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Members of the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security

Dr. Amarnath Amarasingam, Toronto (Ontario) – CCRS Chair

Dr. Amarasingam is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a Senior Fellow at the Canadian International Council, and the Co-Director of a study of Western foreign fighters based at the University of Waterloo.

Community engagement experience:

A member of the CCRS since 2012, Dr. Amarasingam conducted hundreds of interviews for his Ph.D. dissertation on social movement activism, organizational dynamics, and youth identity in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. He also conducted over 50 interviews with former fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers) throughout the former war zones of Sri Lanka in 2012 and 2013. At the Turkey-Syria border, Dr. Amarasingam spoke with dozens of injured fighters, refugees, as well as former and current activists of the Syrian revolution. He has also conducted field research in Somalia, Lebanon, Morocco, Israel/Palestine, and amongst different ethnic and religious groups in North America and Europe. As Co-Director of a study of Western foreign fighters in Syria, he has conducted dozens of interviews with jihadists in Syria and Iraq, supporters of jihadist movements online, as well as family members and friends of individuals who have joined the fight abroad. In addition to being an experienced field researcher, Dr. Amarasingam is the author of *Pain, Pride, and Politics: Social Movement Activism and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada* (2015), has published several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and was the editor of works such as *Sri Lanka: The Struggle for Peace in the Aftermath of War* (2016). He has also presented at over 100 national and international conferences and written for *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Politico*, *Vice News*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Globe and Mail*.

Personal influences:

A native of Sri Lanka, Dr. Amarasingam chose Canada as his home in 1988.

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Rabbi Daniel Benlolo, Montréal (Québec)

Mr. Benlolo is Cantor and Ritual Director at the Shaare Zedek Congregation, a place of Jewish prayer, worship and learning that brings together over 550 families.

Community engagement experience:

Cantor and Rabbi, Mr. Benlolo is the founder of the SJCC Shira Ottawa Choir, The Tamir Neshama Choir and L'école Benlolo Bar/Bat Mitzvah School. He performed at countless community-wide functions while working as an educator at local schools, Judaic advisor for the Tamir Foundation, serving people with developmental disabilities and various other agencies. Previously Cantor at the Congregation Kehillat Beth Israel in Ottawa, the position at the Shaare Zedek Congregation brought Mr. Benlolo back to Montreal. In 1991, Rabbi Benlolo received a prestigious scholarship from the Maybaum Foundation to study Ashkenazi, Yemenite, Syrian and other forms of Sephardi Cantorial styles at the Belz School of Jewish Music, an affiliate of Yeshiva University in New York. He was also the recipient of the 2004 United Way Community Builder Award, the 2013 Governor General Caring Canadian Award, the 2016 Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, Elaine Rabin Social Service Award, and the 2017 Mayor's City of Ottawa Builder Award. Fluent in French, English, Arabic, and Hebrew, Rabbi Benlolo is a multi-talented artisan whose designed ketubot (wedding certificates) and other Judaic art have been published in a variety of books and publications. Recognized by the Universal Peace Federation and Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace as an Ambassador for Peace, Rabbi Benlolo uses his musical and vocal talents to benefit innumerable charitable organizations and promote North American and worldwide Jewry. His passion for singing and stage brought him to perform in several countries including Venezuela, United Kingdom, Israel and the United States.

Personal influences:

The youngest of 12 children, Mr. Benlolo was born in Casablanca, Morocco. His family settled in Quebec in the early 1970's. He attended the Rabbinical College of Canada and became Chazzan (Cantor) of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue of Montreal at the age of 17, a position which he held for eight years.

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Dr. Gira Bhatt, New Westminster (British Columbia) - CCRS Vice-Chair

Dr. Bhatt is a professor of psychology at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and the Principal Investigator/Director of a federally-funded (SSHRC) Community-University Research Alliance Acting Together (CURA-AT) youth gang prevention project.

