

MODEL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bringing the issues back in

This election campaign is marked by an almost total absence of debate on serious issues. With a clear disrespect for our intelligence, the politicians strike poses, smirk and glad-hand in an absurd parody of an election campaign.

But where do the candidates and parties stand on issues that matter deeply to us and define us as a society at this moment in history? Let's ask them, for example, where they stand on Canadian complicity in torture, arbitrary detention, guilt by association, blacklists and equality of citizens. These are hardly peripheral issues.

Nor, unfortunately, are they at all abstract. Let's ask them, for example, where they stand on the case of Abousfian Abdelrazik, which exemplifies many of the abuses associated with the "war on terror". Two years ago, Canadian media was buzzing with the story of this Canadian who was stuck overseas in Sudan, unable to return to his home in Montreal. The Globe and Mail eventually revealed a deeper scandal – Abdelrazik had originally been arrested in Sudan on the request of the Canadian spy agency, CSIS, who then sent agents to Sudan to interrogate Mr. Abdelrazik in Sudanese detention. This happened under the Liberal government. The Conservative government carried on, using the fact that Mr. Abdelrazik's name had been added - in very mysterious circumstances - to a UN Security Council blacklist to block his return home. The Federal Court found that the Conservative Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon had acted illegally by blocking Mr. Abdelrazik's return to Canada and ordered the government to bring him home.

To this day, not one government official has been held to account for these vicious acts – or for similar acts in the cases of Maher Arar, Abdullah Almalki, Muayyed Nourredine, Ahmed El Maati and others.

And although he is now back in Montreal, Mr. Abdelrazik's struggle is far from over. His life remains in limbo because his name is still on the notoriously arbitrary UN Security Council blacklist, making him subject to an asset freeze and an international travel ban. Not one political party, not one MP has spoken out against this sanctions regime and in defense of core democratic principles.

Let's ask our candidates where they stand on this question. Do they support torture and arbitrary detention on the basis of secret suspicions and guilt by association? Let's bring the issues back in!

Name
address
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