

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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## How many more Abdelraziks?

Maher Arar asks why calls for a CSIS oversight agency are falling on deaf ears

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Recently, it seems like every new day has brought new revelations about the depth of involvement of Canadian government agencies, past and present, in the torture of Canadian citizens. Despite the clear conclusions of Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor's inquiry and the findings of former Supreme Court judge Frank Iacobucci's inquiry, the unique stamp of Canadian involvement in the torture of its citizens is actually growing.

An inquiry into the case of Abousfian Abdelrazik, which now seems inevitable, will certainly shed more light about the widely used practice of "obtain information by proxy." But Canadians need not wait for a full-blown inquiry to learn the facts in this case: A glimpse into the heart of a possible inquiry can already be gleaned from a recent federal court order ruling that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service was, at the very least, complicit in Mr. Abdelrazik's initial detention. We can add to that all the rest of what we have learned recently from extensive investigative journalistic reporting, which has mostly quoted official Canadian government documents.

What is particularly puzzling is how CSIS keeps repeating its hopeful mantra that it was never complicit in any of these cases. What the agency may not realize is that, regardless of how often or loudly it denies the obvious, Canadians have learned enough from two federal inquiries and the work of reporters to draw their own conclusions. CSIS should be more worried about its credibility, and be open and forthcoming about the facts of this most recent matter. This is the only path that will allow it to restore its credibility, and the most direct route to providing Canadians with the truth.

Canadians deserve to know why so many of this country's citizens, all of Muslim background, have been imprisoned and tortured abroad. Human-rights organizations, activists and national-security experts have been calling for the current government to establish the credible oversight agency that was recommended by Judge O'Connor several years ago. Their calls have landed on deaf ears.

How many more victims will it take before our government realizes that it needs to act? If the government had established this agency, Mr. Abdelrazik could launch a complaint upon his return. The time required for him to get answers and justice would be much shorter. For taxpayers, it would be a much cheaper alternative than a full-blown federal inquiry.

Most importantly, Canadians would have a reason to trust that their security agencies are being properly held to a higher standard.

In the meantime, even before another inquiry is called, agencies that have played any role in the ordeals of Canadians detained and tortured abroad should be truthful in their statements and not defensive in their rhetoric. They should apologize to the victims of overzealous national security practices. Moreover, they need to take actions assuring Canadians that this will never happen again. It is that simple.

