

# ARAR INQUIRY UPDATE

Maher Arar Support Committee, [info@maherarar.ca](mailto:info@maherarar.ca)  
Produced by volunteer labour.

## Take Action!

- Vote in the new poll on [maherarar.ca](http://maherarar.ca) and encourage others to vote.
- Submit your comments to [maherarar.ca](http://maherarar.ca) on the *Have Your Say* page.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper and comment on the government's actions or on how the inquiry is progressing.
- Write to Prime Minister Paul Martin and tell him the government must stop undermining the work of the commission and start cooperating with it, because we all have a right to the truth. You can contact him by writing to:

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2  
Fax: 613-941-6900  
[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

## Ex-ambassador's testimony stuns politicians and colleagues

One of the most contentious testimonies of the month, and surely the one which drew the most public and media scrutiny, came from Canada's former Ambassador to Syria, Franco Pillarella.

Pillarella not only doubted the fact that Maher Arar was tortured in Syria, but claimed to be unaware of Syria's poor human rights record.

For example, when pushed by lead counsel Paul Cavalluzzo to admit that Syria was known to practice torture when interrogating prisoners, Pillarella would only acknowledge that he was aware of "the reputation, that is all," and that he needed more evidence in order to conclude that Arar had indeed been tortured.

His testimony came despite numerous submissions by the U.S.

State Department and human rights groups that detail torture practices in Syria, many of which landed on Pillarella's desk.

Pillarella's stance on the human rights situation in Syria sparked wide criticism in the media coverage of the Inquiry. As an expert in foreign policy, Paul Heinbecker, a former Canadian ambassador and the director of the Laurier Centre of Global Relations, Governance and Policy, responded to Pillarella's testimony in interviews with various media outlets.

"I think it puts the Department of Foreign Affairs and the foreign service in a bad light," Heinbecker told the CBC.

Pillarella's position on the details of Arar's detention—specifically,

whether or not he was held *incommunicado*—drew criticism from opposition MPs.

NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Alexa McDonough said she was "stunned" by Pillarella. And Conservative MP Stockwell Day called Pillarella's testimony "very surprising," asking "why would our ambassador take the word of the Syrian regime?"

This was the general question asked by the media, and subsequent letters to the editor, as Canadians began to examine the role of Canada's international diplomacy program.

Pillarella currently represents Canada as the ambassador to Romania.

## Maher's Message to his fellow Canadians

***'we must remember how fragile our democracy is, and how important it is to stand up for our democratic rights'***

I had always believed that Canada was the

country of my dream, a country that not only respected human rights but also promoted it to the rest of the world.

Unfortunately the horrible experience I went through has shaken my trust in the Canadian system.

But I have learned very valuable lessons from my struggle for the truth about what happened to me.

I learned that Canadian people, through their tremendous support for my struggle, have

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## NOTICE of the Arar inquiry's public hearings

The Arar inquiry has started its public hearings. The hearings are held at 111 Sussex Dr. in Ottawa.

**July 27-28, 2005**

Witness: **Garry Loepky, Deputy Commissioner, Operations, RCMP**

**July 30, 2005**

**Myra Pastyr-Lupul, Consular Affairs Bureau, DFAIT**

## Extraordinary Rendition: what is it?

Extraordinary rendition, a term coined just two years ago, is the newest addition to the post-9/11 lexicon.

The expression seems to have appeared in a Washington Post article by Peter Finn in early 2002. Now extraordinary rendition is a common concept in discussions of human rights and immigration, and has most recently been compared to kidnapping. But what is extraordinary rendition?

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, the Inquiry heard testimony from Human Rights Watch lawyer Julie Hall, who explained that "rendition" is understood by Human Rights Watch to be any transfer of a person to a country where he or she is at risk of being tortured,

whether the transfer is within or outside of legal procedure.

Hall said extraordinary rendition implied "the handing over of the person would happen outside of legal channels; in other words, this notion that someone would be snatched off the street."

Another Washington Post article, published in late 2002, by Dana Preist and Barton Gellman, used interviews with security and intelligence officers to outline the use of extraordinary rendition. This article described the process by which U.S. agents cooperate with officials in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. The article explained that detainees are often sent to countries with poor human rights records for interrogations,

while the CIA is still in control of the investigation.

That notion recently made international headlines when an Italian judge ordered the arrest of thirteen CIA agents. The prosecution has accused the agents of kidnapping Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, known as Abu Omar, from the streets of Milan in February 2003 and forcing him into a van before shipping him to Egypt where he was allegedly tortured.

Maher Arar is another commonly cited victim of extraordinary rendition in the international press.

## Maher's Message

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demonstrated that they value freedom and democracy, and that they are not willing to sacrifice their civil liberties for the illusion of security.

As we celebrate Canada's birthday, we must remember how fragile our democracy is, and how important it is to stand up for our democratic rights, so that every Canadian, regardless of his or her religion or ethnicity, can live with honor and dignity.

"If what you are trying to elicit from me is whether or not, in our minds, the possibility of ill-treatment towards Mr. Arar had occurred, of course that was in our minds."

~Michel Cabana, RCMP Officer in charge of Project A-O Canada, on the days following the deportation of Maher Arar (June 30, 2005)

>>>Read more about Cabana's testimony in the next Arar Inquiry Update