Community engagement experience:

Dr. Bhatt is a community engaged researcher and an educator. In addition to teaching courses on cross-cultural psychology, psychology of prejudice, and research methods, she conducts research on prevention of youth violence, acculturation, and cultural identity. As the lead of a federally funded (SSHRC) Community-University Research Alliance project addressing the issue of youth violence and gang involvement with a focus on strength-based approach, she built a network of multiple partnerships. This work involved coordinating quantitative and qualitative research streams and developing training workshops in collaboration with seven academic researchers, four post-secondary institutions, and 11 community groups including non-profit and government agencies, school district, RCMP, Surrey Mayor's office, and local businesses. The applied component of the project required dissemination of research knowledge through public presentations and writing for the academic and popular media. Along with her team, she has coordinated a series of gang-prevention workshops and public forums involving youth, parents, teachers, policy makers, the local police and the RCMP, and the community at large. She is a recipient of 2014 KPU's Distinguished Scholarship award, and the 2017 Canadian Psychological Association's Distinguished Contributions to Public or Community Service award for bridging academic research with community action.

Personal influences:

Dr. Bhatt was born and raised in Mumbai where she completed her Master's degree in clinical psychology. She moved to Canada and received an additional Master's degree and a Ph.D. in social psychology from Simon Fraser University, BC. Having experienced and integrated two diverse cultures in her personal life, Dr. Gira Bhatt values diversity both among people and among perspectives.

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Mr. Kamran Bhatti, Hamilton (Ontario)

Mr. Bhatti is a Software Support Engineer with OpenText Corporation in Waterloo, Ontario.

Community engagement experience:

Over the past few years, Mr. Bhatti, through his organization North American Spiritual Revival (NASR) has facilitated outreach events throughout Canada between the various Muslim communities and Public Safety Canada. The purpose of these events was to foster understanding and partnership between public safety agencies and the Muslim communities. Mr. Bhatti serves as the senior mentor for NASR Youth, working with youth to discourage radical interpretations of Islam and engage in impactful civic engagement in local communities. These empowerment programs have worked to build youth leaders within the community since 2009. The young people who have come out of this program have gone on to be leaders at institutes of higher education throughout Canada. Mr. Bhatti attended McMaster University where he earned Bachelor's degrees in Computer Science and Political Science. He also holds a Master's degree in Software Engineering from Brandeis University.

Personal influences:

Born and raised in Hamilton, Mr. Bhatti is the son of immigrants from Pakistan.

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Ms. Lina Chaker, Windsor (Ontario)

Ms. Chaker is currently pursuing her Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Windsor and University of Detroit Mercy.

Community engagement experience:

While acquiring her Bachelor's degree in Communication and Media studies at the University of Windsor, Ms. Chaker advised provincial bodies on the interests of at-risk youth. She recently completed her third public appointment to the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities, where she led a province-wide Listening Tour engagement. She previously worked as a Community Outreach Worker at The Initiative, a United Way-funded neighborhood renewal strategy, and as a Youth Facilitator at the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Featured in TVO's Short Doc (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb2ux-U1qil>), Ms. Chaker builds community through intercultural food, art, and environmental projects. From establishing a community garden, kitchen, and market, to organizing public mural contests and youth summer camps, she is active in creating spaces and activities for positive social interactions. Winner of the 2016 Youth Changing Lives Award, she continues her volunteerism through a number of roundtables, such

as the Windsor-Essex Local Immigration Partnership Newcomer Youth Committee, the Provincial Islamophobia Sub-Committee of the Anti-Racism Directorate, and is a board member of her local mosque, the Windsor Islamic Association.

Personal influences:

Ms. Chaker is a proud Windsorite of Syrian descent. Her familial background of health-care professionals fled Syria to Saudi Arabia for freedom of political thought. Her mother pursued their immigration to Canada seeking a better quality of life and education for her children. Lina has always valued Canada's democratic values and is committed to creating an environment where youth and families are empowered to positively contribute to our pluralistic society.

