

# News release

For immediate release

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## **Intervenors call on PM to help open up the Iacobucci Inquiry**

Ottawa — Organizations with Intervenor Status at the Iacobucci Inquiry have written an open letter to Prime Minister Harper urging him to help open up the Inquiry process by encouraging the release of documents and the holding of public hearings.

The Iacobucci Inquiry is examining the role of Canadian officials in the cases of Ahmad El Maati, Abdullah Almalki and Muayyed Nureddin, three Canadian Muslim men who, like Maher Arar, were of interest to Canadian investigations before being detained and tortured overseas. While this is an “internal” Inquiry, there are clear provisions in the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference that allow for a public component when necessary to ensuring the effective conduct of the Inquiry.

The open letter calls on the Prime Minister “to demonstrate his government’s commitment to transparency and accountability by informing the Commission that his government shares the view that the effective conduct of this Inquiry, and public confidence in its outcome, requires that there be a significant public dimension to its work.”

The Intervenors point out that since the Iacobucci Inquiry began its work, the only sessions that have been open to the public were in March, dealing with applications for standing and funding, and April, dealing with the Rules of Procedure. Since those sessions and the subsequent rulings on these matters, there has been no communication with the public about the process.

To date, no documents or even parts of documents have been disclosed to the men at the centre of the Inquiry, their counsel, Intervenors or the public. Nor have they received any summary, detailed or abbreviated, of the information that has been gathered through interviews with RCMP, CSIS and Foreign Affairs officials.

The Intervenors know that not all hearings and documents can be public, but nevertheless agree with the Arar Report’s recommendation that this should be a credible process that inspires public confidence. That, they argue, requires that documents relevant to issues of significant public importance should be released publicly, and that witnesses whose testimony is relevant to issues of significant public importance should be examined in public.

“Inspiring public confidence requires an active and ongoing effort to engage the public in the process in a meaningful way. The process, as it has been conducted to date, cannot inspire that confidence,” says the letter.

The open letter, released at a press conference in Ottawa on October 9, is signed by Amnesty International Canada, the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Arab Federation, the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations, the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association, Human Rights Watch and the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group. All of these organizations have Intervenor Status at the Iacobucci Inquiry.

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