

# 'There are no words': Hundreds attend rally to support Muslim community, victims of Quebec shooting

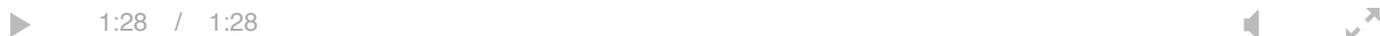


THIA JAMES, SASKATOON STARPHOENIX

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Crowd braves the cold for vigil honouring victims of shooting at Quebec City mosque



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When Ayisha Kurji picked her kids up from school on Monday, she struggled with how to explain the deadly shooting at a Quebec City mosque.

They were too young hear it and too young to understand, she said through tears as she spoke to the crowd of hundreds gathered at Saskatoon's city hall on Tuesday in support of the six men who died in the shooting. Kurji tried to explain to her children what happened.

"My words failed me, because there are no words," she said. "My heart was breaking as I told them, and my only hope is that they are so young, so maybe they won't understand what it means to be attacked because of your faith."



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Many onlookers at the vigil held candles in their gloved hands, listening as Kurji told them our voices are the most powerful thing we have, and encouraged others to speak up and speak out against hate.

"For too long, I have sat quietly thinking and feeling, but not speaking — living in denial that something like this could happen here. It can. It did," she said.

On Sunday night, a lone gunman opened fire in the Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec in Quebec City, killing six and wounding 19 people

attending prayer. The alleged gunman, Alexandre Bissonnette, 27, faces six counts of murder and five counts of attempted murder for the attack, which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called a terrorist act.

Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Azzeddine Soufiane, Khaled Belkacemi, Abdelkrim Hassane and Aboubaker Thabti lost their lives.



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Sarah Roesler was among those who filled the square at city hall, which was also a rally against the United States government's sweeping ban on entry for refugees and people from seven majority Muslim nations. Roesler held a sign with two messages: Love Trumps Hate and We Are All Immigrants.

She noted there are a lot of general misconceptions about Islam, and she

has heard Islamophobic or ill-informed statements even from people who oppose the ban.

“I think it’s important that they come out to things like this, and I come out to things like this to show I’m supportive of it, so that people can be more well informed and actually learn and know what Islam is, that we’re all here together,” she said.

## Hundreds gather in Saskatoon to mourn Quebec mosque... *1:00*

Mayor Charlie Clark and six city councillors lent their support to the vigil’s attendees. Clark said the U.S. is taking many steps backward from a democratic society.

“It is in this community, I know we have tremendous hope and we’ve shown through so many acts that we can build strength and that we can show an alternative to our children and our grandchildren as we listen to what’s happening in the United States. It’s here that we can show that’s not the path that we take, that we take another path,” he said.

Zeba Ahmad donned her red maple leaf mittens for the vigil. She’s called Canada home for more than 50 years and said it has always been a welcoming place.

“It’s really hit close to home for something like this to happen in our country and I just felt it was important to be out here and to be with

people and feel all the love and respect that's out there," she said.

The vigil was one of the many that took place across the country since the attack in Quebec. In Saskatchewan, people attended vigils in Saskatoon and Regina on Monday evening and another is scheduled for Thursday night in Prince Albert at city hall. A rally against Islamophobia is set for Saturday at 2 p.m. at Friendship Park in Saskatoon.



Saskatoon mayor Charlie Clark speaks at Tuesday's solidarity vigil. *LIAM RICHARDS / LIAM RICHARDS*

— *With Canadian Press files*

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