

THE LONG WAY HOME
Discussion Guide

Aisha Jamal
Ariel Nasr

THE LONG WAY HOME

Discussion Guide



HOW DID THIS HAPPEN TO A CANADIAN CITIZEN?

How has the war on terror unfairly targeted particular groups of Canadians and people living in Canada? Where can allies learn more about Addelrazik's case and others who have been treated similarly? This discussion guide is a resource for audience members hoping to consider themes present in *The Long Way Home*. The guide can be used for small and large groups as a starting point for thinking about how to challenge our own biases and those of others, in discussions about the war on terror and its impact locally and globally.

BEFORE DELVING IN

Prior to engaging in a discussion about *The Long Way Home*, we encourage facilitators to prepare groups for these conversations. The subject matter of the film will trigger a variety of emotions and thoughts on topics such as balancing government authority with individual rights and discrimination on the basis of religion and/or race. Participants in a group discussion should be reminded to engage with one another in a respectful and compassionate manner.

Asking the group to create a list of ground rules for the conversation may help set a constructive tone for dialogue. Ground rules could include:

- Personal anecdotes shared in the discussion will not be ridiculed.
- Differing opinions will be heard and respected.
- Purposefully hateful and hostile comments will not be tolerated.
- Responses from people who identify as Muslim and/or people of colour will be prioritized.

“When the fundamental principles of human rights are not protected, the centre of our institution no longer holds. It is they that promote development that is sustainable; peace that is secure; and lives of dignity.”

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High
Commissioner for Human Rights

2003



Spring 2003 - 2006

Abdelrazik travels to Sudan to visit his sick mother. He is then abducted, detained & tortured by Sudanese authorities at the behest of CSIS.



May 2006

Sudanese Intelligence Report reads:

"The suspect does not belong to any political, partisan, sectarian party or otherwise based on religious, political, ethnic, sectarian or partisan understanding."

2005

2004



November 2007 Letter from CSIS confirms:

"Mr. Abdelrazik voluntarily departed Canada for the Sudan in March 2003. The Service has no current substantial information regarding Mr. Abdelrazik."

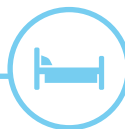


November 2007 Letter from Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) states:

"Please be advised that the RCMP conducted a review of its files and was unable to locate any current and substantive information that indicates Mr. Abdelrazik is involved in criminal activity."

2006

2007



April 2008

Abdelrazik takes refuge in the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum, after he received threats from Sudanese National Security Intelligence. Abdelrazik spends the next year and a half living in the Embassy's gym, while his supporters in Canada fight for his return home.

2008



June 2009

The Federal Court of Canada rules that the Canadian government had violated Abdelrazik's Charter-protected right to mobility, forcing the government to restore Abdelrazik's passport and allowing him to return home.

2009

BACKGROUND

What's The War On Terror? The term 'war on terror' has been used by the American government since the mid 1980s. The term came to represent the international military campaign initiated following the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Since 9/11, controversial government actions have been legitimized as responses to the war on terror. Critics of the term argue that it's been used by different governments to achieve policy and military objectives that existed prior to the 9/11 attacks. When we consider this war in the Canadian context, it doesn't take long to find examples of CSIS infringing on the civil liberties and human rights of Canadian citizens.

What Evidence is there of Similar Abuses by Canadian Officials? Unfortunately, Abousfian Abdelrazik's case isn't an exception in Canada. In September 2002, Maher Arar, a dual citizen of Canada and Syria, was detained during a layover in New York after a family vacation in Tunis. The United States government suspected him to be a member of Al Qaeda. Arar was held without charges for two weeks then deported to Syria where he was detained and tortured for almost a year. Arar has since been cleared of any links to terrorism. In 2007, he received an apology and a settlement from the Canadian government for the ordeal he was forced to endure.

Similarly, Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad Abou-Elmaati and Muayyed Nureddin, all Syrian-Canadians, were detained and tortured for two years in Syria and Egypt as suspected terrorists following the 9/11 attacks. Canadian officials and the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad colluded to imprison the men. In



July 2017, all three received compensation from the federal government. Additional stories like these confirm that Abdelrazik is not the only person to have experienced such an overt violation of his rights as a Canadian citizen and a human being.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) A federal government institution that investigates activities suspected of creating threats to the security of Canada.

