بسم الله الرحمٰن الرحيم

Islamic Supreme Council of Canada

PRESS RELEASE

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Islamic Supreme Council of Canada Delegation Strengthens Christian-Muslim Relations During Historic Visit to Vatican City

22-Member Canadian Muslim Delegation Meets Vatican Officials, Participates in General Audience with Pope Leo XIV, and Explores Rome's Historic Landmarks

Calgary, Alberta, Canada — October 25, 2026

The **Islamic Supreme Council of Canada (ISCC)** is pleased to announce the successful completion of its historic delegation visit to Rome and Vatican City from **October 19 to 22, 2026**. The visit marked another significant milestone in the Council's ongoing commitment to promoting interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, religious harmony, and peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths.

The **22-member delegation, representing various cities across Canada**, travelled to Rome to strengthen relationships with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and explore opportunities for continued cooperation between Christian and Muslim communities.

The delegation was led by **Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy, Chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada**, who has actively promoted Christian-Muslim dialogue and interfaith cooperation in Canada and internationally for several decades.

The four-day visit included important meetings with Vatican officials, participation in the General Audience with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, visits to religious and educational institutions, and sightseeing at some of Rome's most celebrated historical landmarks.

Meeting at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI)

On Tuesday, October 20, 2026, the delegation visited the **Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI)** in Rome.

The delegation met with **Rev. Professor Christopher Clohessy and Rev. Prof. Martin Wullobayi**, and participated in discussions concerning Christian-Muslim relations, Islamic scholarship, religious education, and the importance of developing a deeper understanding of each other's religious traditions.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to exchange perspectives on the role of religious institutions in building bridges between communities and promoting mutual respect.

The delegation also toured the Institute and learned about its academic contributions to the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

The Canadian Muslim representatives expressed their appreciation for the Institute's efforts to promote academic understanding and constructive dialogue between Christianity and Islam.

Meeting with the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican

On the afternoon of October 20, 2026, the delegation visited the **Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See**, the Vatican department responsible for promoting understanding, respect, and cooperation between the Catholic Church and followers of other religions.

The meeting was arranged with the assistance of **Rev. Fr. Laurent Basanese**, whose warm welcome, kindness, and hospitality were deeply appreciated by the Canadian delegation.

The discussions focused on strengthening Christian-Muslim relationships, addressing misunderstandings between religious communities, and encouraging religious leaders to work together for peace, justice, compassion, and human dignity.

Participants reaffirmed the importance of continuing constructive dialogue and cooperation between religious communities.

The delegation also discussed the importance of strengthening interfaith relationships in Canada, where people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds live together and contribute to the country's social and cultural development.

The ISCC representatives expressed their sincere appreciation for the warm reception and meaningful discussions.

Participation in the General Audience with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV

One of the most memorable moments of the visit took place on **Wednesday, October 21, 2026**, when the delegation participated in the **General Audience with His Holiness Pope Leo XIV** at the Vatican.

For the Canadian Muslim delegation, participation in the Papal General Audience represented an important expression of friendship, goodwill, and respect between Muslim and Catholic communities.

The delegation conveyed its sincere prayers and best wishes for the health, well-being, and continued service of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy emphasized that religious leaders have a responsibility to promote understanding and cooperation, particularly at a time when the world faces increasing polarization, hatred, religious intolerance, and international conflicts.

He stressed that religious leaders should become ambassadors of peace, reconciliation, and understanding rather than allowing religious differences to create divisions within society.

Continuing a Historic Relationship: Previous Vatican Visit in 2017

This visit also built upon the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada's earlier engagement with the Vatican.

In **2017, Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy visited Vatican City and had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis**.

That memorable encounter reinforced the importance of maintaining positive relationships between Muslim and Christian leaders.

The October 2026 visit continued this tradition of friendship and demonstrated the Council's long-standing commitment to strengthening interfaith relationships.

Prof. Imam Soharwardy recalled his previous visit with great appreciation and emphasized that dialogue between religious leaders must remain an ongoing process.

