



# AFIC wants know where the protection for the Shahada is?

Monday 4th December, 2023

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), the peak organisation for Muslim Organisations in Australia, has formally approached the Federal Attorney General seeking clarity on the protection of the Shahada and the Seal of the Prophet in the Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures Bill 2023.

AFIC is actively seeking to understand *what safeguards the legislation provides for the expression of the Shahada*, a fundamental tenet of Islam, and the use of the seal of our beloved Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings upon him).

AFIC notes that the bill did remove explicit references to the flag adopted by Islamic State (IS) that has the Shahada and the seal of the Prophet on it, however the revised bill's broader terms, encompassing symbols related to proscribed terrorist organisations, may include the IS flag and continue to present similar challenges. This approach could *inadvertently extend to symbols of lawful expression of the Islamic faith*, as well as movements, such as the Palestinian resistance, thus not effectively altering the original bill's implications.

Dr. Rateb Jneid, President of AFIC, expressed the organisation's position: "We have requested specific details on where the Shahada is protected under this bill. Further, we urge the Australian Government to review the bill comprehensively and engage in further consultations with community and legal experts to avoid any unintended consequences."

The bill is scheduled for debate in the Senate in the week of 4 December 2023.

*The Shahada is the most basic tenant of Islam*, and is a profession of every Muslim's faith uttered daily. The Shahada reads 'I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah, and I bear witness that Mohammad is the messenger of Allah'. The Shahada been used on flags throughout history. Similarly, the seal of the Prophet Mohammad was used by him in his lifetime and *has been symbolically utilised by Muslim leaders for over 1,400 years*. The black flag with white writing, incorporating these symbols, has been traditionally used throughout Islamic history. Both symbols were appropriated and used by IS but are not exclusively representative of them.

### Authorised:

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