



Press Release

BARRED FROM AIR CANADA FLIGHT, EX-GUANTANAMO DETAINEE "WILL NOT BE SILENCED"

Montreal Event to Proceed in Defiance of Air Canada refusal

Montreal, 24 May 2011 -- An event scheduled for this evening in Montreal will proceed even though the main speaker, ex-Guantanamo detainee Moazzam Begg, has been blocked from participating in person. Apparently acting on a phone call from the Canadian High Commission in London, Air Canada refused to allow Mr. Begg to board a flight to Canada, where he was scheduled to speak at events in Toronto, Edmonton and Montreal.

"It is very important that the event go ahead tonight, though Mr. Begg will not be present. It is a way of saying that Moazzam Begg and our voices of dissent will not be silenced. It is also a way of denouncing such arbitrary and abusive practices. We see this incident as further evidence of the political repression that landed Mr. Begg in Guantánamo Bay for two years and in Bagram for another year, only to be released without charge, explanation, or compensation." said Mary Foster of the People's Commission Network, one of the groups endorsing the event.

"Who is responsible for this? Canadian officials reportedly pointed the finger at the Americans. But who shared the passenger list with Canadian and American authorities? And who decided to apply American rules to a flight that doesn't even cross American airspace?" asked Foster.

Diplomatic cables provided to CBC by wikileaks last week reveal that CSIS has continued to share sensitive information freely with the Americans despite the dubious legality of such a practice and all that is known about the danger of doing so.

"We cannot let this pass. We must vigorously protest such incidents in ways that challenge the repressive agenda underlying them. We will use this evening in part to discuss how to do that. For starters, we encourage people to avoid flying with Air Canada and to question them about this incident, which is not the first of its kind." said Foster.

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