a combination of racial animus with sexist, homophobic and transphobic content to attack their identity both as women and as racialized individuals.⁹³

In the analysis of social media posts conducted by Amnesty International, racialized women were found to be targeted through many of the same tropes aimed at wider migrant communities, through language rooted in racist and xenophobic themes that frame them as perpetual foreigners and illegitimate participants in Canadian public life, irrespective of their formal citizenship status. Within these posts, Amnesty International found that social media users made references to racial slurs such as "pajeet", "jeet", "browns", "blacks" and "Chinaman" in response to social media posts by racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people, and their communities were described as "shitholes", reflecting prejudice and racist stereotypes. A significant portion of the language was also dehumanizing, using animalistic and debasing terms. Within posts of the selected accounts and hashtags studied by Amnesty International, racialized activists and the communities they belong to were described as "savages", "animals", "vermin" and "parasites". For instance, in response to a post on X by a Black-Caribbean journalist highlighting the inherent racism in Canada's immigration policy, she was told, "black and brown people have not advanced. They are little more than animals and are sexual deviants."⁹⁴ This framing allows the targets to be stripped off their humanity, making it easier to justify hatred, exclusion, and violence against them and reinforces harmful biases and stereotypes. It also demonstrates continuity of colonial mindsets and prejudices that framed Indigenous Peoples and racialized populations as "savages".⁹⁵

This language used in these posts is also deeply reflective of transnational anti-gender and anti-rights discourses targeting marginalized groups.⁹⁶ For instance, the calls to #BanMuslims, mirrors US President Donald Trump's controversial travel ban targeting several Muslim-majority countries.⁹⁷ Similarly, the description of immigrants' home countries as "shithole" countries is a direct quote from Trump,⁹⁸ demonstrating how his specific, dehumanizing vocabulary has been absorbed and redeployed by online actors. Similar rhetoric has also been deployed in several other contexts, including Europe.⁹⁹

⁹³ For similar findings, see: Francisco, S.C. & Felmelee, D.H., "What Did You Call Me? An Analysis of Online Harassment Towards Black and Latinx Women", May 2021, *Race and Social Problems*, Volume 14, Issue 4, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351589732_What_Did_You_Call_Me_An_Analysis_of_Online_Harassment_Towards_Black_and_Latinx_Women

⁹⁴ Erica Ifill, X Post: "Just say y'all only have a problem with immigration when they're brown or Black, 14 September 2024, <https://x.com/Cdhd123/status/1835095528054702252>

⁹⁵ See Section 4.1 detailing some of the prejudices that were historically used against Indigenous Peoples and racialized migrant communities, like Chinese migrants to deny them voting rights.

⁹⁶ In an in-depth study of the 'Freedom Convoy' movement in 2022 in Canada, which looked at how transnational populist ideology and rhetoric shaped and amplified the movement through digital technologies, researchers found that the US far-right network had an outsized influence on the 'Freedom Convoy' movement. They found that it generated content, amplified Canadian online content, and built significant engagement. Jean- Christophe Boucher, Lauren Rutherglen, and So Youn Kim, "Transnationalism and Populist Networks in a Digital Era: Canada and the Freedom Convoy," December 2024, *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 68, Issue 4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqae131>

⁹⁷ Amnesty International, "USA: Trump's travel ban will harm people seeking safety, spread hate and discrimination", 5 June 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/06/usa-trumps-travel-ban-will-harm-people-seeking-safety/>

⁹⁸ Associated Press, "Trump: Why allow immigrants from 'shithole countries'?", 11 January 2018, <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-north-america-donald-trump-ap-top-news-international-news-fd2af0b877416c8a61c1a77a3cc425>

⁹⁹ Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, "Project 2025 Goes Global: The American Export of Authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism Worldwide," <https://globalextrémism.org/reports/project-2025-goes-global/>

Amnesty International found the language in the sample social media posts studied to be also steeped in misogyny. Racialized women who were vocal online were subjected to slurs like “sl*t”, “b*tch”, “sk**k”, and “e-tho*s”.¹⁰⁰ The sample text analysed by Amnesty International was found to contain severe, gendered slurs like “c**t”. Racialized women’s physical appearance was often a focus of attack, with terms like “fat” and “ugly” used to demean them.¹⁰¹

Within the social media data analysed by Amnesty International, Black women, in particular, were found to be targeted with gendered and racist insults designed to demean and silence them, including being called “awful banshee”, an “evil racist witch”, and a “hideous angry black woman”. They also frequently faced dismissal of their work and lived experiences. Black women’s discussions on racism and oppression on social media platforms were frequently discredited through accusations of “playing the race card” and being “race grifters”, as a way to dismiss the issues they raised.¹⁰²

Lack of a secure migration status¹⁰³ and access to citizenship rights can also act as a deterrent to public advocacy by racialized individuals. For instance, a prominent scholar and activist working with migrant women told Amnesty International that fears of deportation can lead to many within migrant communities feeling that they cannot visibly do the work they want to or speak on issues they would like to.¹⁰⁴ Within this context of people experiencing fears of being targeted with deportations for engaging in public advocacy, public vitriol and racist and xenophobic TFGV against migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people, can contribute to digital spaces feeling further unsafe for women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized and migrant communities.

Lastly, amongst the dominant themes concerning racialized women that was found in the data analysed by Amnesty International, was their portrayal as perpetual victims. In posts analysed by Amnesty International, racialized migrant women were portrayed as powerless, lacking independence and agency, which in turn creates a singular narrative of them. This was particularly evident in the targeting of Muslim women. In the posts studied by Amnesty International, the hijab and burqa were described as “Islamic slave clothing”, “stinkdoeken” (stink cloths), and “bags of trash”, with frequent calls to #BanHijabs.



© ↑ Screenshot of comments on a post on X by Erica Ifill, Black-Caribbean woman journalist

¹⁰⁰ Similar findings were noted in a study on online harassment by Black and Latinx women in the United States, where it was found that the most negative insulting words for women were b*tch, c*nt and sl*t. Francisco, S.C. and Felmllee, D.H., "What Did You Call Me? An Analysis of Online Harassment Towards Black and Latinx Women", (2022), Race and Social Problems, Volume 14, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-021-09330-7>

¹⁰¹ Physical appearance has been found to be one of the key foci of online attacks on women and femininity. Since attractiveness remains one of the central characteristics of feminine stereotypes, targeting victims for their appearance likely aims to wound women by suggesting that they are not living up to feminine, normative expectations and beauty ideals. Felmllee, D., Inara Rodis, P. and Zhang, A., "Sexist Slurs: Reinforcing Feminine Stereotypes Online", July 2020, Sex Roles, Volume 83, Issue 6, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337603590_Sexist_Slurs_Reinforcing_Feminine_Stereotypes_Online

¹⁰² Erica Ifill, X Post: "Just say y'all only have a problem with immigration when they're brown or Black, 14 September 2024, <https://x.com/Cdhd123/status/1835095528054702252>

¹⁰³ In Canada, settled status typically refers to permanent residency (PR), which allows individuals to live, work and study anywhere in the country and receive most social benefits, including healthcare and legal protections. However, they cannot vote, run for office, or hold certain security-sensitive jobs.

¹⁰⁴ Online interview with Ran Hu, 19 September 2025.

Therefore, the attacks directed at racialized migrant women, reproduce similar racist and xenophobic language used to attack the communities they belong to. They are also subjected to stereotypes about women within migrant communities lacking agency, while simultaneously being viciously attacked when they are vocal advocates, creating a double bind.

5.1 THE RACIST MYTH OF “GREAT REPLACEMENT”

A dominant narrative theme that emerged from the analysis of social media posts undertaken by Amnesty International, and which was reiterated in the interviews, was the idea that “mass immigration” poses an existential threat to Canada and specifically to its white “legacy” population, often framed using the language of the “great replacement”¹⁰⁵ or “white genocide”.¹⁰⁶

Proponents of this theory claim that white Christian populations are being deliberately replaced by non-white migrants, particularly Asian and African, at an ethnic and cultural level, through migration policies and the growth of minority communities.¹⁰⁷ Echoing recent surveys that have found an increasing uptake of this ideology in Canada,¹⁰⁸ leading to disastrous consequences,¹⁰⁹ Amnesty International’s research similarly found this trend referenced in hashtags such as #GrandReplacement and #Eurabia¹¹⁰ in the social media posts that were studied as a part of this research.

The language used in many of these posts posits migration as an “invasion” and a deliberate replacement of “real Canadians”, which is understood in exclusionary racialized nationalist terms to refer to a white Christian population. Within this framing, racialized migrants are framed not as people seeking safety and better opportunities but as “invaders”, “foreign troglodytes”, and “3rd world gimmigrants”¹¹¹ who threaten this ethno-nationalist idea of a narrowly constructed national identity. This language denies their place in Canadian society, drawing a sharp distinction between “real Canadians” (defined by “blood” and European heritage) and “paper Canadians”.

