

December 17, 2005

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

Subject: Mr. Abdelkader Belaoui

I am writing in support of the application of Mr. Abdelkader Belaoui for permission to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. I am very concerned that he will not be safe if he is forcibly returned to Algeria.

I can write as some one who has met and come to know Abdelkader. I have come to appreciate the gentle humanity and sincerity of this man.

I know Abdelkader from having spent many days walking along side him in June of this year as we were both participants in the procession from Montreal to Ottawa organized by Solidarity across Borders. We walked for eight days to present the case for a general amnesty for people who have established their lives in Canada but who do not have formal immigration status.

While walking, resting and sharing meals with Abdelkader over several days I learned about his life in Algeria and why he fled to the United States and then to Canada out of fear for his own safety.

Most people who have no disabilities and whose lives are totally safe and secure would not put themselves out for people the way Abdelkader puts himself out for others.

I know that Abdelkader has tried hard to make an independent life for himself in Canada. He is active in his neighbourhood, Point St-Charles, and in groups working to make a better life for people in poverty and insecurity.

Abdelkader has tried very hard to support himself. He told me how he sold the magazine *l'Itineraire* in the Montreal Metro. He has taken a mobility course for the blind at the *Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille*.

He should not be penalized for discriminatory policies and employment practices which are beyond his control. Because he is not a citizen Abdelkader was denied entry to some programmes meant to enhance opportunities for the blind.

Nevertheless, Abdelkader has volunteered with the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of the Handicapped of Quebec (AMEIPH). There he has been a front-desk receptionist since January, 2005. I have since learned that he has only missed three days: once when his mother went into a coma, once when his mother died, and once after he learned of his deportation order.

We need more people like Abdelkader in Canada.

Canada may not be able to return Abdelkader's sight but our country has the power to make his life more safe and secure.

I am pleased to be able to say that I consider Abdelkader a friend. The example of his courage and perseverance in the face of tremendous odds is a constant inspiration to me and all who know him.

Sincerely,

Steve Watson
National Representative – Education Department
Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW)