June 8, 2021

To the UTM community,

I write to you in profound sadness and immense rage.

On Sunday, in London, Ontario, a man deliberately drove his truck over the curb and violently stuck five members of a Muslim family, killing four people and seriously injuring a nine-year-old boy. The murderer, as authorities have already discerned, deliberately targeted the family because of their Muslim faith and planned the attack as the realization of his cowardly hate. He didn’t know his victims personally, as police explain; he knew only that they were Muslims out for an evening walk.

I join UTM in condemning this unconscionable violence; in mourning an innocent family unjustly shattered; and in offering my most profound sympathy and solidarity for Muslim communities. I also echo Muslim community leaders in recognizing the roots of this violence in a deplorable pattern of Islamophobia, which has long proliferated across Canada, only most visibly exemplified in the 2017 terrorist attack on the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City.

Like the Quebec City attack, the murders in London demand a commitment to anti-Islamophobic action, powerfully articulated yesterday by Mustafa Farooq, CEO of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, as he expressed the sorrow experienced over the family’s loss. “Let that sorrow,” he declares, “be the ground where we stand for justice and stand for change.” To our Muslim communities: I see your sorrow. To our non-Muslim communities: I implore you to work as allies in this stand against hate. Most immediately, I urge you to learn more about the goals and principles of U of T’s Community Working Group on Anti-Islamophobia.

I also know that people are hurting. Students can speak to a counsellor 24/7 in multiple languages on My SSP through an app and toll free number: 1-844-451-9700 inside North America; 001-416-380-6578 outside North America. Students can also reach out for support to offices on all three campuses, including the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office at UTM. For UTM staff and faculty, I encourage you to use the resources available through the Employee and Family Assistance Program: please call 1-800-663-1142.

Thank you,

Alexandra Gillespie
Vice-President & Principal
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