



**NATIONAL COUNCIL
OF CANADIAN MUSLIMS**

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NEWS RELEASE

-For Immediate Release-

PMO receives libel notice from national Muslim organization

(Ottawa - January 28, 2014) The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), a prominent Muslim civil liberties & advocacy organization, has initiated a Notice of Libel against the Prime Minister's Office for a "false, offensive and defamatory" statement made about NCCM by Jason MacDonald, the PMO's Director of Communications, in an interview with Sun News on January 16th.

Both MacDonald and Prime Minister Stephen Harper are named as parties in the legal notice. The PMO's statement was issued in response to concerns NCCM raised in an earlier public letter to the Prime Minister.

Joined by allies at a news conference held today on Parliament Hill, NCCM Executive Director IhsaanGardee said in a statement:

"Rather than responding to our legitimate concerns, the PMO's Director of Communications attacked us and attempted to smear our name by claiming NCCM had 'documented ties to a terrorist organization such as Hamas.' Nothing could be further from the truth.

"NCCM will not let the PMO's false statement stand. To say that our organization has illegal affiliations is deeply offensive to us and to Canadians of all faiths and backgrounds, and only serves to reinforce ugly stereotypes about Canadian Muslims.

"By maliciously attacking NCCM instead of addressing the substance of our legitimate concerns, the PMO is trying to intimidate and silence dissenting voices. It is undemocratic and goes against everything Canadians expect from a responsible government."

Describing MacDonald's remarks as a "bullying tactic", NCCM said the PMO was promoting suspicion about Canadian Muslims and demanded that the PMO "immediately, publicly and unreservedly retract its false statement and apologize".

Several statements supporting NCCM were issued by prominent Canadian organizations including Amnesty International Canada, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW), the Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims (CAJM), the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), as well as from prominent Canadians such as Maher Arar.

Prominent human rights activist Dr. Monia Mazigh, the wife of Maher Arar, said:

"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."

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