

August 29, 2016

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 1L1

Dear Minister McCallum,

I write to you on behalf of Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and social justice arm of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada. As an historic peace church, Friends have a deep concern for the wellbeing of American conscientious objectors to the war in Iraq (often called "war resisters"). These conscientious objectors have sought refuge in Canada. We urge you to grant them Permanent Resident status. Please end the years of painful uncertainty about whether or not they will be allowed to remain part of the communities they have integrated into here in Canada. More than twelve years on, we are led to continue to raise our concern as the remaining war resisters' cases are still unresolved.

A fair adjudication of the applications made by U.S. war resisters has been made impossible because the government of Canada:

- publicly called U.S. conscientious objectors "bogus refugee claimants"¹ while their cases were before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada or the Federal Courts,
- issued Operational Bulletin 202 to immigration officers specifically targeting applications made by military deserters from the United States. This bulletin implies that deserters are serious criminals and therefore may be "inadmissible to Canada".² This attempt to discourage conscientious objectors from seeking refugee status in Canada is inconsistent with recognition by the *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* that conscientious objection may constitute a legitimate reason to claim refugee status.³

¹ CBC News, *Kenney's comments prejudice hearings for war resisters, critics say*, Jan 9, 2009, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kenney-s-comments-prejudice-hearings-for-war-resisters-critics-say-1.781908> [accessed 24 August 2016]

² Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *Operational Bulletin 202* July 22, 2010, available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/manuals/bulletins/2010/ob202.asp> [accessed 24 August 2016]

³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Guidelines on International Protection No. 10: Claims to Refugee Status related to Military Service within the context of Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, 3 December 2013, HCR/GIP/13/10/Corr. 1, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/529ee33b4.html> [accessed 24 August 2016]

The beliefs of conscientious objectors are protected under domestic and international law and conscientious objection to military service, whether by draft resisters or deserters, is a widely recognized ground for granting refugee protection, both in Canada and internationally.

As a historic peace church, The Religious Society of Friends has worked tirelessly in support of the human right of conscience. Canada must not facilitate the punishment of a brave decision to act from conscience by returning conscientious objectors to the United States.

A majority of Members of Parliament voted on two separate occasions (June 2008 and March 2009) in favour of a motion from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration calling on the Canadian government to immediately implement a program that would allow U.S. conscientious objectors to stay in Canada, and to immediately cease deportation proceedings against these individuals.

We ask the Government of Canada to finally allow conscientious objectors to stay on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Thank you for your attention and concern on this issue. We look forward to your response and welcome an opportunity to meet regarding this concern.

In Friendship,



Lana Robinson
Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee

cc: Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Jenny Kwan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship critic (NDP)
Michelle Rempel, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship critic (Conservative Party)