This echoes findings by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, who notes that, “[n]ationalist populism — especially when it is adopted by ethno-nationalists — tends to limit “the people” to a particular racial, ethnic or religious group understood to be the only legitimate national group. Right-wing populists champion this ethno-nationalist conceptualization of “the people” using the increasingly multicultural nature of societies as evidence of an imminent threat against the survival and preservation of the nation....Racial, ethnic and religious minorities are relegated to the status of illegitimate interlopers whose interests are characterized as oppositional to those of the group exclusively designated as constituting “the people”.”¹¹²

Within this ideological context, the presence of hashtags and terminologies such as “Islamic Invasion” in the data studied by Amnesty International, paints the presence of Muslims as a deliberate and hostile “invasion” or “conquest”. This narrative framing pushes the idea that Muslims are not seeking to coexist but rather to dominate and ultimately replace a white Christian population.¹¹³

Another community that was found to be targeted through these racist theories is the South Asian community, with one commentator noting, “Take in 4 million over a few years here and the results have been nothing short of catastrophic.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ Southern Poverty Law Center, “The Racist ‘Great Replacement’ Conspiracy Theory Explained”, 17 May 2022, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/hatewatch/racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-explained/>; The Conversation, “What is the ‘great replacement theory’? A scholar of race relations explains”, 15 March 2024, <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-replacement-theory-a-scholar-of-race-relations-explains-224835>

¹⁰⁶ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “White Genocide”, 8 February 2023, <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-explainer/white-genocide/#:~:text=The%20white%20genocide%20conspiracy%20theory,not%20perish%20from%20the%20earth.%E2%80%9D> (accessed on 14 January 2026)

¹⁰⁷ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “The Great Replacement’: A conspiracy claiming white Europeans are under threat”, August 2022, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-Great-Replacement-ISD-External-August2022.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ Toronto Star, “‘Kind of terrifying’: Numbers Show Racist Great Replacement Conspiracy Theory has Found Audience in Canada”, 14 June 2022, [the-star.com/news/canada/kind-of-terrifying-numbers-show-racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-has-found-audience-in-canada/article_fa98542f-0040-5cc4-a6e4-138751016323.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/kind-of-terrifying-numbers-show-racist-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory-has-found-audience-in-canada/article_fa98542f-0040-5cc4-a6e4-138751016323.html)

¹⁰⁹ Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “The Great Replacement’: The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism”, 6 July 2019, <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/the-great-replacement-the-violent-consequences-of-mainstreamed-extremism/>

¹¹⁰ A conspiracy theory that argues Western countries are being “Islamized”, or slowly being brought under Islamic rule. Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “The Great Replacement’: A conspiracy claiming white Europeans are under threat”, August 2022, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-Great-Replacement-ISD-External-August2022.pdf>

¹¹¹ The term ‘gimmigrant’ is a derogatory combination of gimme (short for ‘give me’) and immigrant, used to portray immigrants as people draining the welfare and public services.

¹¹² UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 6 August 2018, UN Doc. A/73/305.

¹¹³ In this context, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance notes that, “In the light of the contemporary prevalence of national identity anxiety targeting Muslims, it is important to highlight that the substantive core of such anxiety is often Islamophobia, defined by one legal scholar as “the presumption that Islam is inherently violent, alien, and inassimilable.” UN Special Rapporteur on racism, Report, 25 April 2018 (previously cited), para 42.

¹¹⁴ Joe, X post: “We could move the entire population of Canada into India and with 1.5 billion Indians, we’d be a rounding error”, 13 July 2025, <https://x.com/notthatjoe/status/1944521820792828038>

Rupinder Liddar, a PhD candidate at McGill University, who is researching South Asian hate in Canada, told Amnesty International:

“

“[There is] this running stereotype and idea that stems from this conspiracy theory called the “great replacement” theory that talks about this idea that immigrants are coming to invade and almost replace the existing white population, and the underlying assumption there is, that white Canadians are native to this land, which is not the case, of course... And we see it regionally happening outside of Vancouver, outside of Toronto, where the large South Asian communities live, specifically the Sikh Punjabi community [...] Because they (South Asians) are taking front facing jobs and because the community is growing larger and that they are doing well in certain sectors of society, [there is this idea] that there is a “great replacement” happening for white Canadians. Sometimes the narratives also shift to there [being] more leeway given to immigrants than there are to white Canadians, in that Canada in some way is favouring those that are “not native to Canada.”¹¹⁵

”

The dominant narrative found in many of the posts studied by Amnesty International also indicate a sentiment that South Asians migrants are not assimilating into Canadian society but are actively replacing its culture, values, and demographics, leading to a feeling that Canada is being transformed into something “foreign and undesirable”, as evidenced through references to “Canindia” or a “third-world shithole” found in the source data. Analysis of social media posts undertaken by Amnesty International, therefore, indicate the prevalence of a discourse amongst segments of social media users that Canadian norms are being erased and replaced by “third world behavior”.

The use of language such as “Canada is finished,” “gone forever”, and “RIP Canada” in the posts studied, further reinforces the idea amongst many social media users that the nation’s core identity, tied to white ethno-nationalism, has been irrevocably destroyed. This is further fuelled by a narrative of “civilizational decline”, where social media users were found to be blaming Canada’s policy of ‘multiculturalism’ for creating a “cesspool of 3rd world savages” and destroying “social cohesion”. Racialized migrants are therefore positioned not as people seeking opportunities but as a hostile invading force, making their presence in Canada a supposed threat to national survival.

¹¹⁵ Online interview with Rupinder Liddar, 19 August 2025.

¹¹⁶ As noted in the Methodology section, for the purpose of this research, Amnesty International looked at selective posts across X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Telegram and one post on YouTube.



© ↑ This image reflects how belonging is constructed and contested over time, challenging exclusionary myths by asserting that migrants have always been part of Canadian society.

© Illustration by Nala Haileselassie

PRESERVING A MYTHICAL AND NARROW NATIONAL IDENTITY

With racialized migrants repeatedly being painted as an invasive threat to Canadian economy, values, culture and society at large, in the social media posts analysed by Amnesty International¹¹⁶ there were numerous calls asking for women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized communities to be deported, even when they were Canadian citizens.¹¹⁷ In the posts studied by Amnesty International, racialized individuals were told to “go back to the desert” or “go home and feel safe in their own countries”, positioning them as perpetual outsiders who do not truly belong.

A number of interviewees told Amnesty International that they had repeatedly been subject to the rhetoric that they don’t belong in Canada and that they must “go back”.¹¹⁸ Deepa Mattoo, a South Asian activist and scholar, who is the Executive Director of Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, which provides a range of services to women who have experienced violence, including women from migrant communities, reported that one of the most common comments she used to receive on her posts was “why don’t you go back to the rape capital (referring to Delhi) you come from”.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See also: Canadian Anti-Hate Network, “Remigration: How White Nationalists Are Repackaging Ethnic Cleansing”, 4 September 2025, https://www.antihate.ca/remigration_white_nationalists_repackaging_ethnic_cleansing

¹¹⁸ It is critical to note that the Supreme Court of Cassation of Italy has ruled that telling non-European Union foreigners to leave the country qualifies as racial discrimination. Elaine Allaby, “Telling migrants to ‘go home’ is racism, rules Italy’s top court”, 13 July 2018, The Local, <https://www.thelocal.it/20180713/italian-court-rules-telling-migrants-to-go-home-illegal>

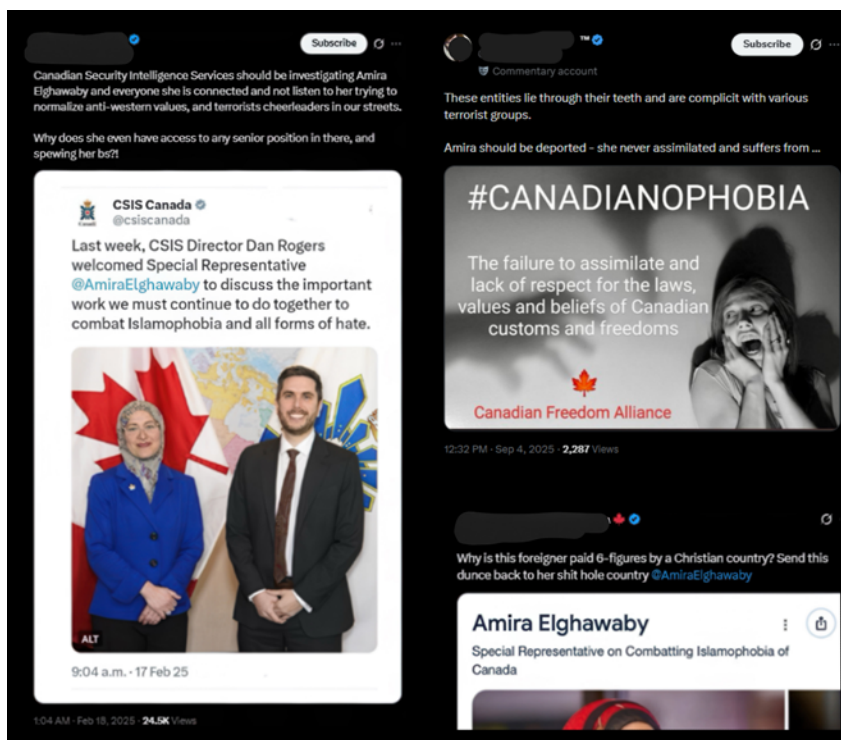
¹¹⁹ Online interview with Deepa Mattoo, 10 July 2025.

