



*“Dedicated to Justice” • «Au service de la justice»*

February 12, 2018

Stéphanie Vallée, Ministre de la Justice  
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Dear Minister:

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a charitable organization that provides support, information and education to victims of crime and stakeholders. It has come to our attention that the Quebec City families whose husbands/fathers were brutally murdered by gun violence in their place of worship on January 29, 2017, are being denied financial assistance by IVAC.

The *Crime Victim Assistance Act* states:

2. Every crime victim or, if he has been killed, his dependents may avail himself or themselves of this Act and benefit from the advantages provided therein.
3. A crime victim, for the purposes of this Act, is any person killed or injured in Québec:  
(a) by reason of the act or omission of any other person occurring in or resulting directly from the commission of an offence the description of which corresponds to the criminal offences mentioned in the schedule to this Act;
4. The dependants of a victim are, for the purposes of this Act, the persons who, at the time of the crime or injury, as the case may be, were dependent on him within the meaning of the Workers' Compensation Act (chapter A-3).

It is clear to us upon reading the legislation, the widows and children of the murdered men should be considered dependents under the law. As well as covering funeral expenses, they should be eligible for therapeutic assistance and an award. We understood that Quebec had the most robust compensation program in Canada for victims, as there is no maximum in terms of what can be awarded, except in relation to salary replacement: up to 90%, maximum \$53,500. Is this incorrect? We also understood that some of the families have appealed the denial of their applications, and they are expected to wait more than two years to have their cases reviewed. This is unacceptable and we ask you to intervene.

We remind you that six women have lost their husbands and 17 children lost their father. The heartache and trauma these families have experienced is unimaginable. The deaths of the victims in this terrorist attack were sudden and violent, two characteristics which potentially lead to worse psychological outcomes in the families of victims than if the deaths were expected and nonviolent. Sudden and violent



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deaths have been associated with negative bereavement outcomes in survivor populations, including high intensity and long duration of depression, and grief in survivor populations. Terrorist events differ from other sudden deaths in that they are large-scale attacks that affect large numbers of family members and communities. As man-made disasters, they impart added risk to family members due to their criminal nature and associated human culpability, with resultant anger or bitterness.

In addition to sudden and violent deaths, several demographic characteristics have been associated with increased risk for clinical levels of grief, such as being young, female and having had pre-existing mental health difficulties. In addition, close bereaved kin of deceased family members have been shown to be at added risk. Finally, deaths associated with human intent or culpability (e.g. homicide and terrorism) have been associated with poor grief outcomes. As someone who supported the Quebec Nationalist movement was directly responsible for these deaths, it is likely that a sense of unjust loss is relevant (and potentially complicating) to the healing process of these families.

We understand some or all of these families also lost their sole financial supporter, thus their personal situation becomes even more difficult. Although psychotherapy can help, it does not assist a widow to suddenly be able to support her family. In the best of circumstances, victims often have difficulty returning to the workforce following a traumatic violent loss due to homicide.

Victim compensation is a form of victim assistance in meeting financial, physical, emotional and social needs of victims, and has played a vital role in victim recovery. The idea of providing reparations to victims of crime through civil redress – either through restitution from offenders to victims or state compensation programs – has a long history of support dating back to ancient Babylonia.

What sort of society are we, if we cannot commit to providing financial help to the family of innocent victims gunned down during prayer? We know that there are long-term negative effects of violence that have direct financial consequences. Compensation can help mitigate these negatives and/or pay other expenses. When victims feel supported and are satisfied with the supports they receive, they are much more likely to heal and move forward.

We ask you Minister, to please step in and help these families. It has been a year already and we can only imagine the feelings of revictimization experienced by their dealings with IVAC. We must do better for the families of Azzeddine Soufiane, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Ibrahima Barry and Abdelkrim Hassane.

Sincerely,

Heidi Illingworth  
Executive Director