



**DAY OF DISSENT**  
**December 7, 2012**

**“Advocacy and Dissent in Canada:  
State of the Union”**

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**Advocacy  
Activism**

**Dissent**



**Free expression  
Free Assembly  
Free Speech**



**Democratic  
governance  
Participatory  
Democracy**

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# DECLARATION OF THE VOICES - VOIX COALITION

Since 2006, the Government of Canada has systematically undermined democratic institutions and practices, and has eroded the protection of free speech, and other fundamental human rights. It has deliberately set out to silence the voices of organizations or individuals who raise concerns about government policies or disagree with government positions. It has weakened Canada's international standing as a leader in human rights. The impact and consequences for the health of democracy, freedom of expression, and the state of human rights protection in Canada are unparalleled.

Organizations that disagree with the Government's positions and/or engage in advocacy have had their mandates criticised and their funding threatened, reduced or discontinued. In many cases these organizations have a long history of service to the public, such as KAIROS, MATCH International, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Alternatives, the Climate Action Network, the Canadian Arab Federation, the National Association of Women and the Law and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. The Court Challenges Program, which funded many human-rights cases, has had its mandate drastically reduced. The Women's Program at Status of Women Canada now effectively excludes many women's groups that conduct research and work to advance women's equality and participation in society.

Individuals have been personally sanctioned in response to their efforts to defend democratic and human rights principles. Linda Koon, President of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and three managers from the highly respected organization Rights and Democracy have all been summarily dismissed. Peter Tinsley, Chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission, was not renewed in his position. Diplomat Richard Colvin was intimidated and derided for his parliamentary testimony about the torture of Afghan detainees handed over by the Canadian military. Partisan appointments to the board of directors of Rights and Democracy resulted in the resignation of internationally renowned board members and have thrown the organization into crisis.



Further, an unprecedented level of secrecy now shrouds a long list of government activities and decisions, making it increasingly difficult for the public to hold the government accountable across a range of fundamentally important issues. Robert Marleau, the Federal Information Commissioner, has reported that access to information regarding government action has been restricted. Diplomats, leaders of governmental agencies, public officials, senior military officers, and scientists at Environment Canada are being pressured to obey a law of silence and censored from communicating to the Canadian public.

The Government has eroded freedom of the press by exercising central control of the information available to journalists. It abused the right to prerogative Parliament in order to avoid serious allegations that the Canadian military has been complicit in the torture of Afghan detainees.

The Government has taken positions domestically and within such key international bodies as the UN General Assembly and the UN

Human Rights Council that undermine essential human rights, environmental and other global principles. The government's actions have set back or weakened crucial international human rights initiatives such as global protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples, a worldwide moratorium on executions, more effective protection of human rights in the Middle East, protection against torture, the rights of gays and lesbians, the rights of women, and the rights of children. Among many distressing examples, since the Supreme Court of Canada found that Canada is responsible for continuing violations of Omar Khadr's human rights, the government's response has been grossly inadequate and a source of shame on the world stage.

In this context, Canadian democratic institutions, civil society organizations, and human rights-defenders have been weakened, marginalized and silenced. Their capacity to monitor and safeguard the respect for democracy, free speech, and other rights is in jeopardy. The quality and health of democratic life in Canada is under serious threat.

United, we call upon the Government of Canada to:

## 1. Respect the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Therefore,

- Cease to deliberately target those who speak out against government policies with the use of smear campaigns, dismissal from employment, funding cuts, blatant and subtle threats, regulations designed to obfuscate and prevent public debate, and other acts of bad faith.
- Commit to parliamentary hearings that address widespread concerns about the loss of democratic space in Canada.

## 2. Act in accordance with Canada's democratic traditions and values.

Therefore,

- Actively promote and support political diversity and public debate, instead of avoiding it.
- Recognize and respect the vital role, expertise, and necessary independence of civil society organizations.