Saba Eitizaz, a prominent journalist who came to Canada from Pakistan, similarly recounted that “the main uniform message now has become, “Go back to where you came from”, “Go home”, “Go do terrorism”, or “What are you going to do? Are you going to blow up?” The whole language [has] changed a lot more since 2021 [and] since Gaza and Israel, and since it (using such hateful language) has become normalized [..]if you’re against a genocide or if you’re talking about crimes and critiquing them as a journalist, [or] because you’re a Muslim, because that’s just what you’re seeing from the politicians and from the very top.”¹²⁰

Amira Elghawaby, who was Canada’s former Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia (2023-2026), has received numerous such messages. She told Amnesty International that the idea of such targeting is to accuse her “of being anti-democratic, anti-Canadian and so to [...] “go back to your country.” She further noted that “over the years I’ve received all sorts of things. The idea of wanting to take over and being Islamist, trying to take over Western values. This is very commonly perpetuated.”¹²¹

For example, a post by a user on X, which received 19,800 views and was liked 742 times, commenting on a meeting between CSIS Canada’s Director and Amira Elghawaby, among other insidious language, notes “Our supposed “Canadian” security intelligence service has been infiltrated by Islamists, just like every other institution in our once great country. Permitting this dangerous radical to have any influence in any level of the public sector is tantamount to treason. Amira Elghawaby was born in Egypt.”¹²²

The post further goes on to note, “Our neighbours to the south know that Canada has been infiltrated which is why Trump is engaging to try and liberate us from our captors. We are effectively a Chinese economic proxy, with various bad actors (including but not limited to) Chi Coms, Khalistanis, and Islamists calling the shots...Any patriot would insist on a complete moratorium on immigration (original emphasis) as well as mass remigrations/deportations until our country has been restored. Restoring our country must include restoring our national identity and ending official multiculturalism, which is a failed experiment and a scourge. Canada is not merely an economic zone where all of [us] pretend that backwards and dysfunctional cultures are equal to one of the greatest cultures which has ever arisen and which was the foundation of Canada’s national identity: Anglo Protestantism.”



© ↑ Collage of screenshots on X targeting Amira Elghawaby, Canada’s former Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia (2023-2026)

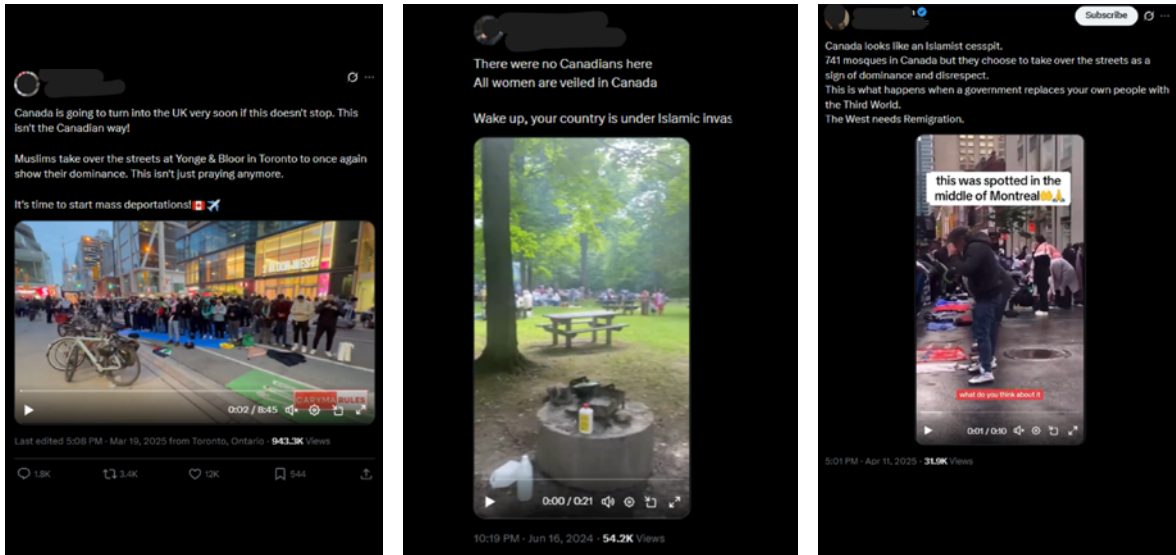
¹²⁰ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025.

¹²¹ Online interview with Amira Elghawaby, 22 August 2025.

¹²² Natasha Montreal, X post: "Our supposed 'Canadian' security intelligence service has been infiltrated by Islamists, just like every other institution in our once great country", 17 February 2025, <https://x.com/NatashaMontreal/status/1891548231030460606>

TfGBV USED TO SILENCE AND ERASE PUBLIC VISIBILITY

Stemming from this fear of an imagined “great replacement”, the analysis of social media posts undertaken by Amnesty International found that any public visibility of marginalized groups was seen as constituting an existential threat to a white, Christian, patriarchal order, perceived as representative of the entirety of Canadian society. Often, offline assertions of rights by marginalized groups, from a large demonstration, to the simple act of a Muslim woman walking down the street, is seen as a violation of this desired social order and acted as a trigger for TfGBV. Through calls to #BanMuslims, #BanSharia, and #DeportThemAll, found in the data analyzed by Amnesty International, the aim is often to enforce invisibility and erase these groups from public life.



Collage of screenshots on X accusing Muslims in Canada of “taking over”/ “invading” Canada through their mere public presence

Women from racialized migrant communities are targeted as symbols of a perceived “invasion”, while their presence in public life is framed as a hostile takeover of Canadian institutions. This narrative seeks to invalidate their voices by marking them as outsiders with no right to speak on national issues.

This erasure from public spaces is often enforced through various form of TfGBV, where TfGBV often serves as a digital enforcement mechanism designed to punish and reverse the gains in public visibility and rights that racialized women have been advocating for.

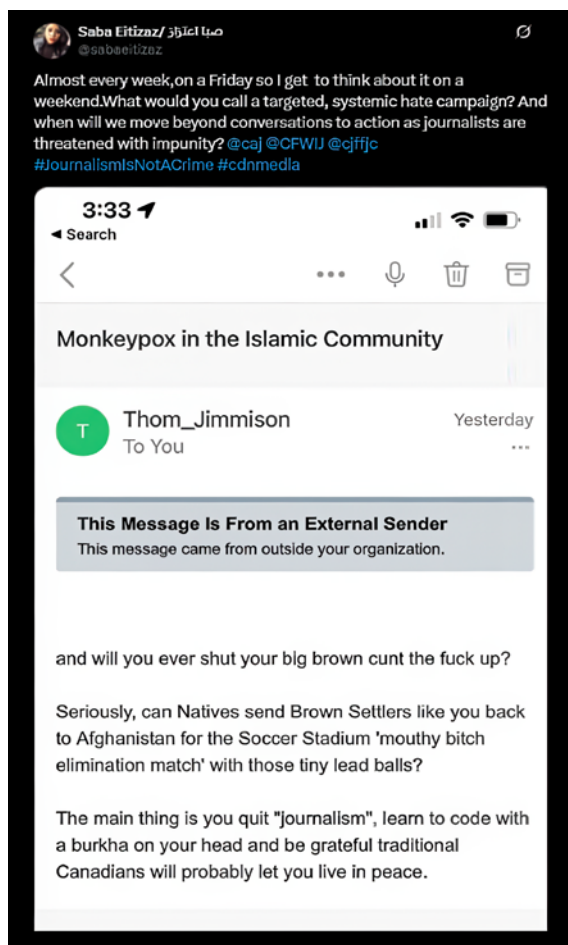
For instance, in 2022, journalist Saba Eitizaz, was subject to a violent and organized hate attack¹²³ after hosting an episode on her podcast with a Black-Caribbean woman journalist, Erica Ifill. Saba told Amnesty International,

¹²³ Coalition for Women in Journalism, Canada: Right-wing Populist Leaders Weaponize Social Media to Silence Journalists, October 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/615e9c03e618583383cc9786/t/61712a380a413d644bd9f935/1634806331124/Canada%2BReport%2C%2B0ct%2B2021%2B%283%29.pdf>



CONTENT WARNING

The following image contains language that is sexist, racist and Islamophobic as well as calls for violence



© ↑ Collage of screenshots on X accusing Muslims in Canada of "taking over"/ "invading" Canada through their mere public presence

“the hate seemed to be more directed, just anger that I even had a voice in Canadian media because I think I’m one of the very few people who have a national platform who’s a host on Canadian media.” She further recalled:



[W]e started receiving these emails [...] and it had some of the most vile death threats and rape threats and just absolute like disgusting things that had nothing to do with the reporting or any of my work, but everything to do with the fact that I’m a Muslim woman, you know, all the usual disgusting references were made [...] [T]hey made references to my Muslim sort of background and they talk about how they would summarily execute me in a stadium full of cheering men in purple robes. It was sort of a reference to how Taliban executions take place. There were a lot of references to the part of the world that I’m from (Pakistan) and from that it just continued.¹²⁴



