

# An Open Letter to Paul Martin, MP Regarding the Detention and Torture of Maher Arar

Published in the Globe and Mail, December 10, 2003



December 10, 2003

Dear Paul Martin,

The B.C. Civil Liberties Association urges you to act immediately upon your appointment as Prime Minister to call a full public inquiry into Canadian officials' involvement in Maher Arar's deportation from the United States and his subsequent detention and torture in Syria.

Mr. Arar has been done a grievous wrong. Canadian officials either participated in that wrong, allowed it to happen, or were ineffectual in preventing it from happening. In consequence, this country failed in its fundamental obligation to protect one of its citizens from mistreatment by another state.

A public inquiry is necessary to determine how such events took place. It is also necessary to learn how Canadian officials' actions contributed to Mr. Arar's mistreatment, and how the practices of Canadian officials should be altered to prevent similar occurrences.

Canadians are fortunate for Mr. Arar's courage. He is living up to his obligations as a Canadian citizen by demanding answers and full accountability from his government so that other Canadians do not suffer a similar fate. It would represent an appalling moral failure of our democratic institutions if the Government of Canada does not respond with similar courage to investigate thoroughly and in a publicly transparent manner all the conditions that led to his imprisonment and torture.

Only a full public inquiry into this matter can properly demonstrate this country's resolve to defend its citizens and uphold their rights. We write on this, the 55th anniversary of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was principally authored by a Canadian, to emphasize that Canada's international leadership on these issues is also at stake.

Mr. Arar's case represents a crossroad in this country's commitment to its citizens' fundamental rights to respect and dignity. Only the appointment of a public inquiry by you, Mr. Martin, can demonstrate that this commitment remains steadfast and has not waned.

Sincerely,

John Russell  
President, BCCLA

The BCCLA urges others to contact Mr. Martin to call for a public inquiry into the Arar case:

Paul Martin  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
613-992-4211 (tel) 613-941-6900 (fax)  
martin.paul@parl.gc.ca

## British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

425 - 815 West Hastings St. Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4 Tel: 604.687.2919 info@bccla.org www.bccla.org