

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

September 19, 2006

Dear Prime Minister,

The release of Justice Dennis O'Connor's report, yesterday, of the Commission of Inquiry into the actions of Canadian officials in relation to Maher Arar represented a remarkable day for justice in Canada. The report is of course a sharp criticism of numerous failings and glaring examples of wrongdoing in the conduct of the national security investigations that led to Mr. Arar's arrest, imprisonment, rendition to Syria and torture. We will be writing to the government in coming days about the importance of immediate and comprehensive implementation of the report's recommendations.

In advance, however, of your trip to the United States this week, we would like to highlight one very important recommendation. Justice O'Connor has recommended that the government "should register a formal objection with the governments of the United States and Syria concerning their treatment of Mr. Arar and Canadian officials involved with his case." He goes on to highlight that American authorities handled the case in a "most regrettable fashion" and dealt with Canadian officials in a "less than forthcoming manner." He underscores, for instance, breaches of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. He also stresses how important it is that steps be taken to correct any inaccurate information that was provided to American agencies by the RCMP.

Prime Minister, Amnesty International urges you to take up this recommendation during your visit to the United States. It would be a powerful indication of your commitment to ensuring full implementation of this report if you were to register this objection at the highest levels of the U.S. government. That gesture would undoubtedly be appreciated by Mr. Arar. It would also be an important first step towards restoring the centrality of human rights and the rule of law in Canada's counter-terrorism laws and practices.

Sincerely,

Alex Neve  
Secretary General