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Ms. Savelia Curniski, Saskatoon (Saskatchewan)

Ms. Curniski is the Co-Founder of NASHI, an organization dedicated to diverting at-risk youth from human trafficking and supporting victims of human trafficking to re-integrate into society through education, awareness campaigns and a skills development program.

Community engagement experience:

Upon successfully completing a Bachelor's and Master's degree, Ms. Curniski pursued a career in education. Her passion for visiting pioneer Orthodox and Catholic churches, while attending university, resulted in her documenting 150 churches in rural Saskatchewan. This collection is now housed at the Canadian Museum of History under the name CHIRP (Church Historical Information Retrieval Project). After teaching in Saskatchewan and Nunavut for a few years, however, she felt the need to further challenge herself. A strong tug to the homeland of her parents culminated in her organizing tours to Ukraine and opening a restaurant in Saskatoon. Later, in 2004, she helped establish the charity NASHI: a group dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking and providing a safe house for young at-risk girls in Ukraine. The safe house, known as the Maple Leaf Centre, can house up to 22 girls and is completely funded by Canadians. It also provides resources to at-risk girls until they complete their post-secondary education. The 14 girls that currently call this home are between five and fourteen years old. In 2006, Ms. Curniski received the Governor General's People of Courage medal for her efforts. She also serves on the Human Trafficking Committee of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Personal influences:

Of Ukrainian descent, Ms. Curniski has been an advocate for victims of human trafficking in Canada and Ukraine since 2004 when she witnessed this extremely complex issue firsthand. The need to give back to others was instilled in her by her grandparents and parents who are her greatest role models. Ms. Curniski illustrates her vision as follows: “We need to walk off the dry land, where we measure and plan, to take the first steps on water where an exciting life awaits each of us”.

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Ms. Ubah Farah, Toronto (Ontario)

Ms. Farah is the Housing Manager for Midaynta Community Services, a non-profit organization that provides social and settlement services to refugees, immigrants and youths in need.

Community engagement experience:

Prior to Midaynta, Ms. Farah completed a one-year student placement with Children’s Aid Society where she was working with vulnerable and marginalize communities. Ms. Farah has been a member of the CCRS since March 2017 and participated in past Public Safety events including a two-day workshop on Community Planning and Crime Prevention for the Somali-Canadian community in October 2012. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social and Community Work from York University. In addition, Ms. Farah has over 20 years of experience in organizational development, project management, and creative leadership. This encompasses community advocacy, policy analysis, operations management, financial management, facilitation and public speaking. Part of the Etobicoke central riding association, Ms. Farah is actively involved in community issues and community development. She is a passionate housing worker dedicated to civic engagement, and has built strong relationships with Somali-Canadian and Muslim diaspora leaders in order to better their lives.

Personal influences:

Born in Somalia, Ms. Farah immigrated to Canada in 1991. As a Social Worker and a community activist who is well connected and well respected in her community and the marginalize communities that she serves, she promotes public safety through education and reminds people that public safety is our shared responsibility. She exemplifies this through her work with the Toronto Police Muslim Consultative Committee as a part of which she engages with the Muslim communities in Toronto on crime prevention and public safety concerns.

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Ms. Bridget Foster, O.N.L., Fredericton (New Brunswick)

Ms. Foster is a former member of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Deputy Minister's Advisory Council, providing strategic advice concerning immigration, refugees, multiculturalism and citizenship.

Community engagement experience:

Ms. Foster was awarded the *Order of Newfoundland and Labrador* in 2014 for over 30 years of service in the immigration/settlement sector. Her accomplishments include receipt of the *Paul Yuzyk Lifetime Achievement Award for Multiculturalism* in 2012, as well as *Her Majesty's Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals* in 2004 and 2012 respectively. Ms. Foster has been involved with the Canadian Council for Refugees, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women and the RCMP Race Relations Committee. She was also the driving force behind the formation of the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies and the national settlement umbrella group, the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance. Furthermore, recognizing the need for and importance of research in immigration, Ms. Foster championed bringing the Metropolis project to the Atlantic region, a project that played an important role in supporting research that sought to inform government decision-making on immigration policy.