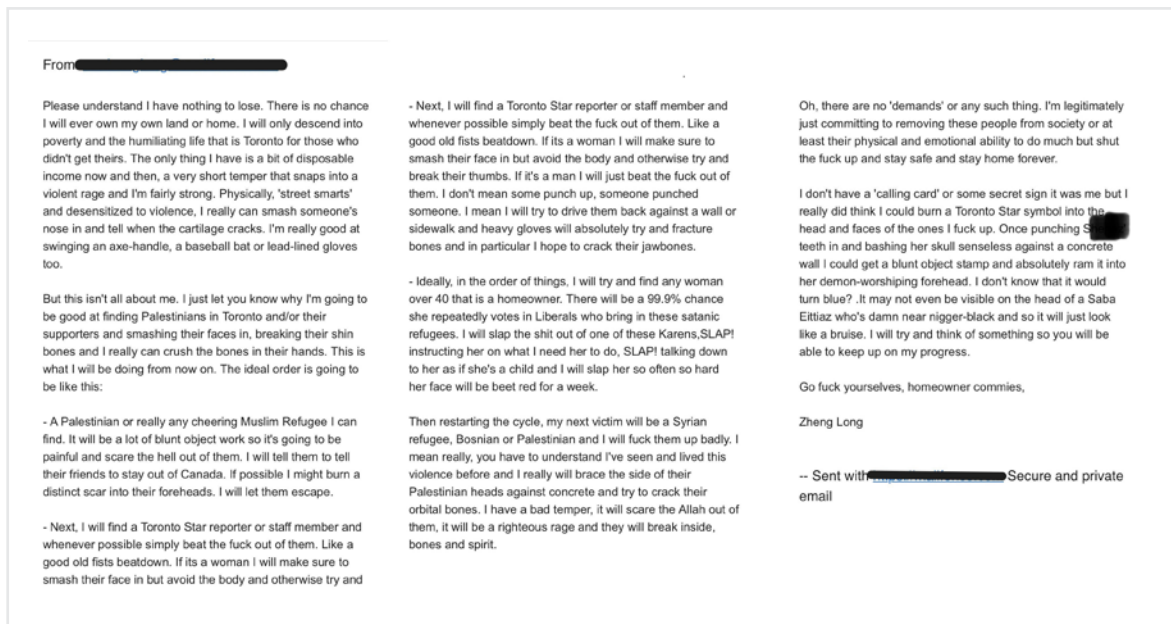
¹²⁴ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025.

She faced a second wave of targeted attack and vitriolic hate in 2023 for her coverage of the genocide in Gaza.¹²⁵ Saba told Amnesty International: **“An e-mail I remember which kind of talked about in great detail how they could break my jaw so I wouldn’t be able to talk, but then they wouldn’t kill me.”** One of the emails she received, Saba recounted, was filled with racial slurs directed at her different identities of being Muslim and migrating from Pakistan, along with other more generic racist slurs directed at people of Arab origin.



CONTENT WARNING

The following image contains language that is sexist, racist and Islamophobic as well as calls for violence



© ↑ Screenshot of a post on X by journalist Saba Eitiaz of an email she received

Erica Ifill, who was targeted as a part of the same organized hate campaign as Saba,¹²⁶ told Amnesty International that she feels punished for being an outspoken and vocal Black woman:

“people don’t like smart black women [...] if we are smart, we’re meant to be quiet and to just support whatever some white man or white woman says [...] And so if you actually exercise that agency that is your brain and you do it loudly and unapologetically, that doesn’t work in Canada.”¹²⁷

As a result, she is often subjected to vitriolic forms of TfGBV, including death threats, rape threats, racial slurs, scenarios of gang rape, the N-word and has also been called a “fat Black b****”. She recounted receiving this daily flood of racist, sexist and abusive messages through post comments, direct messages and email.

¹²⁵ Coalition for Women in Journalism, “Canada: Surge of Threats Target Journalist Saba Eitiaz Amid Israel-Gaza War”, 18 October 2023, <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/canada-surge-of-threats-target-journalist-saba-eitiaz-amid-israel-gaza-war>

¹²⁶ Coalition for Women in Journalism, “Canada: Online Violence Against Women Journalists Of Color Rages On, Erica Ifill Latest Target Of Organized Trolls”, 23 August 2022, <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/canada-erica-ifill-was-targeted-with-online-abuse-in-a-continue-troll-campaign-against-women-journalists-of-color>

¹²⁷ Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025.



CONTENT WARNING

The following image contains language that is sexist, racist and Islamophobic as well as calls for violence



© ↑ Screenshot of an email received by journalist Erica Ifill. Source: Erica Ifill, X Post: "I got new hate mail this morning", 23 August 2022, <https://t.co/qN52WhMRWg>

5.2 WEAPONIZATION OF GENDER-BASED NARRATIVES

Not only are racialized migrants characterized as an existential threat to a generalized white Canadian social order, but in particular, the texts in social media posts analysed by Amnesty International indicate that women's and 2SLGBTQI+ people's rights have often been instrumentalized to cast racialized migrant populations as a threat to white "traditional" families.

RACIALIZED MEN AS SEXUAL PREDATORS

One of the keyways in which this is playing out is the castigation of racialized migrant men, especially Black and brown men, as threat to public safety, but more importantly as a threat to the safety of white women and children. While overall brown and Black men were presumed to be linked with criminality, violence and terrorism in the social media data analysed by Amnesty International, a prominent sub-theme that emerged was the sexual threat to white women and children through references to "rape gangs", "grooming gangs" supposedly run by Black and brown men, invoking imminent sexual threat to white women and children. The frequent repetition of such commentary found in the social media data gathered by Amnesty International, along with claims that, "The Canadian justice system has been altered to protect Immigrant rapists based on immigration status"¹²⁸ creates a potent sense of fear and moral panic, which positions racialized migrant men as predatory figures from whom white Canadian families, and especially white women, must be protected.

¹²⁸ Wiretap Media, X post: "The Canadian justice system has been altered to protect Immigrant rapists based on immigration status", 13 August 2025, <https://x.com/WiretapMediaCa/status/1955633348316922100>

Rupinder Liddar, a South Asian scholar interviewed by Amnesty International, noted that tropes of South Asian men being sexual predators, or them simply existing in public spaces being painted as loitering and staring at “our women”, referring to white women, abound on social media.¹²⁹

“

[T]here is this idea that, again, dates back for a very long time, and it goes for Black men as well as brown men that they are sexually deviant- that white women must be protected from them, [and] that they are only after white women. And so, there is this level of, there is a predatory nature to it, but it comes from a very dark and sinister place. To say that men of a certain race see women in a certain way, and I think we both know that it is an issue with men and it is not an issue of race, but I think the way that it is being framed is specifically targeting Black and brown men. And what that does is, it puts white men in a position where they are not seen as the predators in the same way, they are not seen as someone to be careful of, and it puts a very dark cloud over the whole perception [of South Asian people].¹³⁰

”

While analyzing targeting faced by South Asian communities in Canada, Amnesty International found that Indian men, in particular, were stereotyped as inherently dangerous, criminal, and sexually predatory. For example, the phrase, “They would probably rape and murder us. Then rape us some more,” was repeated in multiple comments.¹³¹

Joyita Sengupta, an associate news producer at CBC, who is of Indian descent told Amnesty International: “It’s this idea that violence against women, and being sexually predatory and sexually violent is an innate part of being South Asian and male in this specific context.”¹³² She further elaborated, “There is a sense of, like, criminality that’s being associated with South Asian men, and I do think, you know, in some of the online discourse, gendered violence in South Asian culture, rape culture, these are things that are being brought up, but not always in good faith, but more so weaponized against brown men.”¹³³



© ↑ Screenshot of a post and comments on a post on X about the presence of Indians in Canada

¹²⁹ See for instance: Jen St. Denis, “Anti-Immigration TikTok by Night, BC Conservative Staffer by Day”, The Tye, 20 February 2025, <https://thetye.ca/News/2025/02/20/Anti-Immigration-TikTok-BC-Conservative-Staffer/>

¹³⁰ Online interview with Rupinder Liddar, 19 August 2025.

¹³¹ Hong Kong Phoeey, X Post: “I’m sorry, but the Indian problem in Canada is out of control.”, 13 July 2025, <https://x.com/PhoeeyPosters/status/1944967517774266809>

¹³² Online interview with Joyita Sengupta, 19 August 2025.

¹³³ Online interview with Joyita Sengupta, 19 August 2025.

Indeed, in the testimonies of women interviewed by Amnesty International, the issue of gender-based violence was misused and weaponized to silence vocal racialized women. For instance, Samira Mohiyeddin, a journalist, broadcaster and producer, told Amnesty International that the weaponization of her sexuality as a lesbian and being of Iranian origin is often used to attack her coverage of the genocide in Gaza. She noted,

“

I mean a lot of them (hateful comments) have to do with, you know, when you're reporting truthfully on what is happening in Gaza, then your sexuality is weaponized against you. So, a lot of the commentary is if Hamas got a hold of you, they would rape you or one of the comments was you can't wear a dildo in Gaza or what roof are you going to be thrown off of? You know, after they rape you, they're going to throw you off a roof.”¹³⁴

”

The trope of Black and brown men being sexually deviant predators, thus, is used to simultaneously justify hatred towards and calls for expulsions of racialized migrants in a bid to supposedly “protect white women and children”, while also being intended to force vocal racialized women into silence. This framing allows gender-based violence to be painted as a ‘race and cultural’ issue, rather than a deeper systemic structural issue of patriarchy affecting all societies, which is then proposed to be solved through the removal of the “deviant” and “criminal” racialized migrants.

