
PRESS RELEASE

Politicians from all parties intervene on behalf of Abdelkader Belaoui Refugee in sanctuary seeks response from new Minister of Immigration

Montreal, 1 March 2007 – Parliamentarians from all four major federal political parties have intervened on behalf of Abdelkader Belaoui. Mr. Belaoui's life has been suspended for over a year, since he was forced to enter into church sanctuary on 1 January 2006 to avoid deportation.

In urging the new Minister of Immigration, Diane Finley, to intervene on Mr. Belaoui's behalf, Bill Siksay, immigration critic for the NDP, wrote, "Mr. Belaoui has the support of over forty organizations such as Amnesty and Comité d'aide aux réfugiés. He has a strong community of friends and activists that support him. The unjust return of Mr. Belaoui to Algeria would undoubtedly jeopardize his health and safety." Mr. Siksay forwarded a copy of Mr. Belaoui's file to the Minister.

Ms. Meili Faille, the spokesperson on immigration issues for the Bloc Québécois, also wrote to Minister Finley, noting that Mr. Belaoui "has shown a force of character out of the ordinary ... integrating in the community and creating strong links with people in his circles. He is supported by a long list of organizations from diverse circles. All that prevents him from fully flourishing here is his confinement to the church. Without that, he would be actively participating in the dynamism and richness of Canadian society. Your intervention is thus required ..."

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr, the Bloc MP for Mr. Belaoui's own riding of Point St. Charles, added his support, urging the Minister to act without delay to grant Mr. Belaoui permanent resident status, "Mr. Belaoui lives in constant fear of being arrested and deported ... And we who have adopted him, fear for his health ..."

"... I urge you to re-examine this case and find a prompt solution," wrote Omar Alghabra, Liberal Immigration Critic, who also presented a copy of Mr. Belaoui's file to the Minister.

The previous year, Conservative MP Mr. Norman Doyle, Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration also wrote to the Minister of Immigration, noting that Mr. Belaoui's quest for permanent resident status has "widespread legal, moral and financial support from the community at large."

The Minister of Immigration has the discretionary power to grant status at any time. Last week, she exercised it in the case of Amir Kazemian, an Iranian refugee who spent almost three years in church sanctuary in Vancouver. Using it in Mr. Belaoui's case would rectify the discrimination applied in the decision to refuse his application for Permanent Resident status in 2005 and finally bring an end to his long ordeal.

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To set up interviews: cell 514 806 6260 or 514 222 0205

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