Ms. Foster began her work in the area of immigration as a volunteer with the Friends of Refugees, the forerunner of the current organization the Association for New Canadians (ANC). Under her stewardship, the Association evolved significantly and today, over 80 employees and 300 volunteers deliver language, employment and other settlement services to newcomers in the province.

Personal influences:

An immigrant herself, Ms. Foster moved to Newfoundland and Labrador with her family in 1978 and has been giving back to Canada, her adopted home, ever since. She has maintained close connections with many of the families Canada has welcomed and continues to engage with the ANC, her former organization in Newfoundland and Labrador, always striving to improve services for newcomers.

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Mr. Soon Kim, Coquitlam (British Columbia)

Mr. Kim is the Owner of Newgen Group of Companies and the Managing Partner for Soon Kim Inc. Chartered Professional Accountant, both of which were founded in 1997.

Community engagement experience:

Initially appointed to the CCRS in 2011, Mr. Kim has also been serving as Chair of the Board of Governors at Capilano University in North Vancouver since 2013. A long-standing business and community leader of the Korean-Canadian community of British Columbia and Canada, Mr. Kim has extensive experience and insight into the economic, cultural, and political environment of Asia, but particularly Korea. He is also a leading expert in real estate development, income tax, SMEs and start-ups. As the CEO of Newgen Group of Companies, Mr. Kim leads private companies in real estate development, property management, and management consultation. Since 2000, Newgen has successfully completed multiple real estate projects in the province. In addition to being a Chartered Professional Accountant, Mr. Kim is a graduate of the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor's degree in Commerce (Marketing).

Personal influences:

A native of South Korea, Mr. Kim has been calling Canada "home" since 1979.

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Dr. Régine Uwibereyeho King, Calgary (Alberta)

Dr. King is an Associate Professor with the University of Calgary's Faculty of Social Work.

Community engagement experience:

Prior to her current position at the University of Calgary, Dr. King was an Assistant Professor at University of Manitoba. She has a Ph.D. in Social Work and a Masters of Education in Counseling Psychology and Community Development from the University of Toronto. Dr. King's research interests focus on psychosocial processes and approaches to psychosocial healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, and cross-cultural mental health among survivors of organized violence, including refugees and those who resettle in post-conflict settings. She has published

on truth and reconciliation commissions, grassroots intergroup dialogue, healing processes, transnational research, and North-South partnerships in social work education. Dr. King's transnational research interests were inspired by her frontline work experience in various community-based organizations in Canada and Rwanda. Dr. King's community engagement is rooted in her commitment to social justice, human rights, and her desire to contribute to safe and healthy communities. She has played an active role in genocide education and prevention, and in the governance of community organizations as a board member.

Personal influences:

Dr. King immigrated to Canada in 2000. She was born and raised in Rwanda and is a survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

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Ms. Georgina M Nagano, Whitehorse (Yukon)

Ms. Nagano is the coordinator of the Community Safety Officer Program of Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) Justice's Community Safety Officer Program. Prior to this she was the A/Director of Justice since November 2016. She was appointed to this position after serving as Justice Coordinator followed by Justice Manager at KDFN.

Community engagement experience:

Ms. Nagano retired from her first career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) after 21 years of loyal service. She has had a very diverse background in policing and served as operational and administrative police officer within the RCMP and within many Aboriginal Communities in Canada. In 2006, Ms. Nagano began her second career with the Department of Justice Canada as the Northern Regional Coordinator for the Aboriginal Justice Directorate's Aboriginal Justice Strategy. She was responsible for the Federal contribution along with researching, identifying and assisting in developing protocol agreements for the application of community based justice programs. In 2014, Ms. Nagano joined Correctional Services Canada in the capacity of Aboriginal Corrections Development Officer for the Pacific Region. As part of her role, she developed release plans with offenders, case managers and Aboriginal Communities and organizations, and provided training, advice and support in the development of plans for Section 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. Ms. Nagano's expertise includes both a working knowledge and practical application of community justice philosophies, Canadian Criminal Code and Youth Criminal Justice Act, the creation and implementation of

community-based programs and other justice specific practices in Yukon. She also has experience working with community safety and security initiative implementations, and other programs/services linked to justice including criminal justice, family and child welfare, community and land based healing, restorative justice principles and practices and Administration of Justice Agreements.

