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The South Asian Women's Community Centre is reverberating with shock and sadness at the tragedy which has resulted in the death of the two children of the Arora family, life cut short at 10 and 13, while the mother herself is in hospital, the survivor of conjugal violence.

Our heartfelt condolences to Madame Arora on the loss of her precious children, to the family, friends, the children's school-mates and the community that will now live under the shadow of this unforgettable violence. We also make this statement to reiterate our available support as needed. We are here and encourage people to contact us to work for safety and security.

In our 40 years of experience, we identify the cause of this violence against women and children as rooted in patriarchy. Patriarchal positions in society put forward justifications and excuses for male violence against women and children. Patriarchy creates and perpetuates a culture of male power and privilege. It is a societal issue and we must work together to collectively end it now.

We are also deeply disturbed by the statement issued by the Laval police in which this tragedy was dismissed as a "family drama". Declaring this a "family drama" on a public platform minimizes the heinous and violent nature of this act. Further we do not recall this terminology ever before being used in situations of such violence and murder. Here it verges on perpetuating long standing stereotypes of the South Asian community. That murder and violence can be referred to as a family drama in this context underlines the systemic racism that is rampant in our society, illogically denied by many.

The duty of the police is to serve the citizenry without prejudice, without discrimination and with greater sensitivity. Words are not harmless, they matter. This instance highlights the need for police forces in Montreal and across the province to work closely with community organizations so that a better understanding can be established in the work of serving the public, and so that heinous crimes are not dismissed insensitively. We need to know that we can with confidence call on the police to protect us instead of feeling threatened by police presence, instead of being judged, and instead of being further victimized. Tragedies such as have visited the Arora family must be eliminated.

Our hearts are broken for Madame Arora but also for her children, robbed of a rightful future. We all want a better world, a safer world for all and particularly for our children and their children.

All research during the pandemic has highlighted the burdens on home life, particularly on the women, across our society. They have been in the presence of the perpetrators of violence and abuse 24/7 without recourse to using the phone to call for help as needed or to get support as centres were locked down as well. The social services are stretched to the limit in what they can offer. We need funding to go to the right places and organizations to prevent these repeating tragedies.

We are not safe until ALL women and children are safe!

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