



March 28, 2006

Amnesty International will be following with interest the work of the People's Commission on Immigration Security Measures, as it undertakes a public and popular review of the security certificate system under Canadian immigration legislation.

Throughout the past decade, Amnesty International has frequently pressed Canada to substantially reform the security certificate process. The process is unfair, and falls far short of what is required under international human rights standards governing fair trials. The process is also of grave concern as it fails to adequately protect individuals from the risk of being deported to countries where they face a very real possibility of torture.

Expert level United Nations human rights bodies, including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention have raised these concerns with the Canadian government and pressed for reform. Countless organizations, legal experts and ordinary Canadians across the country have also called on Canada to make the changes needed to ensure that Canada's practice is entirely consistent with our international obligations.

To date, however, the Canadian government has refused to make those changes and continues to defend a system that violates a range of crucial human rights, including the ban on torture, the protection against arbitrary detention and the right to a fair trial. Canada's position is of concern in that the rights and safety of those individuals held under security certificates are imperiled. It is of further concern in that it conveys a message to other countries that human rights need not be taken seriously in the context of counter-terrorism. Nothing could be further from the truth: counter-terrorism laws and practices which cause or countenance human rights abuses lead only to injustice and insecurity.

The People's Commission provides an important opportunity for building greater public awareness and fostering further debate about this important human rights issue. Amnesty International will follow the progress of the Commission closely over the coming weeks, and we look forward to reviewing the report and other materials that will be produced.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Neve". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International Canada
(English branch)