There are an estimated 20,000 foreigners, including Canadians and Americans, fighting alongside the barbaric cult known as the Islamic State or ISIS. According to a recent Canadian Border Security Agency report, in 2014 the government was aware of at least 130 Canadians fighting in conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq. But in recent months there's been an increase in stories, mainly out of Quebec, of young Muslims leaving the West to join radical jihadists in their wars. In February, reports surfaced of six Quebec teens and young adults who left home and are believed to have joined ISIS. Two more teens were arrested in April and now face terrorism-related charges, and just last week, 10 young Montrealers were intercepted at the airport and stopped from boarding a plane, allegedly on their way to becoming Islamic State militants. What is driving these youngsters to leave comfortable lives in the suburbs and join tribal wars? And how do second-generation Muslim teenagers end up embracing a violent and radical ideology their parents reject? We know that much of the allure of the Islamic State comes from its social media propaganda, but it's also worth examining the families and communities these radicalized youth leave behind. In November 2014, a 20-year-old student from Alabama told her parents she was going on a school trip to Atlanta. Instead, Hoda Muthana boarded a plane to Turkey, met up with friends she'd made on social media, and illegally crossed the border into Syria to join ISIS. Muthana's father is a deeply religious man who encouraged his daughter to peacefully study the Qur'an. He fled Yemen with his wife to give their children a better life free of violence and civil war that plagues much of the region. Violence and a civil war, ironically, that his daughter is now embracing. "I want to apologize for what my daughter did," he said in an interview. The Muslim community in their hometown has also taken a direct stance. On the homepage of the Birmingham Islamic Society's website, there's an open letter denouncing the Islamic State's poisonous ideology. It uses a religious argument to condemn terrorism: "Those who commit acts of terror, murder, and cruelty in the name of Islam are not only destroying innocent lives, but are also betraying the values of the faith they claim to represent." The Muslim community in Birmingham has even taken out paid advertisements in local newspapers to share their anti-terrorism message. They want everyone – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – to know that their community condemns violence. Full stop. Juxtapose the Birmingham Society's response to that of Montreal Imam Adil Charkaoui. Charkaoui teaches Arabic and Qur'an studies at a community center in East Montreal; several of those who have joined or tried to join ISIS formerly attended his classes. Charkaoui's background also raises questions. In 2003, he was arrested on a security certificate after the "Millennium Bomber" Ahmed Ressan told authorities that Charkaoui attended an al-Qaida training camp and was a threat to Canadian security. Charkaoui denied the allegations and he was never charged. Ressan later recanted his story and the case against Charkaoui was deemed unconstitutional and he was given Canadian citizenship. In response to developments surrounding Charkaoui and his students, Parti Québécois politician Agnès Maltais raised a

series of questions in the Quebec legislature: “What is going on at this center? What is Adil Charkaoui telling these children? How is it that young people who follow his teachings suddenly want to join the Islamic State?” These questions may not be polite or nuanced, but they deserve to be answered. But rather than respond to questions or, even better, repeatedly and forcefully denouncing those who leave Canada to fight for our enemy, Charkaoui rashly quipped that the current social climate — where Muslims are viewed as suspects, not partners — is responsible for radicalizing Muslim youth. What a contrast. In Alabama, a grieving father who lost his daughter to a death-cult shows remorse, guilt, and sorrow for her decision. He isn’t afraid to condemn her life choices. His community echoes this sentiment and uses any opportunity possible to show the distinction between peaceful everyday Muslims and the radical sects that undermine their religion. Conversely, in Canada, Adil Charkaoui refuses to condemn violent jihad. Instead, he blames Canadian society, challenges our laws, and says that those who dare criticize him are Islamophobic. This is unhelpful, both to Muslims trying to separate themselves from radical Islam and to a country trying to come to terms with the new phenomenon of homegrown terrorism. Charkaoui needs to be accountable for his center and its possible involvement in the lives of radicalized young Muslims. Full stop. Read the original, from Toronto Sun, here.