UN Blacklist Individuals listed on the United Nations security council blacklist (also known as 1267 list) are suspected to be connected to designated terrorist groups, are banned from travel, weapons and have their assets frozen.

Embassy The main office of one country's diplomatic representatives headquartered in

another country. Embassies cannot be entered into by the host country without permission and from time to time individuals take refuge from the host country's authorities inside a foreign embassy.



Islamophobia The irrational fear, hatred of or prejudice against the Islamic religion or Muslims that leads to discrimination, especially when either are perceived as the source of terrorism.

Anti-Black Racism Policies and practices reinforced by Canadian institutions that reflect and increase beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent.

Intersectionality A framework used to understand how connected systems of power negatively impact the most marginalized people in society. Intersectionality recognizes that an individual's social position is based on the combination of factors such as class, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender and age.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms A bill of rights, the most important rights to the citizens of a country, embedded in the Constitution of Canada. The Charter

protects certain political rights of Canadian citizens and the civil rights of everyone in Canada from all government policies and actions. The Charter only applies to government laws and actions.

Examples of rights protected by the Charter:

Mobility Rights The right to enter, remain in and leave Canada. Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents also have the right to move to, live in and work in any province.

Legal Rights Rights people have when dealing with the Canadian justice system and law enforcement.

Equality Rights Rights that guarantee equal treatment before and under the law, and equal protection and benefit of the law free from discrimination.

Charter Challenge If an individual believes a law or policy they must obey or are subject to, is discriminating against them, is unreasonable or wrong, they can make a Charter challenge in court or at a tribunal. Decision makers e.g. a judge, will apply a test (a series of legal questions) to determine if the rule or legislation in question is constitutionally valid. If the rule or legislation is deemed unconstitutional then it will be found to violate the individual's Charter rights. Bringing a Charter challenge is a complicated and costly process that typically requires assistance from a lawyer.

Citizenship The status of a person that comes with particular rights, privileges and duties and it describes a person's status or position in relation to a particular country.

Canadian Citizenship The Citizenship Act determines who is, and who is not eligible to be a Canadian citizen. There are 4 ways a person can become a Canadian citizen:

- By birth in Canada (automatically granted although there are some exceptions);
- By being born to a Canadian parent;
- By grant (when a non-citizen receives permission to become a citizen); and
- By adoption.

What's an Ally? An ally is a person who stands up for others. Allyship is particularly powerful when a member of a dominant group in society speaks out and acts in support of an individual or a group being discriminated against or treated unfairly.

How do ordinary citizens become allies to those unfairly targeted in the war on terror?

- Educate yourself.
- Challenge your biases, assumptions and what makes you uncomfortable.
- Learn how to identify and speak out against actions that unfairly target individuals and groups in the name of the war on terror.
- Take action that will create change within your community and at an institutional level.

FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS

Discussion Questions

1. Impact on Viewers

- After watching *The Long Way Home*, what mood or feeling does the film leave you with? Why?
- If you could ask Abdelrazik one question what would it be?
- Are you surprised or confused by anything you learned while watching *The Long Way Home*?

2. Impact on Abdelrazik

- How do you feel about Canadian authorities being complicit in the detainment and torture of a Canadian citizen? How can the



“I’ll always remember hugging Joaria again. In my mind, she was the little girl in the snow. But now, she was a teenager. I missed so much of her life. So much of my own life”

Abdelrazik

Canadian government right this wrong?

- How do you think Abdelrazik felt about the Canadian government during his years in detainment? How do you think he feels now about the struggles he faced?
- Do you think Abdelrazik's religious beliefs as a Muslim and his identify as a Black man intersected to bring about his detention and torture? If so, how?

3. Impact on Others

- What impact do you think Abdelrazik's detainment and torture had on his family, particularly his partner and children?
- What was it about Abdelrazik's case that you think encouraged the activists in Canada to get involved? What would have happened to Abdelrazik's if they hadn't brought media attention to his case?
- Abdelrazik's lawyer, Paul Champ, seemed quite moved by his client's return home. How do you think working on Abdelrazik's case impacted Paul's beliefs about the Canadian justice system?

