



For Immediate Release – Conservative’s announcement to combat “Barbaric Cultural Practices” purely political manouvre –

October 8, 2015 – Mississauga

On October 2, 2015, Mr. Chris Alexander and Dr. Kellie Leitch announced measures to stop the so-called “Barbaric Cultural Practices” against women and girls; in particular they announced that a RCMP “tip line” will be established that enables citizens and victims to call with information about incidences of “barbaric cultural practices” in Canada or to notify authorities that a child or woman is at risk of being victimized.

While these measures give the appearance that they combat violence against women and girls, the timing of the announcement at the eve of the upcoming election ironically coincides with all the various debates around the niqab. For all intent and purposes, this announcement appears designed purely to gain voter support by inflaming the perceived niqab issue as a safety and security risk. “This in itself is not in tune with true Canadian values as we know and appreciate them”, said Federation of Muslim Women spokesperson Rabia Khedr, “This is a shameful political tactic that serves only to divide our country and further alienate, marginalize and discriminate against vulnerable Muslim women and minority groups in Canada.”

The federal government has not demonstrated that the existing criminal and policing policies, strategies and resources are insufficient to combat the ills of forced marriages, female genital mutilation or so-called honour-based violence. Let it be categorically clear, FMW does not condone any of these barbaric practices and demands that the government allocates sufficient resources to women’s organizations to eliminate such practices.

On March 18, 2015, Dr. Kellie Leitch met exclusively with a group of Muslim women, in Mississauga. Issues discussed included the right of Muslim women to wear the niqab as a personal choice due to a deeply held religious belief. Dr. Leitch gave the impression of understanding the concerns raised by Muslim women at the meeting.

The Federation of Muslim Women emphatically states the need to focus on issues affecting all women and girls, notwithstanding their ancestry, ethno-racial, cultural or religious affiliations. FMW board members collectively recognize the importance of challenging the real and immediate violence against all women, including the murdered and missing aboriginal women as well as family, domestic and sexual violence against women and girls. Rabia Khedr urges all Canadians to “embrace and celebrate our cultural and religious differences and work towards a Canada that respects the dignity of all Canadians.”

Contact:

Rabia Khedr email: rabia@fmw.org