



**NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS**

Your Voice. Your Future.

Statements in Support of the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)

January 28, 2014

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has worked with NCCM on a number of issues important to protecting and promoting the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom*. We greatly admire the work of NCCM which seeks to uphold rights protection, and to foster inclusiveness and respect for all people, regardless of religious belief, and we have enjoyed working alongside them to fight for due process and fairness. As an organization committed to freedom of expression and association, CCLA is deeply concerned by reports which suggest the government's attempt to silence critical or dissenting voices, and in particular, to do so by suggesting links to terrorist groups.

- Sukanya Pillay, Acting Executive Director and Interim General Counsel; Director, National Security Program, Canadian Civil Liberties Association

The Canadian Association of University Teachers joins with the National Council of Canadian Muslims in expressing deep concern about the effort of the Prime Minister's Office to smear the NCCM for raising a legitimate question about an individual the Prime Minister had invited to be part of his delegation to the Middle East. Freedom of expression is the bedrock of any democracy, but that freedom is undermined whenever governments attempt to silence critics rather than engage the substance of their criticism. CAUT has worked with the NCCM in recent years in promoting *Charter* rights and freedoms. We join with NCCM in calling on the Prime Minister's Office to retract its unjustified criticism of NCCM and to publicly apologize.

- James L. Turk, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) has a record of public service and its work enriches Canadian society. Its work helps to educate Canadians, through advocacy on civil liberties, human rights and discrimination, and to build comity and understanding between cultural communities. The NCCM is an organization that participates vigorously in the democratic process, including appearing as witness in many Parliamentary proceedings and acting as intervenor in multiple court cases at the Supreme Court of Canada.

The BCCLA has worked as an ally of National Council of Canadian Muslims and its predecessor CAIR-CAN in the past. We have often found ourselves on the same side of various issues. Some examples are our work on the Maher Arar inquiry, our work on anti-terrorism issues including security certificates, and most recently on the Combating Terrorism Act. On other issues where we differ in opinion, we welcome the NCCM's contributions that enhance democratic debate.

The BCCLA is committed to defending the freedom of expression and association of all in Canadian society. We are troubled to learn about reports from which it appears that the federal government is attempting to chill the expression of people who are critical of its decisions, in this case, by making accusations that those people are connected to terrorist groups.

- Josh Paterson, Executive Director, British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

As a Canadian who was wrongly labeled a terrorist by journalists and by some politicians, I find the comments made by the Prime Minister's Office with respect to the National Council of Canadian Muslims extremely disturbing. This labeling has severe implications not only on NCCM but also on the law-abiding people who work for and support the organization. I personally know how it feels to live with such stigma on a daily basis. As put nicely in the words of Justice Dennis O'Connor: "labels, even unfair and inaccurate ones, have a tendency to stick."

- Maher Arar

I am very concerned by the troubling comments issued by the Prime Minister's Office. The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is an advocacy organization that represents Canadians Muslims with the media, public officials and other national institutions. When I campaigned for my husband's release, the NCCM stood by me and supported my plight. The PMO owes Canadians an explanation.

- Dr. Monia Mazigh, Wife of Maher Arar

For over 30 years, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women has worked tirelessly to promote peace and understanding among Canadians. CCMW have been at the forefront of dispelling myths about Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular.

We have known and worked with the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) since its inception.

We have admired their tireless efforts in causes of justice and equality and human rights in Canada. Through non-confrontational, peaceful means, NCCM has diffused many cases where racism and bigotry have been a factor. Their educational tool kits and workshops have helped educators and employers ease tensions and create understanding.

There is disquiet among many Muslims in Canada today, when their own elected leaders give short shrift to their concerns. This was evident in the response from the Director of Communications for the Office of the Prime Minister, Jason MacDonald, to the NCCM's letter which urged the Prime Minister to reconsider including Rabbi Daniel Korobkin in his Mideast delegation with clear and legitimate reasons given in the letter.

The problem is further exacerbated when a respected human rights organization like the NCCM is maligned with an unfounded and dangerous allegation of having ties to an illegal group. This defamation endangers the very valuable work of NCCM and goes against every Canadian democratic principle. Further, it exposes the members of NCCM and the whole Muslim Community to suspicion, hatred and bigotry.

We join NCCM in calling Prime Minister Stephen Harper to respond to NCCM's concerns and disassociate himself from the inflammatory statement in order to restore the good name of an esteemed Canadian organization.

- Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)

La *Coalition pour la surveillance internationale des libertés civiles* (CSILC) regroupe 38 ONG, syndicats, associations professionnelles, groupes confessionnels, organisations environnementales, de protection des droits humains et des libertés civiles, ainsi que des groupes représentant des communautés immigrantes et réfugiées au Canada. Son mandat est de promouvoir et défendre le respect des droits humains, des conventions et des règles de droit international dans la lutte contre le terrorisme.

Le Conseil National des Musulmans Canadien est un membre fondateur de la CSILC avec lequel nous avons eu le privilège de collaborer depuis au-delà d'une décennie

dans de nombreux dossiers. Ses prises de position commune avec celles de l'ensemble des membres de la CSILC, son engagement et son leadership dans certains dossiers ont été d'une valeur inestimable pour le travail de la coalition, et en ont fait un partenaire respecté et sollicité.

Au cours de ces treize dernières années, la CSILC et le CNMC ont travaillé de concert pour assurer la primauté du droit et le respect des lois, y inclus la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés, en matière de sécurité nationale.

Ce travail, nous l'avons fait dans un esprit d'inclusion et de participation dans le cadre d'une société démocratique où les organisations de la société civile ont, non seulement le droit ou le privilège, mais aussi le devoir de participer de façon responsable au processus politique. Cela inclus le droit d'expression et de communiquer ses inquiétudes au Bureau du Premier Ministre.

- Roch Tassé, National Co-ordinator, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG) / Coalition pour la surveillance internationale des libertés civiles (CSILC)