

All means all

Calgary mayor thinks religious tolerance is a one-way street, a point he made again brutally at Christmas



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Calgary's Muslim mayor, Naheed Nenshi, has been held up as a symbol of the city's tolerance. Which is ironic, given his own anti-Christian bigotry in return.

Last week, Nenshi ordered city police, backed up with a ridiculously large contingent of private security, to arrest a Christian pastor and five of his congregants who had the temerity to lead a Christmas service in the public atrium of Calgary's City Hall.

Artur Pawlowski, lead pastor of Calgary's Street Church, had foolishly taken the mayor at his word when he described city hall as the city's "living room," open to all.

What Pawlowski didn't understand is that Nenshi didn't mean Christians. Nenshi meant his own co-religionists — no, not Muslims, but the leftist activists who had comprised the Occupy Calgary protests for two months with Nenshi's blessing.

Nenshi permitted that two-month trespass in a public park, claiming the “Charter” prevented him from evicting the socialists, communists, anarchists and petty criminals who inhabited downtown Calgary’s Olympic Plaza.

Of course, there is no Charter guarantee to set up tents, do drugs and have public sex in a city park.

Here’s how Nenshi defended turning a blind eye to law breaking: “It’s funny, the number of people who have talked to me in the last couple of days who have said ‘the Occupy Calgary people need to get off Olympic Plaza so that all citizens can have rights to their front lawn.’ And I say, OK, so all citizens except the ones you don’t like should have a right to the front lawn. Because all means all in my opinion.”

All means all.

Unless they’re Christians having a peaceful, drug-free, sex-free celebration of Christmas in the people’s “living room.” Then Nenshi sends in boys with the billy clubs. For a pastor singing Christmas carols and reading Bible passages.

This isn’t the first time Nenshi — or the city of Calgary — has harassed Pawlowski or his Street Church. Over the past six years, Pawlowski has literally been to court more than 70 times fighting against a series of tickets, charges and other fabricated penalties cooked up by City Hall — none of which was applied to Nenshi’s favourites in the Occupy movement.

He has been charged by the City of Calgary for such horrific crimes as serving food and drink without proper permits.

But Pawlowski’s mission is to bring meals to the homeless who are turned away from official shelters because they are still abusing drugs or alcohol.

Occupy didn’t have permits for their food, either. But because Pawlowski does so in the name of Christian charity, Nenshi targeted him.

Don’t take Pawlowski’s word for it. Judge after judge has condemned the city’s behaviour. One trial judge said the city bylaw officers engaged in “abusive conduct.”

This year, an appeal judge said the city’s bullying of Pawlowski came “precariously close to being excessive and an abuse of power.”

For a few weeks, Nenshi’s policy of anything goes on public property was a reprieve for Pawlowski. While Occupy Calgary was allowed to break the laws, Pawlowski was allowed to minister to the homeless, too. But now that it’s cold and Occupy Calgary has gone back to their parents’ basements, Pawlowski’s brief enjoyment of his real Charter rights — freedom of speech; freedom of religion; freedom of assembly — has been curtailed.

Speaking of grown men who live in their parents’ basement, Nenshi is once again enforcing the law with precisely the brutality and bigotry that Calgary’s courts warned him against. And during Christmas, no less.

Nenshi is a left-wing mayor. That’s not new — Calgary’s last four mayors have been Liberal, as are most of its city councillors. He’s a minority politician in Alberta — that’s hardly new either, in the province that gave us everyone from the Famous Five suffragettes to Canada’s first Hindu and Muslim MPs.

What is new is that the Muslim mayor thinks religious tolerance is a one-way street — a point he made again brutally this Christmas