



Sunday » February
25 » 2007

Six whose fate depends on the future of security certificates

Catherine Solyom

CanWest News Service; Montreal Gazette

Saturday, February 24, 2007

In the last 25 years, the federal government has issued about two dozen security certificates, most of which have been upheld by the Federal Court and used to deport refugees and landed immigrants alleged to have terrorist links. Currently, six people are being detained or are under some form of house arrest in Canada through security certificates:

- Adil Charkaoui, 33, has been a permanent resident in Montreal since 1995. He is married with three children and was studying for a master of arts degree at the Universite de Montreal when he was arrested in May 2003. He was released on bail in February 2005, but his release came with very strict conditions that limit his travel, time out of doors and Internet access. He wears an electronic monitoring bracelet and must be accompanied by specified people when outside. The federal government has indicated he is a sleeper agent for al-Qaida because he was identified in photographs by convicted terrorist Ahmed Ressam. The government wants him deported to Morocco.

- Mohamed Harkat, 38, came to Canada in 1995 and settled in Ottawa. He married a local woman, Sophie Lamarche, in 2001 and was working as a gas station attendant and part-time delivery man for Pizza Pizza when he was arrested in December 2002. The federal government alleges that, in the early 1990s, Harkat travelled to Afghanistan to train in terrorist camps run by al-Qaida lieutenant Abu Zubayda. He is accused of being an al-Qaida sleeper agent. The government wants to deport him to his native Algeria. He has admitted belonging to an Algerian group seeking to establish an Islamic state in that country. In May 2006, he was granted bail under very strict conditions, and in June he was released from the Kingston Immigration Holding Centre, a new facility designed for people held on security certificates on the grounds of Millhaven prison near Kingston, Ont.

- Hassan Almrei, 33, came to Canada in 1999 as a refugee claimant. He was arrested in Toronto shortly after 9/11. A Syrian by birth, he has also lived in Saudi Arabia. He has admitted to participating in terrorist training in Afghanistan, but says he is not a follower of Osama bin Laden. The government claims he used a false passport to make his successful refugee claim and that he has participated in jihad. They want him deported to Syria. After a hunger strike to protest conditions in the Toronto-area detention centre, he was moved to the facility at Millhaven. He has been on a hunger strike there for more than 80 days.

- Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, 46, was arrested in June 2000 in Toronto and was later moved to the holding centre at Millhaven. He was on his 84th day of a hunger strike protesting prison conditions when he was ordered released into house arrest last week. He is married to a Canadian and was working as a retail clerk at the time of his arrest. The government alleges that he belonged to Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which merged with al-Qaida in the late 1990s. Mahjoub was convicted of terrorism in absentia in Egypt and faces prison time there. He has admitted meeting bin Laden on several occasions and working for him in Sudan in the early 1990s. He also stayed with the Khadr family, associates of bin Laden's, when he first arrived in Canada in 1995.

- Mahmoud Jaballah, 44, has been detained twice using security certificates. His first arrest, in 1999, was overturned by the courts because of problems with the evidence provided by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. He was rearrested in 2001, weeks before 9/11. He has spent much of the time since in solitary confinement. CSIS alleges he is a member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, was an aide to an al-Qaida deputy and played a role in the bombings of two American embassies in Africa in 1998. Jaballah arrived in Canada in 1996 with his wife and children and used a fake passport to claim refugee status. Prior to his arrest, he was the principal of a Toronto-area Islamic school. He is currently in the Millhaven holding centre, awaiting a bail hearing. He has been on a hunger strike for over 80 days.

- Manickavasagam Suresh, 51, a Sri-Lankan born Toronto resident, was arrested in 1995 after a security certificate was issued for him on the basis that he was a major fundraiser for the Tamil Tigers. He was granted bail three years later, under strict conditions. The federal government has been trying to deport him ever since, but has not been able to do so because of fears Suresh will be tortured if returned to his native country.

Montreal Gazette

© CanWest News Service 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.