



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

BCCLA says federal government must bring Khadr home

In the wake of this week's firing and rehiring, of Omar Khadr's American military lawyer, the BCCLA again demanded the child soldier's repatriation. "The American military trial processes relating to Mr. Khadr have been irregular and troubled from the outset," said Robert Holmes, President of the BCCLA. "That has been determined already by the highest courts in both the US and Canada."

In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "The military commission ... structure and procedures violate both the [Uniform Code of Military Justice] and the four Geneva Conventions signed in 1949." In 2008, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld that finding. Khadr was only fifteen when arrested in Afghanistan, making him a child soldier under the UN Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, yet the US authorities have failed to treat him as such.

"During his detention, in addition to the treatment at Guantanamo, Mr. Khadr has had two trials, three military defence lawyers, three judges, four prosecutors, a refusal to grant the United Nations observer status at his hearings, the withholding and alteration of exculpatory military reports, leaks of manufactured evidence of connections to Maher Arar, the spectacle of Canadian officials violating international law, and now the dismissal and rehiring of his appointed military counsel," said Holmes. "What will it take for Canada to recognize that this process is so flawed and plainly unjust that we must demand his return from the U.S.?"

The Canadian federal government has so far refused to ask for Khadr's repatriation to Canada. French Guantanamo detainees were repatriated in 2005; UK detainees in 2004; Russian detainees in 2004; an Australian detainee in 2007.

"Our government is supposed to be there to assist us and to defend our rights to security and to return home. It is time that our government request formally of the US government that Omar Khadr be repatriated to Canada," said Holmes. "Canada has such a proud tradition of standing up for human rights throughout the world. Our reputation suffers when we fail to look out for our own and to demand that injustices such as this be remedied immediately."

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