Personal influences:

Ms. Nagano is a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation Beneficiary and Citizen of the Wolf Clan from Dawson in Yukon.

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Mr. Mohamed Soulami, Sherbrooke (Québec)

Executive Director of *Actions interculturelles*, Mr. Soulami is a member of the Board of Directors of Pathways to Prosperity, the largest group of researchers in the immigration field. Likewise, he is a member of the *Conseil d'administration de la Table de concertation des organismes d'aide aux réfugiés et immigrants* (TCRI), a group of 140 organizations in Quebec. In addition, Mr. Soulami is the President of the *Cimetière musulman du sud-est du Québec* (CIMSEQ), the first Muslim funeral cooperative in Canada.

Community engagement experience:

A CCRS member since 2015, Mr. Soulami directs all of his efforts toward enriching the value of immigration and diversity and what they bring to our society. *Actions interculturelles*, the organization he has been running since 1997, is renowned for its innovative projects that promote intercultural understanding. The organization has accomplished multiple local, provincial, and national-based projects over the years. Passionate about the richness of cultural diversity and the contribution of immigrants to Canada, Mr. Soulami loves to share what has motivated him for all those years: a society rich in its diversity. Mr. Soulami was awarded the title of *Chevalier* of the *Ordre de la pléiade (Ordre de la Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures)* at the National Assembly of Quebec in 2000. He also received in 2008 the Jacques-Couture Award (*Prix Québécois de la citoyenneté*) from the Minister of Immigration, Diversity, and Inclusiveness, and was a finalist of the 2010 Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Mr. Soulami was also recognized by *Actions interculturelles* in 2015 with the Champion for Cultural Diversity Award and the *Mérite estrien*.

Personal influences:

Originally from Morocco, Mr. Soulami came to Sherbrooke in 1989 to pursue his university studies and then decided to live there on a permanent basis.

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Ms. Marjorie Villefranche, Montréal (Quebec)

Ms. Villefranche is the Executive Director of the Maison d'Haïti, a community and cultural organization in Montreal dedicated to the social inclusion of new Haitian immigrants and vulnerable populations.

Community engagement experience:

A specialist in Haitian community history, Ms. Villefranche has participated in the *Histoires d'immigrations* project led by the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec in 2014. She has also made three documentaries: *Port-au-Prince ma ville*, *District 67*, and *Petites mères*. Ms. Villefranche was honoured with multiple awards, such as the 2008 *Femme de mérite*, Education category award of the YWCA Foundation and the *Personnalité de la semaine*, *La Presse*, *Radio-Canada* in 2012. She is at the forefront of current affairs because of her involvement and the energy she invests into advancing the issues surrounding immigrant women and undocumented persons. One of Ms. Villefranche's recent achievements is the construction of a new *Maison d'Haïti*, an establishment whose beauty is worthy of all the communities that it serves. For more than 40 years, Ms. Villefranche has devoted herself to the education and defence of immigrant women and illiterate individuals. The fight against racism, discrimination, and all other forms of exclusion are part of her everyday life. She has participated in the Bread and Roses March, the city of Montreal's Task Force on Democracy, and the *Comité d'Action Femmes et Sécurité urbaine de Montréal*. Currently, she is the head of the *Conseil d'administration de la Table de concertation du quartier Saint-Michel*.

Personal influences:

Ms. Villefranche arrived in Montreal, Quebec, in 1964 at the age of 12 and quickly became involved in various sensitive issues. She is currently one of the most influential voices in her sector.

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