This dangerous instrumentalization in turn is used to justify protectionist approaches in the name of safeguarding women and girls, particularly white women and girls, often at the cost of violating right to bodily autonomy and agency and fails to address the root causes of gender-based violence. It also often acts as a barrier for women from racialized migrant communities to report instances of gender-based violence occurring within their communities, for fear of fuelling further stereotyping. As Joyita rightfully notes, “It’s really layered and nuanced when we talk about the violence and the vitriol that women face in their South Asian communities and or back on the subcontinent in India. And when that’s like used against us by other communities it’s frustrating because it’s like, you know, there are real conversations that need to be had about violence against women, about rape culture, about the discourse online. But it’s a conversation for us to have within our community, not for other people to use against us to oppress us or put us all down.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Online interview with Samira Mohiyeddin, 12 August 2025.

¹³⁵ Online interview with Joyita Sengupta, 19 August 2025.

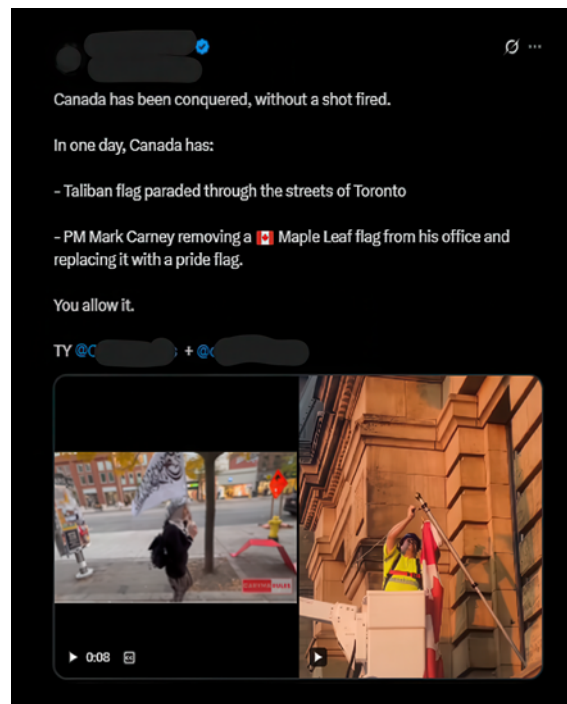
5.3 WEAPONIZING RIGHTS OF 2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITY TO DEMONIZE RACIALIZED MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Another trend observed in the social media analysis was the weaponization of experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ people to scapegoat racialized migrants, thereby pitting two marginalized communities against each other.

The social media content studied by Amnesty International co-opted the language of queer liberation to attack Islam, claiming it is “anti queer in its very existence” and that its followers must be deported to “save” Western liberal values. Within this framing, systemic discrimination and violence faced by 2SLGBTQI+ people is reduced to belief systems of just one religion, thereby erasing a plethora of factors that contribute to anti-LGBTI hate, including binary understanding of gender, gender stereotypes, rigid enforcement of gender norms, social stigma and prejudice, colonialism, and discriminatory legislations among other root causes.¹³⁶

This framing also allows commentators to seemingly position themselves as defenders of rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Far from this being true, Amnesty International’s analysis found that many of the same accounts that target racialized migrants, also advocate for exclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ people, portraying queer lives as “unnatural” and a “threat to social order.” The commentary points to an understanding where both the presence of racialized migrants and 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canadian society is seen as a symptom of “moral decay” and “national ruin”.

During the period of data harvesting by Amnesty International from social media platforms between 8- 15 August 2025, a popular hashtag on X used to typify this phenomenon was the homophobic and Islamophobic hashtag, #UKisConqueredbyHomoMuslims. The hashtag combined homophobia and Islamophobia into a single expression by framing both queer visibility and Muslim migration as parallel forces that have “conquered” the UK, with the implicit warning that Canada faces the same fate. One of the posts using this hashtag, went on to note “Terrorist anal pigs like you should die. Canada is too good. Western civilization is not compatible with your fuck barbaric religion.” These posts containing the hashtag #UKisConqueredbyHomoMuslims, have since been removed from X.



↑ Screenshot of a post by a user on X which received 83.5k views and 1.6k likes at the time of publication, depicting simultaneous hate towards Muslim migrants and queer people.

Note: The post misrepresents the flag being carried in the first video as “Taliban flag”. The text on the flag simply states Shahada (shahadah), which is the Arabic term for the declaration of faith in one God (Allah), and is one of the five pillars of Islam.

¹³⁶ UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Report, 11 May 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/38/43.

Thus, even as rights of 2SLGBTQI+ folks and racialized migrants, in particular Muslim migrants, are portrayed as being incompatible and weaponized against each other, a deeper analysis shows that the same forces are often opposed to the rights of both these marginalized communities.

This is a frequently used strategy among anti-rights groups whereby the supposed defence of one marginalized group (in this case, queer people and women) as a rhetorical weapon is used to justify profound hatred against another (in this case, Muslims and South Asians), all while simultaneously undermining any efforts to advance their rights and targeting progressive movements that actually advocate for the rights of these marginalized groups.

DEHUMANIZATION AND STEREOTYPES OF “SAVAGERY” ROOTED IN COLONIAL LEGACIES

In order to make the idea of mass expulsion of migrants and violence against them more palatable, the language in social media posts studied by Amnesty International, systematically dehumanized racialized migrants and portrayed them as a source of “contamination”.

In the computational text analysis of social media posts done by Amnesty International, Muslims were found to be constantly referenced through dehumanizing language of “parasites”, “scum”, “trash”, “rodents”, “vermin”, and “animals”. In fact, texts analysed from social media posts explicitly state that “Muslims are not humans” and Islam was described as “filth”, a “cancer”, a “dirty thing” and a “death cult”. Black people were also found to be described as “little more than animals” within the social media posts analysed by Amnesty International.

The phrase “Import the 3rd world, become the 3rd world” used by some users¹³⁷ further encapsulates the prejudice and stereotypes that racialized migrants bring with them inherent chaos, filth, and a lower level of civilization that will inevitably degrade Canada. This theme draws heavily on colonial prejudices and is further used to justify exclusion and contempt.

In social media text analysed by Amnesty International, people of South Asian origin, particularly Indians, were also referred to with dehumanizing slurs such as “pajeets”,¹³⁸ “jeets”, “savages”, “animals”, “parasites” and “cockroaches”. Commentators on social media repeated stereotypes of Indians as “street shitters” and “beach poopers”.¹³⁹ Amnesty International’s analysis found that poor hygiene was a recurring and dominant theme, with comments being replete with references to harmful stereotypes about South Asians having strong body odour as well as being hairy and unsanitary.

Joyita Sengupta, an associate news producer, who is South Asian and has extensively researched South Asian hate in the context of Canada, told Amnesty International, “The motif of like faeces or like outdoor defecation was something that was repeatedly coming up that I think is relatively new. It’s not something that I think has been as frequently tied to the South Asian population in the way that we’ve sort of seen recently. Sort of jokes about general like sanitation or smell, that was something that I saw more and more not just on Canadian platforms or from Canadian users, but also from international ones.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ See for instance: Leah True Crime Canada, X Post: “Import the 3rd world, become the 3rd world”, 12 April 2025, <https://x.com/CanTrueCrime/status/1911179622252974468>

¹³⁸ ‘Pajeet’ is an invented name which sounds ‘Indian’ and which emerged among anti-rights accounts as a derogatory term to refer to Indians. See: https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/the-rise-of-anti-south-asian-hate-in-canada/

¹³⁹ In 2024, allegations of public defecation by Indian immigrants in the Ontario town of Wasaga Beach were spread online despite lacking any evidence. They quickly gained traction, further fueling racist sentiments against Indian migrants. Rupinder Liddar and Sonya Pallapothu, “The familiar rise of anti-Indian racism in Canada”, Policy Options, 1 November 2024, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2024/11/anti-indian-racism-canada/>

¹⁴⁰ Online interview with Joyita Sengupta, 19 August 2025.

This language, that reinforces stereotypes and biases, of casting South Asians as smelly has been frequently used in the targeting of South Asian women in digital spaces. In response to her appearance on a radio show where she flagged a particular Instagram page for spreading hate against South Asian people, Joyita received a lot of hate on the comments section of the post. She recounted:

“

[O]ne in particular stands out because they said the same thing over and over and over again. So, they commented on the post that the radio show had uploaded, and they said, imagine the smell. And then they went to my page, and then they DM-ed me and said something similar about me being smelly and then they went on my page and [...] they found a post where I posted a reel of me wearing South Asian clothes [...] and then they commented on that post specifically saying imagine the smell.

