

# Editorial

## Time to address the root causes of terrorism

Last Friday, [International Cooperation Minister Julian Fantino outlined his vision for CIDA's future in an address to the Economic Club of Canada](#). He spoke of a profound shift towards the private sector, particularly mining companies, and of more explicit work to promote Canada's interests abroad.

The same week, [a confidential draft document on Canadian foreign policy was severely criticized by opposition MPs, human rights experts and former diplomats](#). Thomas Mulcair said in the Commons that "the Conservatives' new foreign policy plan, crafted in secret, includes no vision for human rights, no vision for peace and security, no vision for aid and international development, no vision for Canada as an even-handed leader on the world stage."

We have also learned last week that the [Harper government is blocking the negotiations around the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement](#) by objecting to language proposed by the EU on the importance of respecting fundamental human rights.

The International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group is outraged and deeply concerned by the actions of the Harper government and the impact of those actions on populations and the environment abroad. Specifically, ICLMG is concerned that these actions will contribute to exacerbate economic hardship, poverty and social marginalization, that are root causes of terrorism.

In recent years, many governments have operated a shift in discourse and treatment regarding environmental and indigenous activists, among others. In January 2012, the Harper government launched a series of targeted attacks against specific environmental groups and foundations opposed to various resource development projects. Meanwhile, CSIS and RCMP security reports have equated "economic interests" with Canada's "national interests" and portrayed any group opposed to these interests as a threat to Canada's national security. This was reinforced by Public Safety Minister Vic Toews' 2012 counter-terrorism strategy which puts in the same category of "Domestic Issue-based Extremism" animal rights activists, environmentalists, anti-capitalism activists, and white supremacists. Moreover, the executive summary of the strategy states that: "At home, issue-based domestic extremists may move beyond lawful protest to threaten acts of terrorism", thus blurring the distinction between terrorism and civil disobedience, which might very well imply low-level violence. Such a discourse may very easily influence Canada's economic partners worldwide. Coincidentally, there have been increasing accounts of use of anti-terror legislation by Latin American governments to prosecute protesters who are fighting environmentally, economically and culturally devastating resource extraction projects.

In the fight against terrorism, there are two options: addressing the root causes of terrorism or simply dealing with the symptoms. Being a short-term solution, the latter option is often preferred. Yet when you only treat the symptoms, you do not fix the problem.

In that vein, ICLMG is also concerned by Defense Minister Peter MacKay' interest in drones. [We have learned last summer that Canada's poor will have to sacrifice an additional \\$1 billion so that armed Predator drones and their Hellfire missiles can become part of Canada's growing arsenal.](#) We are worried of the potential use of these drones by the Canadian military abroad when [Minister MacKay believes that "unmanned systems have proved their effectiveness in the decade-long U.S.-led war in Afghanistan"](#) and that "these eyes-on systems that can literally read a license plate from outer space have increased our ability to decrease civilian casualties." However, the myth of the fewer civilian deaths with drone strikes has been debunked by [a new study conducted by law professors at Stanford and New York University](#) which contends that the U.S. use of drones to target suspected militants in Pakistan has had a "damaging and counterproductive effect" on the country and has killed far more civilians than previously acknowledged. Since militaristic aggression was also found to be a root cause of terrorism, the use of drones may arguably treat the symptoms temporarily, but it exacerbates the problem in the long run.

If the Harper government is to be effective in its fight against terrorism, it must lessen its focus on the economic interests of corporations - which are not a guarantee of economic growth and certainly not one of wealth redistribution - and its love of military toys, and start addressing the root causes of terrorism by making human rights and development a priority, here and abroad.

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