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Tuesday, October 05, 2010

The Honourable Peter MacKay, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of National Defence  
National Defence Headquarters  
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0K2

By fax: 613-995-8189

October 5, 2010

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned national organizations, are writing to express our deep disappointment at your decision to cancel a scheduled presentation by Dr. Zijad Delic, the Executive Director of the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC).

Dr. Delic was invited to speak at the Department of National Defence on Monday October 4, 2010 to mark Islamic History Month in Canada. The decision to silence Dr. Delic's speech was reportedly spurred by lobbying from outside interest groups.

For your information, Dr. Delic is a respected Imam, educator, social activist, and longtime facilitator and promoter of interfaith dialogue and Muslim civic engagement.

The decision to rescind the invitation to Dr. Delic sends a clear message to Canadian Muslim communities that the federal government will uncritically yield to pressure groups when it comes to Canadian Muslims.

News reports indicate that the decision to cancel Dr. Delic's speech was released to the media, rather than to Dr. Delic directly. Fairness would have dictated that your office contact the speaker to verify any allegations and to provide him with the opportunity to respond.

The statement issued by your office refers to a comment made six years ago by a former president of the CIC that was indeed reprehensible. It is worthy of denouncement and has been denounced by Muslim organizations and individuals alike, including Dr. Delic.

Your hasty decision in regards to a man who has dedicated his life's work to building bridges between all Canadians suggests that fairness and due process are being abandoned when it comes to Canadian Muslim participation in the public sphere.

The Canadian government must remain a government for all Canadians.

We urge you to meet with Dr. Delic and other community leaders without delay and mitigate the damage done by this unnecessary episode of us-versus-them suspicion.

Yours Sincerely,

The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN)

The Canadian Council of Imams

The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA - Canada)

The Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA)

The Islamic Society of North America – Canada (ISNA – Canada)

The Muslim Association of Canada (MAC)