



October 29, 2024

The Honourable Mélanie Joly  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

**Re: Urgent Call for Independent Investigation into the Death of Canadian Citizen FJ**

Minister Joly,

I am writing today on behalf of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, a coalition of 44 Canadian civil society organizations dedicated to defending civil liberties in the context of anti-terrorism and national security measures.

Our coalition is gravely concerned by the news of the death of Canadian citizen FJ while being held in a deportation centre in Turkey on the night of October 16 to 17, 2024, leaving her six children in Canada without a mother and leaving a multitude of questions surrounding her death unanswered.

We have read the news coverage and the detailed letter shared with you on Oct. 24, 2024, by members of the civil society delegation to northeast Syria, and **fully support their call for you to take immediate steps to initiate an independent and impartial investigation into the death of FJ.**

As you are aware, our coalition has written to you on several occasions, including Dec. 7, 2022, Jan. 26, 2023, and March 31, 2023, expressing our concern with the Canadian government's lack of action in repatriating Canadians detained in life-threatening, indefinite detention in northeastern Syria. We have yet to receive a reply.

In our communications with you, we expressed our worry that your government's inaction on this ongoing violation of the rights of Canadians could lead to the death of a citizen abroad; it is to our great dismay that these concerns have come to fruition.

It has been reported that your government had previously placed an ultimatum before FJ: her six children being held in Al-Roj detention camp could be repatriated to Canada without her, or they could remain in the detention camp in horrendous conditions with her. Eventually, FJ's children were brought to Canada without her, and separated among several foster families. This is despite Canada's international obligation to uphold the best interests of children, which was clearly to avoid family separation and to allow for the repatriation of the children together with their mother to Canada.

Moreover, the rationale for denying the repatriation of FJ to Canada – that she allegedly posed an insurmountable security threat – was belied by the fact that Canada has already repatriated several Canadians who have either been placed under peace bonds or charged with criminal offenses. It also contradicts the RCMP's own position expressed to the Minister of Public Safety in 2018 that: "The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees Canadian citizens the right to return to Canada. Therefore, even if a Canadian engaged in terrorist activity abroad, the government of Canada must facilitate their return to Canada."<sup>1</sup> This is compounded by the fact that the Canadian government has presented no evidence of the threat that FJ would allegedly pose.

FJ's death in a Turkish deportation facility raises several unanswered, including:

- What was communicated to her by Canadian officials during consular visits?
- What did she express to those officials regarding her detention and trial?
- Did the RCMP, as reported, visit and question FJ while in detention?
- If so, why? And what was she told about potential charges?

These are only a few questions, which, along with the many raised in the Oct. 24 letter from the civil society delegation, require urgent investigation.

We also note with concern that FJ's death came just after she had been acquitted of criminal charges relating to membership in an armed terrorist group by a three-judge panel in Turkey. This again raises serious concerns about the basis on which Canada refused to repatriate FJ, along with her children, months earlier, which would have avoided this appalling outcome.

It is imperative that your government take urgent and immediate action to investigate this matter, and provide answers to FJ's children, and to all Canadians, about the circumstances leading to her death and how to avoid such a dreadful outcome in the future.

We also reiterate once again our call that you and your government take immediate action to repatriate all Canadians, and the non-Canadian mothers of Canadian children, who remain in

---

<sup>1</sup> RCMP briefing note to the Minister of Public Safety, "Canada's Approach to Terrorism and Violent Extremism." 2018. Online: <https://www.scribd.com/document/395365824/RCMP-Returnees>

indefinite, life-threatening detention without possibility of release or trial in camps and prisons in northeast Syria. This is the only option in compliance with Canada's *Charter* and international human rights obligations. Not one person more can be allowed to have their rights violated and to face abuse, torture or death in the name of national security.

We look forward to hearing from you further on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Tim McSorley  
National Coordinator  
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

cc: The Honourable Dominic Leblanc, Minister of Public Safety  
Pam Damoff and Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretaries to the Minister of Foreign  
Affairs