

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

ICLMG: the organization

The ICLMG is a national coalition of Canadian civil society organizations that was established in the aftermath of the September, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. The coalition brings together some 40 NGOs, unions, professional associations, faith groups, environmental organizations, human rights and civil liberties advocates, as well as groups representing immigrant and refugee communities in Canada.

The mandate of the ICLMG is to defend the civil liberties and human rights set out in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, federal and provincial laws (such as the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, provincial Charters of Human Rights or Privacy legislation), and international human rights instruments (such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*).

Active in the promotion and defence of rights within their own respective sectors of Canadian society, ICLMG members have come together within this coalition to share their concerns about national and international anti-terrorism legislation, and other national security measures, and their impact on civil liberties, human rights, refugee protection, racism, political dissent, governance of charities, international cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

ICLMG member organizations are deeply concerned with the impact of contemporary violence, including all forms of political violence, and the use of terror, whether by states or non-state elements. Such violence and tactics of terror are a threat to the deepening of democratic and open societies and government worldwide. Consequently, we support all legitimate efforts to combat terrorism which is in itself a serious attack on human rights, but argue that these efforts must always respect human rights norms.

At the same time, while we recognize the obligation of states to protect citizens and others on their territories from violence, we regret the way in which most states are interpreting this obligation by restricting democratic freedoms. We do not properly defend democracy, the rule of law and a culture of human rights by abdicating these very principles. Security and freedom are not opposites. Respect for fundamental rights is an essential condition, a vital component of security.

Specific actions of the coalition include:

- Monitoring the evolution and the application of Canada's security and "anti-terrorist" agenda and its impact on civil society organizations and communities;

- Disseminating information to ICLMG members as well as to interested and affected organizations and communities;
- Developing joint and concerted responses to ensure transparency and due process where specific organizations and/or vulnerable communities are affected;
- Promoting public awareness of the implications of the laws and other anti-terrorist measures;
- Lobbying and carrying out advocacy work with policy makers, members of Parliament, Parliamentary committees, etc.; and
- In ways relevant to the above aims, supporting links with Southern CSOs whose work, and their relations with Canadian counterparts, may be impacted by the application of security laws in Canada and/or countries with which Canada harmonizes its security policies internationally.

Since its inception, ICLMG has served as a round-table for strategic exchange — including international and North/South exchange — among organizations and communities affected by the application, internationally, of new national security (“anti-terrorist”) laws. ICLMG has provided a forum for reflection, joint analysis and cooperative action in response to Canada’s own anti-terrorist measures and their effects, and the risk to persons and groups flowing from the burgeoning national security state and its obsession with the control and movement of people.

An important aspect of the role of the ICLMG is the dissemination of information related to human rights in the context of counter-terrorism and the expanding – and largely unaccountable – national security apparatus . This information is distributed to members of the coalition who in turn broadcast it to their own networks.

Further to its mandate, the ICLMG has intervened in individual cases where there have been allegations of serious violation of civil liberties and human rights. The ICLMG has also intervened to contest proposed legislation, regulations and practices that contravene the Canadian Constitution, other Canadian laws and international human rights standards.

In particular the ICLMG has raised concerns about:

- Canada’s anti-terrorism legislation and other counter-terrorism measures;
- the harmonization of Canada’s security policies and practices with those of the United States, especially with regards to border controls and the creation of “terrorist” watchlists and no-fly lists;
- the dynamics and problematics of information sharing between states;
- the need for rigorous independent and integrated oversight mechanisms over national security operations of the RCMP and other security/intelligence agencies, including among others CSIS, CSE, CBSA and Transport Canada;

- the lack of due process, transparency and accountability in the use of security certificates and secret trials to deport landed immigrants and refugees suspected of terrorist links;
- the rapid deployment of a global infrastructure of mass surveillance and the erosion of privacy rights, civil liberties and freedoms;
- the treatment of Maher Arar, Abdullah Almaki, Ahmad Abou-Elmaati, Muayed Nureddin and others detained and tortured abroad;
- the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, the treatment of Omar Khadr and the growing disregard for the rule of law and international covenants in the context of the U.S. led “war on terror”.

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