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## Press Statement

Muslim Canadian Congress condemns Bangladesh Minister's statement that criticizing Jamaat-e-Islami is tantamount to criticizing Islam

TORONTO: The Muslim Canadian Congress has expressed shock at the statement of a Bangladesh cabinet Minister who claimed that criticizing Jamaat-e-Islami is tantamount to criticizing Islam.

In a report published in the Dhaka newspaper The Daily Star, Industries Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami was reported as saying that speaking against Jamaat-e-Islami amounted to a conspiracy against Islam.

Rizwana Jafri, president of the MCC said she was shocked at Mr. Nizami's equating of Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami as one and the same. "This indicates a very fascist streak among Islamic fundamentalists who will do anything to destroy democracy and install Taliban type governments across the Muslim world."

She added that the Muslim Canadian Congress denounces such claims in clear terms as absolutely unislamic and undemocratic. It shows a clear lack of understanding of Islam's divine peace-message.

Tarek Fatah, a Board member of the MCC said any party who was complicit in the genocide of the Bangladeshi people in the 1971 Liberation War and worked as collaborators, should hang its head in shame instead of lecturing about Islam. The Jamaat-e-Islami's record is tainted as anti-

democracy, not only in Bangladesh, but also in Pakistan, from where it draws much of its origin.

As Muslim Canadians who cherish democracy and a separation of religion and state, we are alarmed at the silence of the Bangladeshi government in dealing with Islamic fundamentalist forces that are trying to destroy the intrinsically democratic nature of Bangladeshi society

Throughout Muslim history such efforts to monopolies Islam as the ownership of a selected few hardliners has caused immense harm and bloodshed; it is time to stop this in Bangladesh.

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