



**Civilian Peace Service Canada (CPSC) Conference:  
"Women Building Peace"  
February 15 to 17, 2009, Saint Paul's University, 223  
Main Street, Ottawa**



This conference followed from the very successful dinner hosted by the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative (CDPI) held in September, honoring the contribution of women to peace. The conference is developed in cooperation with the CDPI, Saint Paul University, the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (CICR), the Rideau Institute, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, and One World Inc. Organizers acknowledge, with appreciation, the PSAC Social Justice Fund, Parliament Hill Local 70390, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, One World Inc., MDR Associates Conflict Resolution Inc. for the contributions made to the success of the conference.

**Monia Mazigh  
February 17, 2009**

**Biography:**

Monia Mazigh was born and raised in Tunisia and immigrated to Canada in 1991. She holds a Ph.D. in finance from McGill University and speaks Arabic, French, and English fluently. She has worked at the University of Ottawa and taught at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia. Mazigh was catapulted onto the public stage in 2002 when her husband, Maher Arar, was deported to Syria where he was tortured and held without charge for over a year. She campaigned tirelessly for his release during that time. In 2004, she ran in the federal election for the NDP, coming third but gaining the most votes for the riding the NDP had ever received. She is the author of "Hope and Despair". Dr. Mazigh lives in Ottawa with her husband and two children.

**Presentation:**

**The consequences of the war on terror on citizens**

The war on terror was initiated by the American administration immediately after the attack of 9/11. It isn't a classic war with classic methods, weapons... where the attacker is identified, the soldiers identified, the defendant is known and the victims can be counted instead it is a new type of war, unseen before. It introduced a new international order still unknown to the general population, it made many international conventions as if obsolete or ill-equipped and it affected the lives of many citizens, by depriving them from their freedom, by intruding into their privacy as well as it affected the lives of women and children who are caught in this war as spouses, daughters, sisters of the missing and tortured husbands.

### **Torture and harsh interrogations are used technique in this war on terror:**

Many years ago and since the universal declaration of human rights, one would think that humanity made tremendous progress in banning torture. What we still see in the US, for instance, is a debate about the possible use of torture. In democratic, compassionate societies like Canada, the very idea of torturing suspects detained by the state is abhorrent. It is unjustifiable, and it is illegal. Despite this, during the past seven years since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, we have heard politicians, members of the legal community, as well as members of the public call for the torture of terrorist suspects if it results in information that can be used to enhance our security. How can we even consider using torture as a legal tool and at the same time claim to be a civilized democracy? How can we consider using such methods and then condemn human rights violations abroad? Such methods would contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the US for instance, there is a raging debate about "waterboarding" as a technique of make suspect speak. Even though more than 100 U.S. law professors stated unequivocally that waterboarding is torture, and is a criminal felony punishable under the U.S. federal criminal code, the Bush administration was not convinced and it is ambiguous whether the technique is still used or stopped against the prisoners of the so-called "war on terror".

### **Guantanamo Bay and the creation of enemy combatant notion instead of prisoners of war:**

Since June 2008, the prisoners held in Guantanamo have been classified by the United States as "enemy combatants". Before, the Bush administration made claims that these detainees were not entitled to any of the protections of the Geneva Convention (for instance the status of prisoners of war). This change was ordered by the US Supreme Court who ruled on June 29, 2006 that the detainees were entitled to a minimal protection.

### **Extraordinary Rendition as a practice of the war on terror:**

This is another tool used in this context of national security is extraordinary rendition. My husband was the victim of an American policy that is known as extraordinary rendition. That's a euphemism. What it means is that the United States seizes individuals, presumably terror suspects, and sends them off without even a nod in the direction of due process to countries known to practice torture such Syria, Egypt and Morocco. In extraordinary rendition there are no rules. The person seized, presumably a terror suspect, is thrust into a highly secret zone of utter lawlessness, with no rights whatever. The entire point of this atrocious exercise is to transfer the suspect to a regime skilled in the art of torture. It's as if a cop picked up a suspect from his home and handed him over to a street gang to extract a confession. One's guilt or innocence is not relevant. No legal defence is permitted. Few years ago, Edward Markey, a US congressman, has taken the eminently sensible step of introducing legislation that would ban this utterly reprehensible practice. In a speech on the floor of the House, Mr. Markey, a Democrat, said: "Torture is morally repugnant whether we do it or whether we ask another country to do it for us. It is morally wrong whether it is captured on film or whether it goes on behind closed doors unannounced to the American people."

