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Hate crimes against Muslims increase in Canada

2-3 minutes

Hate crimes against Muslims have increased 60 percent, according to the latest figures released Tuesday by Statistics Canada.

There were 159 incidents in 2015, a significant jump from 99 the previous year, the agency said on its website.

The numbers have been steadily increasing and are up 253 percent since 2012, although overall instances of police-recorded hate crimes were down 3.8 percent in 2015 to 1,362 from 1,424 in 2012.

Khalid Elgazzar, board vice chairman of the National Council of Canadian Muslims and an Ottawa-based lawyer, termed 2015 as a “difficult year.”

Two terrorist attacks in France fed anti-Muslim flames in Canada, while former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2015 made an election issue out of the right of a Muslim woman to wear a veil at citizenship ceremonies.

“The Canadian Muslim community bore the brunt of sinister political rhetoric surrounding the federal election which painted Muslims as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers as well as being anti-women,” Elgazzar said at a press conference in Ottawa.

But the number of hate crimes was probably higher.

“The number of hate crimes in this release likely undercuts the true extent of hate crime in Canada, as not all crimes are reported to police,” Statistics Canada said.

Elgazzar said the incidents are under reported because some Muslims do not believe police will take action and are afraid of being further victimized.

But Muslims were not the only target, or even the largest target.

Statistics Canada figures show the largest number of hate crimes were against blacks, with 224 incidents in 2015. Jews were next with 178 incidents reported and sexual orientation hate crimes stood at 141.

Others targeted included members of various religions.

But Muslim hate crimes were the only ones to show an increase in 2015.

And the number of violent incidents included in hate crimes – assault, threat and criminal harassment – was also up, at 38 percent, an increase of 15 percent compared to the previous year.

PHOTO CAPTION

Alexandre Bissonnette, a suspect in a shooting at a Quebec City mosque, arrives at the court house in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada February 21, 2017. REUTERS