EXERCISES/ACTIVITIES

Questions For Self-Reflection

- How did you perceive Abdelrazik at the outset of the film? Why?
- What do you think about his struggle to get home after having watched the film? Why?
- What are some of the questions you have for Abdelrazik, his family, the activists who supported him?
- What are some of the questions you have

for the government agents (in Canada and abroad) who worked to keep Abdelrazik detained for so long?

Debate: Government Interests vs. Individual Interests

In pursuit of the war on terror, government and individual interests sometimes conflict. A country's population may benefit from government actions that interrupt terrorist activities but those interventions can also have unfair and negative impacts on individuals and communities that belong to marginalized groups.

Divide into two teams, one will represent the interests of Canadian citizens and the other will represent the interests of the Canadian government. Each team will come up with arguments for and against protecting the Charter rights or government practices listed below. Anticipate how the opposing team will respond and tailor arguments to counter their claims. Once both teams have had a chance to complete the two charts, the entire group will come together to share and discuss their assertions. (see next page)

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

Nelson Mandela, South African civil rights activist

CHARTER PROTECTED RIGHTS	PROS	CONS
<p>Section 6: Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada.</p>		
<p>Section 9: Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.</p>		
<p>Section 15: Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.</p>		

FIGHTING THE WAR ON TERROR	PROS	CONS
<p>Allowing CSIS and the RCMP to monitor phone calls and online activities of suspected terrorists.</p>		
<p>Keeping certain security measures e.g. arrests, detention and torture, as well as gathered intelligence related to alleged terrorism classified thereby shielding the public from such information.</p>		
<p>Sharing classified information with foreign governments and assisting those governments with the arrest, interrogation detention and torture of suspected Canadian terrorists abroad.</p>		

WRITING AND/OR VISUAL EXERCISE

Abousfian Abdelrazik's case provides a strong example of what can happen when an individual's Charter rights are blatantly violated. Write or visually depict a piece that considers the rights and freedoms you enjoy as a Canadian citizen or as a person living in Canada. Then, share how your life and the lives of those around you would be impacted if suddenly some or all of those rights were taken away. Are there any particular rights that you or members of your community take for granted. To the contrary, are there any rights that you or members of your community feel are infringed upon in a way that other groups do not experience?

NEXT STEPS & TAKING ACTION

- Write a letter to the prime minister expressing your concern. Address it to:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

No postage is required!

- See more details at our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/longwayhomedocumentary>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Articles

Canada Must Call Islamophobia What it is – Racism

<https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/amjad-canada-must-call-islamophobia-what-it-is-racism>

I'm Not Your Kind of Muslim

<https://thewalrus.ca/im-not-your-kind-of-muslim/>

Islamophobia: The Very Real Monster in Canada's Closet

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/hadeel-abdel-nabi/islamophobia-the-very-real-monster-in-canadas-closet_a_23357882/

Books

Anti-Terrorism: Security and Insecurity after 9/11, Edited by Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, Fernwood Publishing, 2009.

Dark Days: The Story of Four Canadians Tortured in the Name of Fighting Terror, Kerry Pither, Viking Canada, 2008.

Movies, Documentaries and Media Coverage

The Secret Trial 5

<http://secrettrial5.com/>

The Feeling of Being Watched

<http://www.feelingofbeingwatched.com/about/>

Rendition

<https://www.warnerbros.com/rendition>

The Torture Files, The Fifth Estate, and CBC's The National investigation into CSIS and the RCMP's collaboration with the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad that resulted in the arrest and torture of three Canadians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHnlfGUYZx8>

Charter Resources

Your Guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/how-rights-protected/guide-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/how-rights-protected/guide-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>

Online Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>

PRIMARY FILM CREDITS

Directed & Produced by Aisha Jamal & Ariel Nasr

Line Producer Gavin Seal

Featured Interviews

Abousfian Abdelrazik

Paul Champ

Samaa Elibyari

Recreations Performers

Abousfian Abdelrazik - Jonathan Emile

Joaria - Haylee Walker-Yansen

CSIS Officer - Serge Martineau

Art Director - Paola Ridolfi

Director of Photography Gabi Kislat

Sounds Recordist Emory Murchison

Editor Edmund Stenson

Music Composition & Sound Designer Inaam Haq

Additional Camera Ariel Nasr

Set Dresser Glendon Ray Light

Researcher Emma Savas