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NEWS RELEASE

After Arar: study finds major pieces of unfinished business

Montreal – Maher Arar’s “extraordinary rendition” from a New York airport to the nightmare of a Syrian prison has left many unanswered questions about the future of Canadian-US intelligence-sharing practices, according to a new study from the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The study, “Arar: The Affair, the Inquiry, the Aftermath,” by Reg Whitaker, examines the scandal surrounding Arar’s year of torture in a Syrian prison, the public inquiry under Justice Dennis O’Connor into the complicity of Canadian officials, and the aftermath of the inquiry report, including the impact on the government of Canada, on national security policy and on Canadian society.

According to Whitaker, who was a member of the five-person Advisory Panel to Justice O’Connor on Part 2 of the Commission’s mandate, O’Connor’s report contains two serious shortcomings: the exclusion of the role of Parliament in ensuring national security accountability, and the deliberate focus on whether government protocol was followed, rather than examining the efficacy of the national security operations themselves.

“Effective scrutiny would require that agencies be monitored for compliance with government policy objectives, as well as assessed for performance,” says Whitaker. “Although the Commission recognized the crucial importance of international intelligence-sharing in mounting anti-terrorist operations, the role of the United States in violating the rights of a Canadian citizen and in ignoring Canadian sovereignty raises serious issues of trust.”

“Arar: The Affair, the Inquiry, the Aftermath,” by Reg Whitaker, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org.

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