



NEWS RELEASE

British Columbia Civil Liberties Association
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For immediate release

BCCLA to Argue for Omar Khadr's Return from Guantanamo in Supreme Court

Vancouver, B.C. — On November 13, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association will argue in the Supreme Court of Canada that the government must obey a Federal Court order to bring Canadian Guantanamo detainee Omar Khadr back to Canada. The court ordered the government to immediately ask the United States for the return of Mr. Khadr. The Government is appealing the order.

Omar Khadr is a Canadian citizen who has been detained by the United States in the Guantanamo Bay since 2002, when he was 15 years old. Canadian officials interviewed Mr. Khadr in Guantanamo when he was 16 and gave summaries of what they learned to the American government. The Canadian officials knew Khadr was tortured under the "frequent flyer" sleep deprivation program at Guantanamo. "Frequent flyers" were moved from cell to cell at least once every three hours, denying them sleep. He now faces trial before a U.S. Military Commission that is a violation of international law.

Sujit Choudhry, Counsel for the BCCLA: "Canada violated Mr. Khadr's constitutional rights when it interrogated him in Guantanamo Bay. Where there is a right, there must be a remedy, and in this case, the appropriate remedy is an order that Canada seek Khadr's repatriation."

Grace Pastine, Litigation Director for the BCCLA, called Canada's treatment of Omar Khadr "shameful and illegal." She said that action to bring Khadr back to Canada is long overdue. "The UK, Australia, France, and even Russia have asked for their citizens to be returned from Guantanamo. Only Canada has not," said Pastine. "The U.S. government is ready to send Khadr back to Canada. All we need to do is ask."

Joe Arvay, Counsel for the BCCLA: "It actually boggles the mind that the Prime Minister is so vehemently opposing the repatriation order. How does it in any way prejudice Canada's interests? Why does Canada stand alone in the free world in not wanting to protect its citizens from the travesty of Guantanamo?"

The BCCLA believes that the government's appeal in the Khadr case is just the latest evidence of the government's disregard for Charter rights. "Omar Khadr's story is just a piece of a bigger pattern of abuse by the Canadian government," Pastine said. "How many Arars and Khadrs must there be before we draw a line? Canada's reputation in the world has suffered enough."

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