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Somalis plead for end to 'carnage'

**Police committed to solving gang, youth violence: Boyd**

The head of the Canadian Somali Congress pleaded with city police and elected officials Saturday to help stop the "carnage" of young Somali men in Alberta.

**In a hushed community hall, Ahmed Hussen said that 12 young Somali men have died violent deaths in Alberta in just the past four months.**

**"Twelve deaths in the last four months! That's completely unacceptable and we have to do something about it," Hussen told the forum looking at ways to tackle the problem of gangs and youth violence.**

**Hussen, who is from Toronto, said he was approached by members of the Somali community to voice their pain over violence that has claimed so many young lives.**

**"What they are saying in no uncertain terms is this is not something that needs a royal commission that will take years," he said.**

**"This is something that needs a solution right now, and the community is willing to work with everyone on this." About 250 people packed the forum -- Youth For Change -- held at a north Edmonton community hall. The forum lasted over two hours.**

**Among the speakers were federal cabinet Minister Jason Kenney and police Chief Mike Boyd, who each called on the community to work more closely with police and other community stakeholders to address youth violence.**

**Citizenship and Immigration Minister Kenney acknowledged that many Somali refugees to Canada have suffered challenges such as prejudice**

and racism. But he said that must not be an excuse for young Somalis to remain out of mainstream society.

"We need to build trust," said Kenney, who asked that the community remember that police services across Canada are there to protect and to create a safe society.

Last week, two Somali men were killed on a single day in Edmonton.

Abdul Kadir Mohamoud, 23, was found shot to death on Tuesday in Grand Trunk Park, near 109th Street and 130th Avenue.

That night, police responded to reports of gunshots at a townhouse complex at 148th Avenue and 89th Street. Ahmed Mohammed Abdirahman, 21, died from gunshot wounds.

Chief Boyd wouldn't comment specifically on investigations underway in either case.

Boyd conceded that some members of the community question whether local police are committed to solving violent crimes involving Somalis.

Then, in a firm, measured tone, Boyd said: "I want you to hear from me as your police chief ... we are committed to do everything we can to find out who is responsible for the violence against our members of the community." The remark was greeted with thunderous applause.

On Friday, Mahamad Accord, executive director of the Alberta Somali Community Centre, said he'd written to Boyd urging action to close the divide between the community and police.

Accord said the mistrust of police runs so deep in his community it's unlikely they will help police solve the latest killings.

But after Saturday's forum, Accord said he couldn't be happier with statements of support from such speakers as Boyd and Kenney, and also with the strong turnout.

"If we had any more people, they wouldn't have a place to sit," he said, adding that a followup meeting will be held shortly and be aimed exclusively at young people.

Edmonton's Somali community is pegged at between 10,000 and 15,000 people.

**Source: Don Retson, The Edmonton Journal**

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