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## NEWS RELEASE

### *Muslims struggling to balance faith with Western life*

#### *New study focuses on factors for successful integration*

**Montreal** – Muslims in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are trying to find ways to reconcile their beliefs with the challenges and complexities of Western society, and they are appealing to their religious leaders to help them understand the contexts in which they live, according to a new study from the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The study, “Changing Perceptions of Islamic Authority among Muslims in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom,” by Karim H. Karim, provides insight into Muslims’ views on immigrant integration by examining how their perceptions of religious authority shape their engagement with broader society. Its findings are primarily drawn from a series of focus group discussions with lay Muslims in Ottawa, Montreal, three cities in England, and Washington, DC.

“The focus group discussions have helped to show some of the complexities of Muslim soul-searching, which has often simplistically been portrayed in popular discourse as a contest between ‘moderates’ and ‘fundamentalists’,” says Karim. “It is important for all non-Muslims here in the West, and for public policy-makers in particular, to understand the expectations that Muslims have of their leadership, because of the integral connection that Islamic beliefs make between faith and the material world.”

Karim hopes the study will improve our understanding of how Islam frames Muslims’ aspirations for successful integration into Western societies. He urges governments to work toward alleviating Muslim alienation by ensuring that anti-racism and anti-discrimination programs address Islamophobia. He also calls for increased support for organizations that work to increase mutual knowledge and enhance intergroup relations. Such initiatives, he says, could help reduce the attraction of extremism, particularly among Muslim youth.

“Changing Perceptions of Islamic Authority among Muslims in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom,” by Karim H. Karim, can be downloaded free of charge from the Institute's Web site ([www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org)).

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