

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Parliamentary Oversight of Anti-Terrorism Agenda a Must Concludes Report From Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

OTTAWA. In its report, *In The Shadow of the Law*, a pan-Canadian coalition monitoring the application of Canada's anti-terrorism agenda documents the negative impacts already felt in the areas of civil liberties, human rights, refugee protection, citizenship and racism, political dissent, as well as international cooperation and humanitarian assistance. It also comments on the policy environment that appears to be pre-dominantly influenced by a desire to appease U.S. pressure for the harmonization of security and refugee policies. The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group is concerned by the lack of coherent oversight, at the political level, needed to analyse and evaluate the validity and impacts of the laws. It calls for the creation of a Parliamentary mechanism mandated to examine and review the necessity, the use and the impacts of all policies, special agreements and legislation introduced in the name of the fight against terrorism.

“The kind of report recently tabled by Justice Canada on the use of merely two articles of the Anti-Terrorism Act is far too limited to offer the complete story,” says Gerry Barr, co-Chair of the monitoring group and president-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. “One has to consider the whole web of legislation, policies and measures adopted by the government. Taken together, this cohort of legal measures has corrosive effects on the rights of Canadians, particularly with regards to the rights of due process and privacy. They open the door to discretionary and non-accountable behaviour by government.”

“The main victims of the new security paradigm are refugees and immigrants” says Janet Dench, director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, pointing to the use of “security certificates” and secret trials to deport people and the proposed changes to the Citizenship Act that will allow the revocation of citizenship through secret trials.

“Canada is heading toward a two-tier citizenship and tearing away at its multicultural fabric,” adds Raja Khouri, president of the Canadian Arab Federation. “The government appears indifferent to abuses committed as a result of racism or racial profiling. It is also taking a timid approach in cases of harassment of Canadians of foreign origin by U.S. border authorities, as well as in cases involving Canadians forcibly deported and detained abroad.”

The monitoring group cautions against the temptation to use the fight against terrorism as a pretext to increase policing tools and powers that facilitate regular work of police forces and government agencies at the expense of rights and freedoms guaranteed under Canada's Constitution and Charter. It calls upon Parliament and the government of Canada to reassert a commitment to these essential rights and constitutional protections.

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group is a coalition made up of NGOs, churches, unions, environmental advocates, civil rights advocates, other faith groups and groups representing immigrant and refugee communities in Canada (See list of members below).

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Members of the *International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group* include Amnesty International, Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale, Canadian Association of University Teachers, Canadian Arab Federation, Canadian Bar Association, Canadian Auto Workers Union, Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Canadian Council for Refugees, Canadian Ethnocultural Council, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Canadian Labour Congress, CARE Canada, Centre for Social Justice, Council of Canadians, CUSO, B.C. Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, David Suzuki Foundation, Development and Peace, Greenpeace, International Development and Relief Foundation, Inter Pares, Muslim Lawyers Association, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Quebec Civil Liberties Union, Rights and Democracy, United Steelworkers of America, and World Vision Canada.