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EWS LOCAL

# Local Muslims express mixed emotions following Shafia convictions



By Tori Stafford, Kingston Whig-Standard  
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Ian MacAlpine The Whig-Standard Imam Sikander Hashmi of the Kingston Islamic Society arrives at Frontenac County court house on Sunday to hear the verdict in the Shafia murder trial.

Members of the local Muslim community responded with mixed emotions Sunday as the Kingston Mills murder trial concluded.

"It's a sad day for everybody because we have a broken family with parents that are going to be away from their surviving children for a very long time," said Imam Sikander Hashmi of the Kingston Islamic Society.

"I wouldn't call it a good day ... (it's) a good day for justice, perhaps . but overall, I think there's sadness."

Like Hashmi, Alia Hogben expressed feelings of a heavy heart.

"I feel very very sad. I'm sad for the deaths," said Hogben, president of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

"We should be focusing on the death of four young women and girls."

Hogben also expressed frustration over the Crown's use of the term "honour killings" to describe the deaths of Mohammad Shafia's first wife, Rona, and his three daughters, Zainab, Sahar and Geeti.

"I'm very upset about the fact that this was played out as "honour killing" and somewhat exotic and strange, instead of the fact that this is femicide, which is the killing of girls and women because men, our patriarchy, thinks that that is OK," Hogben said.

The idea that someone can make a judgement that another's behaviour is "deviant," and should therefore be killed is one that appalled Hogben.

"My concern is far greater and more deep," she said. "The use of the term honour killing was dreadful, utterly dreadful, and it shouldn't have been used."

Imam Hashmi agreed with Hogben that using the term honour killing in connection with the case did more harm than good.

"There was also a lot of frustration in our community for having the allegations coming out of this courtroom being linked to our faith," Hashmi said.

When the trial began, Hashmi made a point of addressing the fact that there is no such thing as an honour killing in the Islamic faith. He dedicated an entire Friday khutbah (Islamic sermon) to the topic. This, he said, is because it is his job as a religious leader to denounce the notion of honour killings altogether.

"Our job now is to continue the fight against domestic violence and honour-based violence," Hashmi said.

"We've got to continue and take concrete steps to ensure that something like this never happens again."

The verdict of guilty for Shafia, his son, Hamed, and his second wife, Tooba Mohammad Yahya, on all counts of first-degree murder brings an end to a case Hashmi described as being full of the same mixed emotions he and Hogben expressed.

"It was a very difficult case for the public, especially for members of the Muslim community to follow, simply because it was tragic in just so many ways," Hashmi said.

"It evoked a number of emotions - there was a lot of anger, there was a lot of shock, there was sadness . definitely, definitely sadness."

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