My husband's case is the tip of an iceberg known as "extraordinary rendition" -- the outsourcing of detention and rough interrogations. The Central Intelligence Agency told The New York Times, that between 100 to 150 terror suspects have been captured and

sent to jails in foreign lands such as Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria -- all of them identified by the State Department as torture states -- under the express authority of the previous President George W. Bush.

In a New York Times editorial we can read about rendition the following: "This is about a system that was hastily conceived, ineptly formulated, incompetently administered and now out of control. It lowers the humanity of the people who practice it, and the citizens who condone it." The Los Angeles Times said: "This barbarism is why U.S. judges have refused to condone the indefinite detention of terrorism suspects."

**Damage to civil liberties:**

One of the first consequences of the war on terror is the damage to our civil liberties. Unfortunately, this damage to our freedoms and liberties occurred with the willing support of many of our politicians who, in an understandable moment of panic, believed that Canada needed draconian anti-terrorism legislation to fight the terrorist threat that was facing us. Indeed, under the name of national security, many controversial and dangerous laws or acts were passed. In the US, it is the case of the Patriot Act and here in Canada Bill C-36. Of course, we all agree that all countries should feel safe and secure from any terrorist attack but these laws opened the door to allow phone tapping on citizens, intruding on their private lives all this in the pursuit of an illusory security that cannot be achieved with a word of human rights.

**Social consequences:**

The effects of the war on terror and the new security laws are not just abstract; they have directly affected law-abiding people across the country that happen to share the ethnicity or the religion of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorists. The Anti-Terrorism Act and other new security legislation have resulted in innocent people being profiled by our security and justice system. They have resulted in people being arrested, detained and denied the right to due process. The Muslim and Arab communities are the group mainly targeted by the war on terror. Within this group, suspicion, fear and trauma are very common and widespread. Inside those communities, women are most of the time the victims suffering in silence if their husbands or loved ones are caught in the war on terror. They lack the support from the other member of the community, they don't have the financial, social resources or network to speak out and defend their rights. The fear created a policy of silence and trauma that very few dare to reverse.

**Geo-political consequences:**

In many countries around the world, oppressive regimes are unjustly using the war on terror as a reason to throw opponents in prisons. Many political opponents became labelled terrorists and many legitimate resisters are kept indefinitely in prison, tortured or killed.

The war on terror started by the US gave many reasons to some dictatorship to continue the oppression and the abuse of human rights. Certainly, there is a difference between curtailing civil liberties in Canada and the outrageous violation of human rights in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, we cannot accept the concept of "degrees of violations".

**Comment from the floor:**

Monia.. raised awareness that war on terror is a war on each of us and affects our rights, freedoms, our abilities in many ways. A war on terror is an oxymoron. War is terror. Terror is war. The effects are loss of freedom, surveillance, new terminology:.. (e.g. "enemy combatant" who does not get treated under the Geneva Convention), new patterns, new threats, where governments are changing the way we are controlled; watching the way we act.... We have feelings of confusion. Our fears are confirmed, e.g. crossing border to USA, we wonder 'Am I on a list? Am I going to be arrested? Who knows! Some activists are afraid to speak. If we are afraid, imagine those with visible religious ties, ethnic backgrounds speaking out.... What can we do about it?

- most people are not thinking of war on terror as affecting them... We need to inform ourselves, read Monia's book, see her notes. Ask your library to put those books on a shelf, tell your network, your friends, your book store.... Do not treat it as some distant war on terror... It's happening here.
- awareness building and making sure that others know that it is not them and us. It's right here, on our ground.
- Monia brought an example, by which other countries are using the new terminology now to bypass conventions. For example, a journalist in Liberia has has recently been charged as enemy combatant within his own country ...

Action: personal action, demonstrations, media, lobbying....insist on investigative media....