”

Yet another gendered presentation of the harmful tropes of South Asians lacking personal hygiene and being unsanitary is the portrayal of South Asian women as being ‘unattractive’. The long hair kept by some South Asian women, in particular, has been replete with associations of dirt, smell, being unclean and unhygienic, which in turn is used to paint them as less feminine and unattractive.

“There is, again, this other narrative that Indian women are not attractive, and maybe some of the connection and I don’t pretend to know the logic of, or the lack thereof, of these narratives suggest that they are considered unattractive because they have long dark hair, or because they have more hair than white women, or because they display their hair in a certain way, as in the case of some Sikh women. But that hair is being linked to femininity. I think this is very important, and I think it’s very important to understand that this is all through the lens of Western beauty culture and beauty standards”,¹⁴¹ Rupinder Liddar told Amnesty International.

Brishti Basu, a South Asian reporter, similarly echoed how these tropes of South Asian women being unattractive has affected her. She recounted, “There was a time [...] in 2023, where I asked my managers if I could take my photo down from my byline because people were commenting on my appearance. One person [said] something weird [like] ‘you have huge pores’. In the middle of a hateful tirade [about my reporting], they’ll say something strange about my appearance.”¹⁴²

The language and imagery used within commentary in social media spaces, is thus, replete with references of racialized migrants as being fundamentally uncivilized and undesirable in stark juxtaposition to a more “civilized” white population. These stereotypes inherent in the language used to target racialized migrants can be traced back to and reminiscent of colonial-era tropes that associated non-western populations with filth, disease and savagery, which was often used to justify colonialism and violence against Indigenous Peoples and racialized populations (see Section 4.1.). In the present, the use of this language similarly seeks to dehumanize entire populations of racialized migrants as being less than human and savages, that can be then used to justify violence, call for their removal from Canada or even elimination of entire communities.

¹⁴¹ Online interview with Rupinder Liddar, 19 August 2025. In a report on the increase of hate faced by South Asian migrants in Canada, an interviewee similarly notes that South Asian women are either fetishized for qualities that are similar to Western beauty standards, such as minimal body hair and white skin, or they are considered undesirable if their South Asian features stand out and are perceived as masculine. Hannah Scott-Talib, “Canada has a rampant South Asian racism problem”, 17 September 2024, The Link, <https://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/canada-has-a-rampant-south-asian-racism-problem>

¹⁴² Online interview with Brishti Basu, 13 August 2025.

6. A HEAVY TOLL WITH NO RECOURSE

“

*I don't think that it's measurable, the cost.
I think it changes the core of you*

Saba Eitizaz, South Asian journalist

”

The online ecosystem of racist and xenophobic hate wherein racialized migrants are routinely subjected to dehumanization narratives, and hateful and vile stereotypes, impacts the lived experiences of racialized communities in a plethora of harmful ways. As the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families have noted in their joint general recommendation/comment, “These narratives have had a negative impact on the enjoyment by migrants of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committees stress that these practices not only affect the human rights and living conditions of migrants and others perceived as such, but also lead to increasing social exclusion, inequality and other negative outcomes.”



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6.1 MENTAL HEALTH TOLL

Interviewees told Amnesty International that being regularly subjected to anti-migrant rhetoric, both through direct attacks, including in the form of TfGBV, as well as through circulation of popular xenophobic messaging on social media, has taken a massive toll on their mental, emotional and physical health as well as their professional growth. After being subjected to a targeted hate campaign, where she received a flurry of violently xenophobic, racist and sexist messaging, journalist Saba Eitizaz recounted the devastating impact on her, “I’ve had a lot of impacts on me because this (journalism) has been my lifelong career [...] [I]t has impacted my work and my career. Like I’ve put on 100 lbs when the sexualization started happening. I started hiding more and more. I feel like I was hiding in my own flesh in a way, and I’ve just started isolating. You can ask anyone, I got really sick. My health, my immune system and everything suffered and I’m still sick.” She further added:



I feel like I’m just a little fragment of the reporter or the journalist that I was and what I started off as. And a lot of people will be telling you that they feel like that. They feel like a shadow of themselves

Saba Eitizaz, South Asian journalist¹⁴³



Erica Ifill, who was also targeted as a part of the same online hate campaign, echoed similarly devastating impacts on her.¹⁴⁴ In the aftermath of receiving emails which claimed to know where she lived, she was forced to leave her house for fear of being personally attacked. She told Amnesty International that she fell into deep depression in 2022, when the online hate campaign started, and this continued well into 2023.



It was super difficult. It was depressing. It was very shocking... I like to call it a digital lynch. I got digitally lynched

Erica Ifill, Black-Caribbean journalist¹⁴⁵



¹⁴³ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025.

¹⁴⁴ Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025.

¹⁴⁵ Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025.

6.2 SELF-CENSORSHIP



These factors are intersecting, and the folks who are racialized with precarious immigrant status are being impacted in their unique way, where sometimes people just feel they need to move away from the space

Ran Hu, Advocate and scholar working on gender-based violence¹⁴⁶



With the threat of being subjected to xenophobic, racist and misogynistic attack always looming large, a number of interviewees told Amnesty International that prolonged exposure to misogynistic, racist and xenophobic messaging has forced them to adopt a number of measures in a bid to safeguard their emotional and physical well-being. Many reported leaving X (formerly Twitter), being forced to rethink what they post online, having to make their accounts private, disabling comments, and even avoiding reading comments and posts to protect their mental health.

In some cases, the constant circulation of racist and xenophobic messages targeting migrant communities forced people into hiding their identities, a forced erasure adding to the mental health toll they have already been experiencing. Brishti Basu, a South Asian journalist told Amnesty International that she felt unable to reveal being an immigrant throughout her career due to hostile reactions in online comment sections about racialized migrants in her own city. Brishti recounted,



I've always locked away that part of my identity (being an immigrant) and not really shared it with anybody [in the workplace] and, like, tried my best to fit in and adapt and adjust and not be like the immigrants that everyone hates, like, you know, be the "right kind of immigrant". And that in itself, I think is a [messed] up way to think.¹⁴⁷



¹⁴⁶ Online interview with Ran Hu, 19 September 2025.

¹⁴⁷ Online interview with Brishti Basu, 13 August 2025.

6.3 FROM ONLINE TO OFFLINE ATTACKS

The fears of having to censor what they share and post for fear of safety has not been unfounded. Amira Elghawaby, Canada's former Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, recounted a particular horrific incident of receiving a phone call, replete with similar ideas about "great replacement", "Muslim invasion" and attacks on hijab worn by Muslim women:

“

I received a phone call from a lady who clearly is being radicalized about all this, and she started yelling at me and saying, “we don't need people like you here. We don't want to see Muslims. You're going to come; you're going to assimilate. You don't need to wear your hijab. My grandfather built this country, and you guys just come and want to take everything.” So, I can see how even the online narratives are translating to people's lives

Amira Elghawaby, Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia¹⁴⁸

”



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¹⁴⁸ Online interview with Amira Elghawaby, 22 August 2025.

She received another such threatening message on her phone in August 2025. She said of the message, “[The message was] just threatening me and it was very misogynistic. It was very, very very violent, very violent.”

These attacks, however, are not isolated. For instance, Statistics Canada’s report on hate crimes found that in 2023, 44.5 per cent of hate incidents in Canada were motivated by race or ethnicity with South Asian and Black people facing higher rates of hate threats and assaults.¹⁴⁹ Hate crimes towards South Asian communities was found to have increased by 143 per cent from 2019 to 2022.¹⁵⁰ Between 2022 and 2023, there was also a significant increase in reported hate crimes against Muslims.¹⁵¹

This environment of fear created through an ecosystem of disinformation and unchecked xenophobic and racist narratives, has meant that many vocal racialized women are in fear not just of their safety but those of their friends and families as well. Amira told Amnesty International that she doesn’t post “anything about my family because of this (online threats), on any of my platforms anymore. I made sure to remove a lot of my own personal content, once I was appointed (as Canada’s Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia), off of Instagram.”

The hate circulating online, therefore, is not limited to posts and comments that remain behind screens. As data indicates¹⁵², and which was corroborated by people interviewed by Amnesty International, the narratives circulating online have deep deleterious impacts on the everyday lives of racialized people in Canada, as summed up by journalist Samira Mohiyeddin:

“

*[I]t’s racism because it comes down to, you know, we don’t even recognize what this country is anymore. Like white people are minority. That’s the type of rhetoric that is being used which has emboldened a lot of people to commit a lot of heinous acts like tearing hijabs off women’s heads in the street. Mosques are being attacked. That’s how you see it manifest.*¹⁵³

”

¹⁴⁹ Statistics Canada, “Police-reported information Hub – Hate crime in Canada”, 29 September 2025, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2024013-eng.htm>

¹⁵⁰ Statistics Canada, “Police-reported hate crime 2022”, 13 March 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240313/dq240313b-eng.htm>

¹⁵¹ Statistics Canada, “Table 6 - Police-reported hate crimes, by detailed motivation, Canada, 2020 to 2023”, 21 August 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240725/t006b-eng.htm>

¹⁵² Canadian Women’s Foundation, Challenging Gendered Digital Harm: Research Report on Impacts and Solutions to Digital Harm Facing Women, Gender-Diverse People, and Gender Equality, February 2025, https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/25-18_CWF_GenderedDigitalHarm_ENG_Mainreport_v14.pdf

¹⁵³ Online interview with Samira Mohiyeddin, 12 August 2025.