He expressed hope that the relationships established and strengthened during the 2026 visit would lead to greater cooperation between Muslim and Christian institutions in Canada and internationally.

Exploring Rome's Historic Landmarks and Cultural Heritage

In addition to their important meetings at the Vatican, members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada delegation enjoyed visiting several of Rome's world-famous historical and cultural landmarks.

One of the most memorable highlights was the delegation's visit to the **Colosseum**, one of the world's most iconic ancient monuments and a remarkable symbol of Roman history and civilization.

The delegation also explored other historic sites throughout Rome, gaining a deeper appreciation of the city's rich cultural heritage, magnificent architecture, and centuries-old history.

These sightseeing activities provided an excellent opportunity for delegation members to spend time together, strengthen friendships, and experience the beauty and historical significance of one of Europe's most celebrated cities.

Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy expressed his appreciation for the memorable experience, noting that the visit was not only an important step toward strengthening Christian-Muslim relations but also an opportunity for cultural learning, friendship, and mutual understanding.

The delegation thoroughly enjoyed its time in Rome, particularly the visit to the Colosseum, and returned to Canada with wonderful memories of a successful, meaningful, and enjoyable journey.

Promoting Peace, Unity, and Religious Harmony

The Islamic Supreme Council of Canada believes that interfaith dialogue must go beyond formal meetings and lead to practical cooperation in addressing the challenges facing humanity.

The Council continues to encourage religious communities to work together in combating hatred, discrimination, Islamophobia, antisemitism, religious intolerance, poverty, and violence.

Through its network of mosques, Islamic centres, schools, food banks, and community organizations across Canada, the Council promotes religious education, community service, and peaceful coexistence.

The Council strongly believes that religious communities can play an important role in building a more peaceful, compassionate, and inclusive society.

The Vatican visit reaffirmed the importance of maintaining open communication and positive relationships between religious leaders.

Statement by Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy

Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy, Chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada, stated:

"Our visit to Vatican City was a deeply meaningful and memorable experience. We were warmly welcomed by Vatican officials, and our discussions reaffirmed the importance of friendship, respect, and cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

We believe that religious differences should never become a reason for hatred or division. Instead, our shared values should inspire us to work together for peace, justice, compassion, and the well-being of humanity.

Canada is home to people of many religions, cultures, and backgrounds. Our diversity is a strength, and religious leaders have an important responsibility to promote understanding, unity, and peaceful coexistence.

We are deeply grateful to Fr. Laurent Basanese, Fr. Wasim Salman, and everyone who helped make our visit successful. We look forward to strengthening these relationships and continuing our dialogue in Canada and internationally."

An Invitation to Continue the Dialogue in Canada

Following the successful visit, Prof. Imam Soharwardy extended a warm invitation to Vatican representatives, including Fr. Laurent Basanese, to visit Canada and continue discussions with Canadian Muslim leaders.

The Islamic Supreme Council of Canada hopes that this historic visit will contribute to further exchanges, educational initiatives, and collaborative efforts between Muslim and Christian institutions.

The Council remains committed to organizing interfaith meetings, educational programs, and community initiatives that bring people of different religious backgrounds together.

The delegation returned to Canada with renewed enthusiasm and determination to continue building bridges of friendship, understanding, and cooperation.

About the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada

The **Islamic Supreme Council of Canada (ISCC)** was established in 2000 and is a national Muslim organization dedicated to promoting Islamic education, community development, interfaith dialogue, and peaceful coexistence.

The Council works through a network of mosques, Islamic centres, schools, food banks, and charitable organizations across Canada.

For more than two decades, ISCC has actively engaged with Christian, Jewish, and other religious communities to promote mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

The organization continues to encourage Canadian Muslims to participate positively in Canadian society while maintaining their religious identity, values, and traditions.

ISCC believes that cooperation among religious communities is essential for building a united, peaceful, and prosperous Canada.

Media Contact

Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy
Chairman
Islamic Supreme Council of Canada

Website: www.iscc.ca
Email: contact@islamicsupremecouncil.com
Phone: +1-416-994-5467