## 3. Be transparent.

Therefore,

- Demonstrate full respect for and accountability to the Parliament of Canada and the Canadian People.
- Allow complete access for Canadians to information regarding public policy decisions.
- Base funding decisions for government and civil society organizations on fair standards and democratic principles, instead of partisan agendas.



# **Five Key Themes**

**Demonizing Dissent**

**Destroying funding**

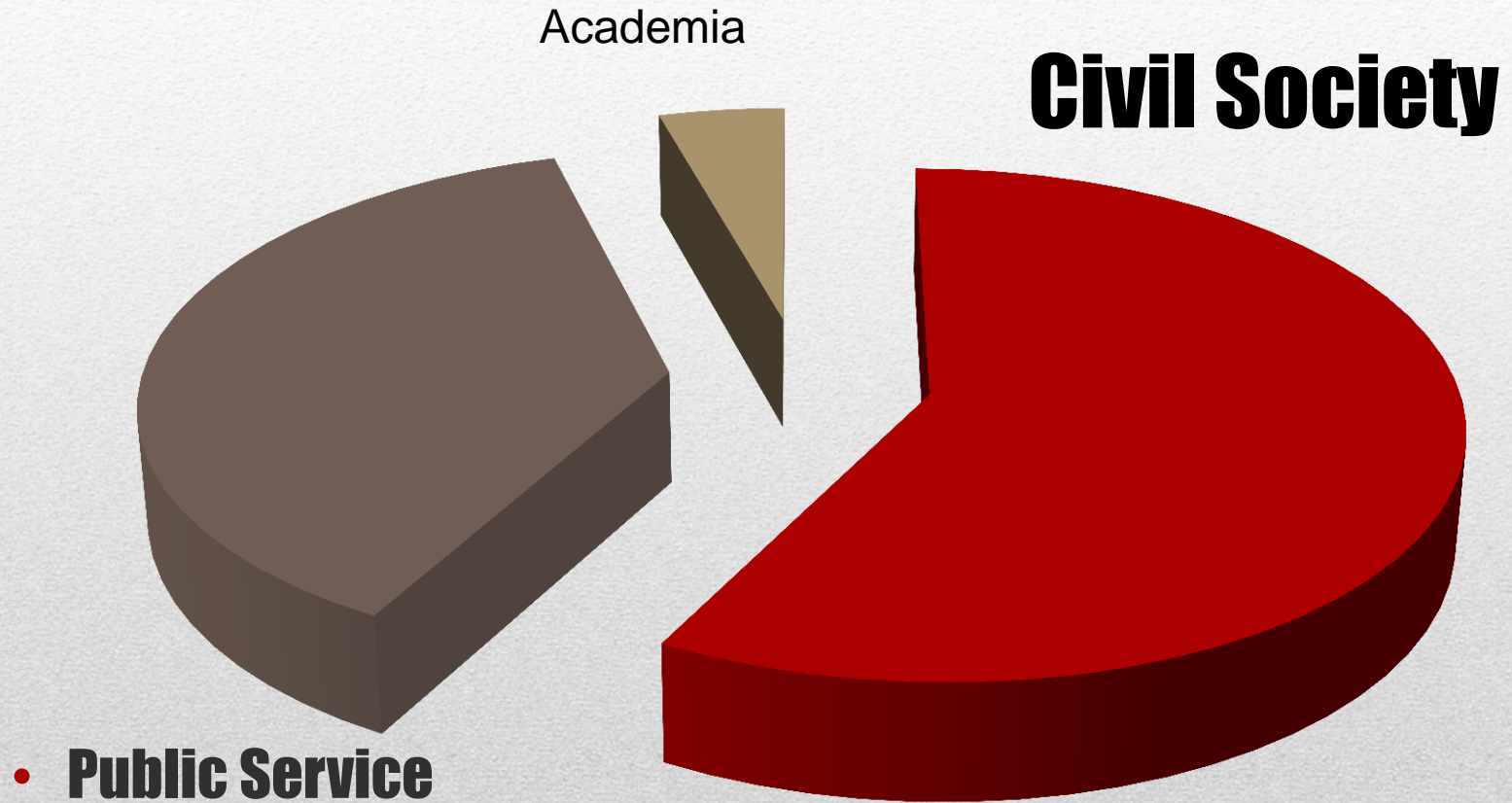
**Undermining Democratic  
institutions**