6.4 NO RECOURSE TO JUSTICE

Even as racist and xenophobic TfGBV continues to be a heavy presence in the lives of racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people, they have seldom found any support in the various institutions that have an obligation to address this. Under international and regional human rights treaties and instruments, states are also required to ensure that individuals whose rights have been violated by TfGBV have access to remedy.¹⁵⁴

As Amnesty International has previously noted, survivors of TfGBV face a range of barriers in accessing justice.¹⁵⁵ Migration status, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, disability, ethnicity, caste, class and other aspects of one's identity further compound these challenges.

Even within the limited legal recourses available to survivors of TfGBV in Canada, approaching law enforcement, especially police, has not been a viable option for racialized migrant women. Law enforcement has historically been a critical tool in racist policing of marginalized communities, and law enforcement have repeatedly been accused of subjecting Black, Indigenous and racialized communities to systemic racist violence and discrimination in various forms.¹⁵⁶ This legacy continues today and is reflected in interviewees' hesitation to approach law enforcement for support, and confirmed by their experiences when they did so.

Across the board, interviewees told Amnesty International that they often did not see much value in filing a police complaint for most instances of TfGBV they faced, as they did not believe their complaints about online harassment would be taken seriously. In the interviews conducted by Amnesty International, the experience of those who filed police complaints for the extreme forms of online harassments and threats they faced, indicate that these fears are not unfounded. A number of interviewees told Amnesty International that when they reported instances of TfGBV, including threats of violence, to the police, they were told that they should just block the perpetrators or "be careful" or that there is nothing that the police could do about online hate.¹⁵⁷ While in most instances police failed to lodge a report, even when in the rare instances when this was done, interviewees told Amnesty International that no action was taken, which violates Canada's obligations under international human rights law.¹⁵⁸

While survivors of TfGBV interviewed by Amnesty International, who reported online harassment and received no recourse, were all Canadian citizens, the situation is even more precarious for undocumented people or those who do not have settled immigration status in Canada, as they are even less likely to feel safe in approaching support services for xenophobic TfGBV faced by them. As Deepa Mattoo, a South Asian activist and academic working with migrant groups notes, "Status issue plays out in a big way in accessing what we call our traditional justice system." She further elaborates, "In terms of the non-status folks....when status is the root cause of violence bleeding people's lives, we know what needs to happen. We need to give status to people [...] [That] can at least get people a common ground of being able to speak what they need to speak about and access their rights within the safety of a label".¹⁵⁹

Survivors of TfGBV with precarious migration status are also likely to face additional barriers in accessing support. Ran Hu, an advocate and scholar who extensively works with migrant survivors of gender-based violence, noted that many migrant women who face TfGBV may not be aware of the legal framework in Canada, their rights in digital spaces, support services available and advocacy tools.¹⁶⁰ They may also encounter language barriers that affect their ability to access a range of services for survivors, as often language options are limited, and resources for survivors and policy updates are rarely translated and disseminated keeping these communities in mind.¹⁶¹ In addition to inaccessible language, lack of cultural understanding and inability to account for how cultural practices and racial and ethnic identities impact the experiences of TfGBV, act as further deterrent for seeking support when faced with TfGBV.

¹⁵⁴ UDHR, Article 8; ICCPR, Article 2(3); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 2; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Article 6; CEDAW, Article 2; CAT, Article 14; American Convention on Human Rights, Article 25, among others.

¹⁵⁵ Amnesty International, Human rights implications of technology-facilitated gender-based violence: Submission to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, (Index Number: IOR 40/9284/2025), 24 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/9284/2025/en/>

¹⁵⁶ Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on systemic racism in policing in Canada found evidence of systemic racism in how policing is carried out in Canada: The report points to the over-representation of Indigenous and racialized people within the criminal justice system and described over-policing, practices of racial profiling and discriminatory use of force against these populations. It also noted that Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people are particularly impacted by systemic discrimination in policing, experiencing both over-policing and under-policing (i.e. a lack of police assistance) when they are the victims of criminal acts. House of Commons, Systemic Racism in Policing: Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, June 2021, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/parl/xc76-1/XC76-1-1-432-6-eng.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025; Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025; Online interview with Deepa Mattoo, 10 July 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Online interview with Saba Eitizaz, 26 September 2025; Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025; Online interview with Samira Mohiyeddin, 12 August 2025. See Section 4.2. for details of Canada's International Human Rights Obligations to address TfGBV.

¹⁵⁹ Online interview with Deepa Mattoo, 10 July 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Online interview with Ran Hu, 19 September 2025. See also: Ran Hu et al., Digital Technology's Complex Role in Facilitating and Responding to Gender-Based Violence among (Im)migrants: A SCOPING REVIEW, December 2023, <https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/832dc61c-04b2-46e5-a2e3-ca9953e4902c/content>

¹⁶¹ Nocola Henry et al., "Technology-facilitated domestic violence against immigrant and refugee women: A qualitative study", 13 March 2021, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Volume 37, Issues 13–14, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/08862605211001465>.

Overall, Amnesty International has found that even as racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada continue to be targeted through vicious forms of xenophobic and racist TfGBV, they are often left without any recourse through the existing systems, even as they continue to suffer immense harms through both personal attacks and the overall spread of racist and xenophobic hate.

Yet, despite facing such harms and not receiving any support from the State, racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ persons and those perceived as such, have continued to find ways to navigate and resist such violence. From finding ways to centre their mental health; blocking hateful accounts and commentary; as well as leaving some social media platforms in some cases; or becoming even louder and emboldened in calling out hate in others, racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ persons have found numerous ways to remain resilient in the face of such vitriolic hate. At times, they have also found support and community in unexpected places. Speaking of one such instance where a community of strangers stepped in to support her in the face of brutal online attack, after she failed to receive support from her employers and other professional support groups, journalist Erica Ifill told Amnesty International:

“

For me, it taught me that there are people I didn't even know- [people] I've never met in my life - who rallied around me, appreciated my work, and fought for me online. They even got together and crowdfunded Uber for me. That was beautiful.¹⁶²

”

Where the state has failed, marginalized people and communities themselves have used the intense attacks they have faced to build solidarity amongst each other and also educate and equip others who might be facing similar attacks,¹⁶³ once again highlighting the need to centre community voices, experiences and expertise in how TfGBV is addressed.

¹⁶² Online interview with Erica Ifill, 20 August 2025.

¹⁶³ See for instance the #NotOK campaign, CBC-Radio Canada, Newsroom Guide for Managing Online Harm, <https://notok.cestassez.ca/en/> (last accessed 1 April 2026).

7. CONCLUSION



Till people are fearing removal [and] getting detained, you cannot expect people to freely organize and freely speak

Deepa Matto, Executive Director, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic¹⁶⁴



Xenophobic TfGBV faced by racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people is happening within a context of misinformation, disinformation and scapegoating of racialized migrants for larger systemic failures. When messaging from politicians repeatedly frame racialized migrants as a drain on economic resources¹⁶⁵ and controversial influential figures paint migrants as an invasive force who will destroy an exclusionary mythical white Canadian national identity and call for their elimination,¹⁶⁶ the same messaging is mirrored and amplified in digital spaces, with extremely devastating impacts for both individuals and communities that are targeted.

As the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families have noted in their thematic guidelines for eradicating xenophobia towards migrants and others perceived as such, this “constant repetition of a narrow and unfair representation of migration and migrants can cumulatively enable an environment where xenophobic narratives emerge. Consequently, discrimination, xenophobic and racist hate speech and even violence may seem acceptable or legitimate. This chain reaction informs policies and practices which, in turn, feed and multiply these narratives. This toxic combination leads to human rights violations linked to multiple forms of discrimination.”¹⁶⁷



© Illustration by Nala Hailéslassie

¹⁶⁴ Online interview with Deepa Mattoo, 10 July 2025.

¹⁶⁵ Canadian Press, “Former immigration minister says Poilievre is rallying ‘anti-immigrant’ views”, 10 September 2025, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/article/former-immigration-minister-says-poilievre-is-rallying-anti-immigrant-views/>

¹⁶⁶ Canadian Anti-Hate Network, “White Nationalism in Canada: Organized, Emboldened, and Growing”, 30 October 2025, <https://www.anti-hate.ca/white-nationalism-in-canada-organized-emboldened-and-growing>

¹⁶⁷ CERD and CMW, Joint General Recommendation No. 39 of CERD and General Comment No.8 of CMW (previously cited), para 3.

Addressing this harmful manifestation of TfGBV, therefore, requires policymakers to address how the circulation of racial and gender stereotypes through the digital spaces, can normalize misrepresentations of communities, as well as abusive behaviours, harassment, and discrimination against racialized migrants. The intersectional nature of the TfGBV faced by racialized women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from migrant communities requires imaginative solutions that centre their voices, specific vulnerabilities, needs and realities, which have so far gone unattended within efforts to address TfGBV in Canada.

