

Dennis O'Connor
Commissioner
Commission of Inquiry into the Actions of
Canadian officials in Relation to Maher Arar
PO Box 507, Station B
Ottawa, Canada K1P 5P6

by fax: 992-2366

February 28, 2006

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing on behalf of all of the organizations with intervenor status before the Commission, to express our concern about recent reports that there may be delays in the release of your report due to ongoing disputes with the government with respect to matters of national security confidentiality. We have seen reference to this in an article in the Globe and Mail (*Secrecy battle delays Arar report*, Globe and Mail, February 22, 2006). In the article, your chief counsel, Paul Cavalluzzo, is quoted as guessing that there may be a delay of up to two months while this is resolved.

As you are aware, the intervening organizations have frequently made submissions to you and to the government directly, expressing concern about the approach taken by the government to matters of national security confidentiality. We have been concerned that the government's positions have made it impossible for Mr. Arar himself to fully participate in an inquiry process that is, after all, about him. We have also been concerned that the government's positions unduly and very substantially restricted the "public" dimension of the commission. We have indicated that we felt that the government's approach goes beyond the legitimate grounds recognized under international human rights law for restricting public access to judicial proceedings. Our concerns have grown when we have had an opportunity to see first-hand some of the materials over which confidentiality has been claimed, when some documents have, for instance, been released a second time with some of the initial redaction removed.

We are writing at this time to request a meeting with you and/or your counsel, either in person or by telephone conference. We wish to meet because we need to be as well-informed as possible about the status of the report and the nature of any ongoing national security disputes with the government. That information is critical to our continuing ability to be fully engaged in the Commission process, able to intervene when appropriate, and prepared to respond when the report is finally released.

Arrangements for a meeting can be made through my office. I can be reached at aneve@amnesty.ca or by telephone at 613 744 7667, ext. 234.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International Canada

on behalf of:

Amnesty International Canada
Association for the Prevention of Torture
British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
Canadian Arab Federation
Canadian Islamic Congress
Canadian Labour Congress
Council of Canadians
Council on American Islamic Relations (Canada)
International Coalition Against Torture
International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group
Law Union of Ontario
Minority Advocacy Rights Council
Muslim Canadian Congress
Muslim Community Council of Ottawa-Gatineau
National Council on Canada-Arab Relations
Polaris Institute
Redress Trust
World Organization against Torture