

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opponents of Secret Trials and Deportations to Torture to Hold Martin Luther King Day Vigil Outside Federal Liberal Caucus in Kitchener-Waterloo

Demonstrators to Seek Meeting with Stephane Dion and Liberal MPs, urging them to vote against new legislation allowing for indefinite detention without charge on secret evidence, two-tier justice, and deportation to torture

What/Where: March and rally, leaving from Fairview Mall
(on Fairway Road South) just west of Hwy. 8,
Peaceful walk to Holiday Inn, 30 Fairway Road South

When: Monday, January 21, 12 noon, Martin Luther King Day.

Who: Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada (you can reach us on the
21st on our cell phone at (647) 668-8445 or beforehand at (416)
651-5800) and Anti-War @ Laurier
Kitchener-Waterloo Contact: (519) 569-8085 (ask for Alison or Nadeem)

To mark the Martin Luther King holiday, members of the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada along with the Anti-War @ Laurier (AW@L) peace group will descend on the Liberal Caucus retreat being held in Kitchener on Monday, January 21. The groups will march to the Holiday Inn (30 Fairway South) after leaving from the Fairway Mall at 12 noon in an effort to meet the Liberal leader over lunch and seek his support to stop new secret trials legislation.

"Last February, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared security certificates unconstitutional, asking, 'how does one meet a case that one does not know?'" explains Matthew Behrens, coordinator of the campaign. "Eight months later, the minority Harper government introduced an almost carbon copy piece of legislation. Canada's leading legal associations, including the Canadian Bar Association, have said this bill will fail a Charter challenge. So when the House resumes next week, how can members of the Liberal Party, which prides itself as the party of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, vote for such a bill?"

Opponents have long argued that security certificates create a two-tier system of justice in Canada, allowing for the lowest possible standards of justice to be used against permanent residents and refugees (as opposed to the criminal law standards that are granted to Canadian citizens in similar circumstances). They also result in indefinite detention without charge, often in solitary confinement for periods of up to 4 years, and the use of secret evidence. Cases can be built on anything "not normally admissable in a court of law."

Security certificates have been condemned by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, three separate committees of the United Nations, and thousands of people across Canada, including David Suzuki, Alexandre Trudeau, former Solicitor General Warren Allmand, former Foreign Affairs Minister Flora MacDonald, writers Naomi Klein, Ann-Marie MacDonald and Heather Mallick, singer/activist Bruce Cockburn, Oscar-winning director Denys Arcand, the late June Callwood, and Monia Mazigh, who won a long-fought battle to return her husband Maher Arar to Canada.

"We want to ask Mr. Dion how the Liberal Party can justify voting for these types of human rights abuses in what is supposed to be a 21st century democracy," Behrens says. "The Liberal Party supported this bill at second

reading. We want to talk with them to see if they can turn around, show some courage in the spirit of the civil rights movement, and reject legislation designed to further entrench inequality in this country."

There are currently five Muslim men subject to security certificates, all of them fighting deportation to torture. Four of them are under draconian house arrest, and one of them remains at the "Guantanamo North" facility in Kingston, Ontario, built specifically for security certificate detainees, even though the law which has placed them in this dire situation is unconstitutional.

Kitchener's Alison Murray, a long-time campaigner against security certificates, says "it is important for MPs to take a stand against security certificates. Secret evidence and indefinite detention have no place in a democracy"

Nadeem Lawji, also of Kitchener, says " all people should be guaranteed a fair trial in this country. If passed, Bill C3 will further entrench the legal double standard faced by refugees and permanent residents."

Bill C-3 is slated to face a vote as early as the last week in January. Although they applied to be heard by the committee hearing evidence about security certificates, campaign members were not invited to appear in Ottawa. Media interested in the campaign's brief can receive one electronically by contacting tasc@web.ca or calling (416) 651-5800.

"Dion has rightly called on the Canadian government to speak out against abuses at Guantanamo Bay, another site of indefinite detention, but that call will only be undermined by his own party's support for a law that allows for the exact same indefinite detention here in Canada," says Behrens.

For further information before January 21, please contact (416) 651-5800 or (519) 569-8085. On the day of the rally, campaign members can be reached on a cell phone at (647) 668-8445.