However, participation of racialized migrant women and 2SLGBTQI+ people, especially those with precarious migration status, in these processes of change is predicated on having a sense of security about their migration status and not living under the constant fear of deportation or loss of status. This calls for an urgent overhaul in how systems of migration are built and how they function. Global migration is happening within a context of global power imbalances rooted in the legacies of colonialism, conflicts and militarization, insecurity, labour exploitation, climate displacement, among other factors, all of which disproportionately impact marginalized groups. As long as discourses about migration by politicians and in social media messaging are removed from these structural underpinnings, and framed simply as a resource drain issue, xenophobic TfGBV can never be fully addressed.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the Government of Canada and the Provincial and Territorial governments to take urgent steps to address racist and xenophobic TfGBV, including through the following measures:

- Strengthen comprehensive legislative and policy measures to prevent and address TfGBV:
 - Enact comprehensive legislative and policy measures, in close consultation with affected rights holders, to recognise, prevent, document, investigate and address all forms of TfGBV, including xenophobic and racist TfGBV;
 - Prohibit amplification of hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence against racialized migrant communities both online and offline;
 - Ensure that women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from Black, Indigenous, racialized communities, including those who are migrants, can freely and safely exercise their rights to freedom of expression in digital spaces, without fear of discrimination, harassment, intimidation and violence, in line with international standards and safeguards;
 - Engage in meaningful consultations on online harms with diverse women and 2SLGBTQI+ people from racialized migrant communities, keeping in mind other intersecting axis of intra-group privilege and oppression, including class, disability, ethnicity, caste etc;
 - Situate efforts to address xenophobic TfGBV within broader efforts to tackle and address systemic discrimination against Indigenous Peoples, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, through an intersectional and structural lens;
 - Proactively remove structural and systemic barriers to equitable enjoyment of rights by racialized migrant communities, including by supporting legislative measures, social policies and educational programmes;
- Ensure survivor-centred support and access to justice:
 - Work with municipalities to provide a range of support services for survivors of racist and xenophobic TfGBV including hotlines, mental health support, legal aid, expedited and accessible legal processes, and reparations for harms caused;
 - Provide redress and support for survivors that is racially and culturally relevant and accessible, that do not rely on traditional criminal justice systems;
 - Decentralize redressal efforts by championing leadership and outreach by community-based organizations;
 - Establish sustained funding frameworks to support culturally relevant, community-based, and survivor-centred services in collaboration with municipalities;

- Commit to shifting xenophobic narratives online and offline in collaboration with municipalities:
 - Publicly acknowledge the harms caused by false and misleading statements and circulation of messages that perpetuate and incite stigma, discrimination and violence against racialized migrant communities;
 - Disseminate accurate and timely information to stop the spread of misinformation and efforts to misrepresent marginalized communities;
 - Refrain from messaging that directly or indirectly links migration with poor socio-economic conditions and scapegoats racialized migrant communities for systemic failure to ensure the basic needs of people;
 - Undertake public education that seeks to build deeper understanding of and empathy for racialized migrants and their contribution to society;
 - Tackles gender and race-based stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes against racialized communities and create awareness about the phenomenon of xenophobic TfGBV, its consequences and intersectional harms.

APPENDIX A

HASHTAGS STUDIED FOR THE COMPUTATIONAL TEXT ANALYSIS

A

HASHTAGS PROMOTING ANTI-RIGHTS NARRATIVES

#cdnpoli
#TrudeauMustGo
#TruckersForFreedom / #ConvoyToOttawa
#MCGA
#WhiteGenocide
#WhitePower

B

HASHTAGS PROMOTING TRANSPHOBIC CONTENT

#LeaveOurKidsAlone
#HandsOffOurKids
#1MillionMarch4Children
#EndGenderIdeology
#OnlyTwoGenders
#GenderCritical
#BillC16

C

HASHTAGS PROMOTING MISOGYNIST CONTENT

#Incel
#RedPill
#MGTOW
#FeminismIsCancer
#AntiFeminist
#WomenLieToo
#TradWives

D

HASHTAGS PROMOTING ANTI-ABORTION CONTENT

#ProLife
#MarchForLife
#PreBorn / #prolife

E

HASHTAGS PROMOTING ANTI-PALESTINIAN RACISM

#HamasIsISIS
#IsraelUnderAttack

E

HASHTAGS PROMOTING ANTI-BLACK RACISM

#AllLivesMatter
#WokeMob

G

HASHTAGS PROMOTING ISLAMAPHOBIC AND/ OR ANTI-MIGRANT CONTENT

#BanSharia
#StopIslam
#BanMuslims
#TheWestIsNext
#RefugeesNotWelcome

APPENDIX B



April 3, 2026

Ms Elaheh Sajadi
Gender Rights Campaigner
Amnesty International Canada
Toronto by email

Dear Ms Sajadi,

Thank you for your letter regarding technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV) in Canada (Ref: TC AMR 20/2026.7483).

We appreciate the opportunity to share Meta's approach to fighting gender-based harassment, discrimination, and hateful conduct. You can also check our Women's Safety Center for more information.

Helping women feel safe to connect and engage with others is central to what we do. But a form of abuse that continues to exist when people interact with each other is bullying and harassment. At Meta, we use new technologies to reduce it on our apps, give people tools to protect themselves and also measure how we are doing.

Meta's Human Rights Commitments and Policy Framework

Meta's work is grounded in our Corporate Human Rights Policy, which applies enterprise-wide and is informed by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Our policy commits us to periodic reporting to the Board of Directors on key human rights issues and guides the integration of human rights into our products, programs, and services. Our human rights experts promote the policy's integration, undertake due diligence, and support employee training on human rights.

Content Policies Addressing Gender-Based Harassment and Hateful Conduct

Meta does not allow hateful conduct on our platforms, as defined in our community standards. Other content policies include:

- Bullying and harassment
- Violence and incitement
- Coordinating harm and promoting crime
- Adult sexual exploitation
- Authentic identity

We continuously update these policies based on research, external engagement, and investigation on our platforms.

Product and Platform Protections

Meta offers built-in protections and tools for teens, parents, and guardians to help keep them safe while providing space for them to exercise their right to freedom of expression and access to information. In 2024, we launched Instagram Teen Accounts, a new experience for teens with built-in safeguards, guided by parents.

We have developed more than 50 tools and resources to support teens and their parents and guardians, and spent over a decade developing policies and technology to address content and behavior that break our rules.

Our features and tools allow you to protect yourself against unwanted content and contact.

You can limit access to your Facebook profile or filter for potentially offensive direct messages on Instagram. You can always report violations directly to our teams.

Stakeholder Engagement and Policy Development

Meta engages with a broad range of stakeholders, including human rights groups, vulnerable communities, civil society members, academics, think tanks, and regulators. For example, in 2024, we conducted six Policy Forums, where subject matter experts from Meta share varying viewpoints and discuss potential changes to Community Standards and Advertising Standards.

We also held Community Forums to leverage public input on issues where there were competing tradeoffs and no clear answers.

Meta's Trusted Partner program helps identify trends and better understand the impact of online content and behavior on local communities. Trusted Partners provide insights and identify harmful content in countries that experienced heightened unrest, including attacks on journalists and human rights defenders, and misuse of AI content.

Our policies, tools and resources are built with guidance from the security experts, academics, NGOs, human rights activists and policymakers that serve on our Global Women's Safety Expert Advisors group.

Special Initiatives and Crisis Response

Meta has launched educational campaigns and partnerships to deter gender-based violence online. For example, in Brazil, we partnered with the Ministry of Women to launch an official channel on WhatsApp enabling women to pass on complaints or request information about violence against women. We published an online guide in Portuguese to protect women against online violence and engaged with industry groups, civil society organizations, and regulators on joint initiatives to address gender-based violence and harassment.

Meta also works with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to expand the Take It Down program, allowing more teens to take back control of their intimate imagery. We developed new tools to help protect against sextortion and launched an education campaign to help teens spot sextortion scams and help parents support their teens in avoiding these scams.

Building on the work we do to share signals across industry to keep users safe, we are taking additional steps to help remove non-consensual intimate imagery across the internet. Adults can already share hashes of their intimate images with StopNCII.org to help prevent them being shared online without their consent, and soon we will begin to securely share hashes of non-consensual intimate images we've removed from Meta apps with other companies through StopNCII.org. This will allow us to help prevent the re-sharing of these images across different online platforms, even if someone hasn't pre-emptively uploaded the hashed image themselves to StopNCII.org.

Transparency and Oversight

Meta's Transparency Center provides regular reports on enforcement of Community Standards and responses to government requests. The Oversight Board is an independent body that reviews cases referred by Meta or appealed by individuals who disagree with our content moderation decisions. It provides binding rulings and recommendations to enhance our content moderation practices.

Meta is committed to fighting gender-based harassment, discrimination, and hateful conduct through robust policies, platform protections, stakeholder engagement, and transparency. We welcome continued dialogue with Amnesty International and other stakeholders to further strengthen our approach.

Yours sincerely,



Miranda Sissons
Sr Director, Human Rights Policy



Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.



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Index: AMR 20/0918/2026

Publication: May 2026

Original language: English

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