**Death of Evidence**

**Marginalizing human rights**

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# 114 Cases identified to date,



*About 70 cases documented thus far... the 'hit list'...*

## THE HIT LIST

Aboriginal Healing Foundation	Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada	Palestine House
Abousfian Abdelrazik	Environment Canada	Pat Stogran
Access to Information	Eritrean Canadian Community Centre of Metropolitan Toronto	Peter Tinsley
Adil Charkaoui	Errol Mendes	Pierre Daigle
Adrian Measner	Feminist Alliance for International Action	Rémy Beauregard
Afghan Association of Ontario	First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada	Richard Colvin
Alternatives	Franke James	Rights & Democracy
Amir Attaran	Hospitality House	Sean Bruyey
Arthur Carty	Joanna Gualtieri	Sharryn Aiken
Bloor Information & Life Skills Centre	Kairos	Sierra Club of British Columbia
Canada without Poverty	Kevin Page	South Asian Women's Centre
Canadian Access Program	Lifeline	Statistics Canada (mandatory long-form)

census)

Canadian Arab Federation

Linda Keen

Status of Women Canada

Canadian Council for  
International Cooperation  
(CCIC)

Luc Pomerleau

Steven Schnoor

Canadian Council on  
LearningMada Al-Carmel Arab  
Centre

Tides Canada

Canadian Doctors for Refugee  
Care

Munir Sheikh

Unions Advocating Equal  
PayCanadian Foundation for  
Climate and Atmospheric  
Sciences

