

For immediate release

May 10, 2005

**Intervenors ask Arar Commission to clarify whether it will investigate if what happened to Maher Arar was part of a "pattern"**

Ottawa — Organizations intervening at the Arar Inquiry are seeking clarification from the Arar Commission about whether despite a ruling issued today, it will investigate if what happened to Maher Arar was part of a pattern.

At a hearing last week, Amnesty International Canada, the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations and the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group urged the Commission to appoint a fact finder to bring evidence from other Canadian men who say they were interrogated and tortured in Syria. They argued that in order to fulfill its mandate, the Commission must bring evidence from these men in order to investigate the possibility that what happened to Mr. Arar was not an isolated case, and was instead part of a pattern of Canadian agencies being linked to the detentions, interrogation and torture of other Muslim Canadian citizens in Syria.

In a ruling made public today, Justice O'Connor said that while he is appointing a fact finder to bring evidence from these men, the fact finder's role will be limited to examining their treatment in Syria. He argues that information pertaining to allegations of wrongdoing on the part of Canadian officials would have to be introduced through evidence and be subject to cross-examination.

"Given what Justice O'Connor has ruled with respect to the limited role of the fact finder, we are urging him to clarify whether he is, through other means, investigating 'pattern' as a possibility, and if not, why not," said Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada.

"There are several very important links between these cases, and we were very clear in our submissions that we consider this question to be central to the mandate of the Commission, and want to ensure that it is being thoroughly examined," said Neve.

Mr. Arar, Mr. Ahmad Abou El Maati, Mr. Abdullah Almalki and Mr. Muayyed Nureddin were all people of interest to Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies before being detained, interrogated and allegedly tortured in Syria.

All of the four men say they were imprisoned at the Palestine Branch of the Syrian military intelligence prison and all say they were interrogated and tortured there. Mr. El Maati says he was forced to talk about Mr. Arar and Mr. Almalki.

The RCMP then searched Mr. Almalki's home and visited Mr. Arar's home, and the two men later ended up being interrogated in the same prison. Information used in the interrogation of Mr. Arar, Mr. El Maati and Mr. Nureddin seems to have come from Canada, and Mr. Almalki's family has asserted that he was detained in Syria at the request of Canadian authorities.

Mr. Almalki, Mr. El Maati and Mr. Nureddin all applied for standing at the Inquiry but were turned down. Government lawyers have argued that examining the other cases is irrelevant to the Commission's mandate.