

Comité de soutien d'
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DIGNITÉ POUR ABDELKADER



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PRESS RELEASE

QUEBEC CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS ON MINISTER TO GRANT STATUS TO ABDELKADER BELAOUNI

Groups request meeting to find solution for non-status man stranded in church for more than 500 days

Montreal, 17 May 2007 – Quebec civil society organizations today released an Open Letter to the Federal Minister of Immigration, Diane Finley, calling on her to grant permanent resident status to Abdelkader Belaoui. The letter has more than 70 endorsers, representing around 250 organizations working in all sectors in Quebec.

Tuesday marked Mr. Belaoui's 500th day in a church, where he took refuge on 1 January 2006 to avoid a deportation order.

The organizations are asking the Minister to meet with them in order to work out a solution to the unacceptable situation.

Quoting a series of letters that have been sent to successive federal ministers of immigration since December 2005, the organizations write, "For over a year, we have attempted to draw the attention of Immigration Canada and successive Immigration Ministers to the situation of Abdelkader Belaoui. ... Despite numerous letters and telephone calls, in an outpouring of support at every level, from community organizations, individuals, politicians, national organizations, and even foreign nationals, the government does not appear to have yet taken any steps to find a solution. Simple requests for a meeting to discuss options have been ignored or refused."

The letter also outlines eight reasons for granting permanent resident status to Mr. Belaoui: his integration into society; the fact that he has a financial sponsorship; the contributions he has already made to the community; discrimination in the decision to refuse him; the hardship of a third displacement;

the fact that he has lived outside Algeria for 11 years; his physical security; and his economic security and autonomy.

The groups conclude, “Mr. Belaouni is simply seeking to live without fear and in dignity, which is no more than the fundamental right of every human being. We strongly support Mr. Belaouni's application for permanent resident status on humanitarian grounds.”

Mr. Belaouni was refused after taking many steps to attain legal status in Canada. The groups behind the appeal see this as symptomatic of the problems with Canada's immigration system, writing, “The fact that Mr. Belaouni has had to try so many different avenues and has still not been given status in Canada is, to us, a particularly striking illustration of those problems. We are convinced that Mr. Belaouni's is a case in which the Minister needs to intervene. By doing so, she will indicate a willingness to address the problems which affect our communities.”

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