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Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security  
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### **Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023**

The Canberra Islamic Centre wishes to express our deep concern regarding the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023, which was recently introduced to Parliament on 14 June 2023. Specifically, we would like to address our deep concern regarding the inclusion of the Islamic State flag in the Bill without any explanation provided on its background or meaning.

We understand extensive consultations were conducted with various communities concerning the use of symbols such as the Nazi hakenkreuz and double-sig rune, which holds cultural and religious significance for some groups. The Explanatory Memorandum's Section 39 goes into great depth to elucidate the usage of these symbols within different faith communities, providing a nuanced understanding. It appears a similar opportunity was not extended to the Muslim community to explain the misappropriation of the Islamic flag by the Islamic State and its malicious use to deceive unintended participants for their unholy cause.

Unlike the symbols used by the Nazis, which are sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, and Jains, the words inscribed on the Islamic flag are sacred words used and written by Muslims on a daily basis. These words are taken directly from our scripture, the Holy Quran, and therefore cannot be subject to a ban.

The flag in question bears the declaration "There is no God but Allah," and "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." These words form the Shahada (Arabic), meaning the profession of faith, are one of the five pillars of Islam. These words are the creed of our faith, representing the essence of Islam, pure monotheism, and the belief in Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) as the last prophet.

Furthermore, the script design on the flag "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" is a replica of the seal used by the Prophet when corresponding with world leaders, inviting them to embrace Islamic monotheism. Moreover, similar flags were used by early Muslims and have been depicted in historical movies and documentaries predating the existence of the Islamic State. Elaborate variations of flags, utilising similar words, were later developed for different empires, including Baghdad, Islamic Spain, and the Mughal and Ottoman Empires. Some current Muslim countries use these words in their flags.

We strongly refute the claim made in point 5 of the Explanatory Memorandum that the Islamic State flag "is widely recognised as representing and conveying ideologies of hatred, violence, and racism that are incompatible with Australia's multicultural and democratic society." We wholeheartedly reject this statement because the words displayed on the flag constitute fundamental principles of the Islamic faith.

Further, the wording in the legislation appears to compare the Islamic State with the Nazis. Many recent authoritarian regimes and dictatorships, are equal or similar to the Nazis, could take that mantle. The Muslim community deplores the Islamic State, and it is disingenuous to malign the community in general with their evil deeds. The Islamic State in its crazed frenzy killed mostly Muslims and destroyed many Islamic sites in addition to non-Muslims and their religious sites. It is widely understood the flag does not belong to or represent the Islamic State.

The Attorney-General Department's response for including the flag in the legislation was to avoid offending refugees fleeing from the Islamic State. If that is the logic, then the Christian cross of the Croatian Ustaše (pro-Nazi) and Serbians should be included as it similarly offends fleeing Bosnian refugees, or Buddhist symbols offend fleeing Rohingya refugees, or ban the Star of David for those Palestinians fleeing [Apartheid](#)<sup>1</sup> Israel. All these symbols are attached to and have seen shocking number of death and destruction at the hands of their perpetrators.

It is particularly disconcerting no one from the Attorney-General's Department sought consultation with the Muslim community in this matter. Over the past two decades, poorly executed legislation has resulted in the Muslim community experiencing backlash from racists, bigots, and even parliamentarians and media sources. Even a quick Google search would have listed articles explaining the flag was hijacked by the Islamic State - [Independent News](#)<sup>2</sup>. We implore you to address this matter promptly and rectify this. It is poor form for the Attorney-General to sign off on this legislation and very disappointing it is occurring under a Labor government. We expect better, it is imperative this issue be promptly addressed and resolved.

We invite the Attorney-General's Department and other committee members working on the legislation to visit the Canberra Islamic Centre library, which houses the largest collection of books on Islam in the Southern hemisphere, including books on other faiths. We also have experts available to provide information and answer any question regarding Islam and comparative religious studies.

In conclusion, we respectfully request the removal of the Islamic State flag from the legislation. We urge you to reconsider and engage in meaningful dialogue with the Muslim community to ensure a fair and accurate representation of our faith and its symbols. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

Ilyas Rahaman  
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Canberra Islamic Centre

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CC: David Smith MP, Federal Member for Bean  
Muslim Foreign Missions in Australia

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<sup>1</sup> United Nation News, "Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territory is 'Apartheid'"  
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114702>

<sup>2</sup> Independent "ISIS Flag: What do the words mean and what are its origins?",  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-flag-what-do-the-words-mean-and-what-are-its-origins-10369601.html>