

Press Release

Security certificate detainee hospitalized on 179th day of hungerstrike

Kingston, 30 November 2009 -- Mohammad Mahjoub was hospitalized in Kingston last Thursday evening, on the 179th day of a liquids-only hungerstrike. Mr. Mahjoub, a 50-year old father of two, has been detained for over nine years without charge under a security certificate. Until Thursday he was the sole detainee at the Kingston Immigration Holding Centre (KIHC), dubbed "Guantanamo North" to draw attention to the practice of holding prisoners indefinitely at the facility, on secret evidence. Mr. Mahjoub has been on hungerstrike since 1 June 2009.

Three weeks ago, dozens of medical professionals sounded the alarm, warning Minister of Public Safety Peter van Loan that, "we have serious reasons to believe that Mr. Mahjoub will die or, at minimum, be permanently impaired if he remains on hunger strike much longer" and urging the Minister "to immediately take the necessary measures to enable Mohammad Mahjoub to put an end to his hunger strike".

Their letter went on to note that Mr. Mahjoub, "is at even greater risk because he is 50 years old, has hepatitis C, and was subjected to torture in his country of origin. In addition he has been detained for over 9 years, often in solitary confinement, and has been on lengthy hunger strikes on several occasions. These antecedents increase the likelihood that Mr. Mahjoub may experience life-threatening consequences."

Despite the urgent warning, the government has not taken action.

Mr. Mahjoub was in Federal Court on 26 and 27 October, requesting transfer to house arrest pending the outcome of his legal case. Mr. Mahjoub was forced to return to the KIHC from house arrest on 18 March 2009 in order to free his wife and two children from the intrusive and suffocating house arrest regime. He has requested release into a separate apartment in order to avoid placing the same unbearable burden on his family.

After years of being the object of widespread, intense criticism, the security certificate regime appears to be imploding, with the withdrawal of the certificate against Montrealer Adil Charkaoui, the removal of most of the interim conditions imposed on Ottawa-based Mohamed Harkat, repeated scandals involving CSIS withholding key exculpatory information from the courts, and potential freedom for Hassan Almrei and Mahmoud Jaballah, who both live under oppressive house arrest regimes in Toronto.

Immediate and determined action on the part of the government, taking into account the very serious abuses he has suffered under the unconstitutional security certificate process for the past nine years, could still enable Mr. Mahjoub to end the hunger strike before the damage is irreversible.

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Available for interviews:

Janet Cleveland, signatory to letter by health professionals, 514-273-3800, ext. 6584

Additional interviewees:

Bill Siksay, member of Parliament, Burnaby-Douglas, NDP, 613 996 5597 Ihsaan Gardee, ED, CAIR CAN, 613 254 9704

More information:

514 222 0205

Background information:

<http://peoplescommission.org/en/mahjoub/>

Source:

Hunger Strike Support Committee (Montreal)