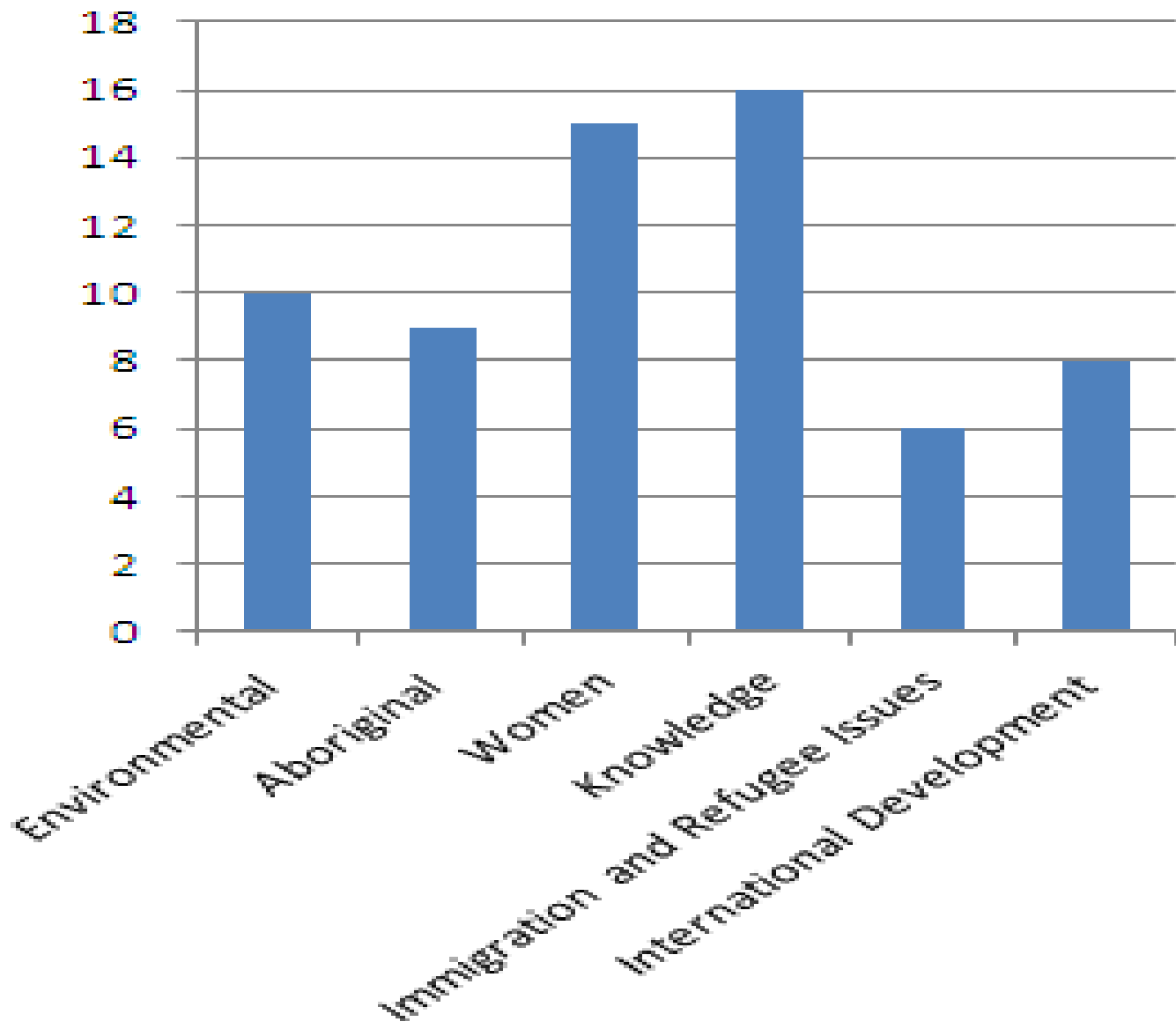
Mustafa Barghouti

Women's Legal and  
Education Action Fund  
(LEAF)Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal  
Network

Omar Khadr

Yves Côté

Canadian Human Rights  
Commission





## Environmental Advocates

- Cast as terrorists, or working against Canada's interests

or

- Charitable status threatened



**Sierra Club, David Suzuki Foundation, Tides  
Canada,**

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voice with us for democracy in Canada.



Aboriginal Healing Foundation



Afghan Association of Ontario



Alternatives



Canada Without Poverty



Canadian Arab Federation v Canada



Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC)



Canadian Council on Learning



Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care

## Targeted for Speaking Up



## Legal Cases





Law Commission of Canada



Yves Côté



Joanna Gualtieri



Status of Women Canada



Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC)



Kevin Page



Adrian Measner



Library and Archives Canada





Access to Information



Canadian Council on Learning



Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences



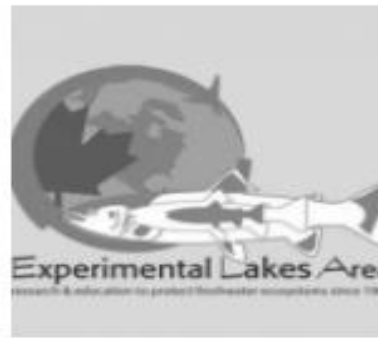
Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)



Community Access Program (CAP)



Environment Canada



Experimental Lakes Area



First Nations Statistical Institute

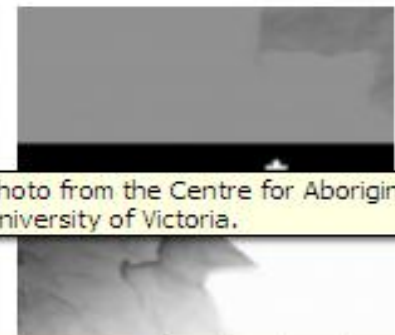


Photo from the Centre for Aboriginal Health, University of Victoria.

# **VOICES-VOIX**

## **Defending Advocacy and Dissent in Canada**

