

WAR RESISTERS SUPPORT CAMPAIGN

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Amnesty International, Canadian Council for Refugees and MPs Call on Harper Government to Let War Resisters Stay in Canada

Immigration Minister's Remarks Prejudice Fair Process

Toronto—Amnesty International and the Canadian Council for Refugees have written open letters to Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney, expressing their serious concerns about blatantly prejudicial statements by the Minister who is supposed to be responsible for ensuring that all refugee applicants receive due process without political interference.

Minister Kenney was quoted in a Global TV news story that aired on Wednesday night, and a Canwest News Service article that was published on Thursday morning, saying the following about U.S. soldiers who fled to Canada after refusing to take part in the Iraq War:

"We're not talking about draft dodgers, we're not talking about resisters. We're talking about people who volunteer to serve in the armed forces of a democratic country and simply change their mind to desert -- and that's fine, that's the decision they have made, but they are not refugees," said Kenney.

Kenney said he was frustrated by what he called "bogus refugee claimants."

"I don't appreciate people adding to the backlog and clogging up the system whose claims are being rejected consistently 100 per cent of the time," Kenney said.

"Everyone, including war resisters, has a right to expect their applications will be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner," said Lee Zaslofsky, Coordinator of the War Resisters Support Campaign. "Minister Kenney's comments show the Harper government has a blanket policy of opposition to all war resisters which makes it nearly impossible for them to be treated on a 'case-by-case basis' as our government has been leading Canadians to believe they would."

Opposition Members of Parliament are also speaking out about the effect the Minister's statements could have on the outcome of all war resisters' cases. The MPs are calling on the Harper government to respect the will of the majority of Canadians by implementing the motion in support of war resisters that was adopted by the House of Commons on June 3, 2008.

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AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW: War resisters and a representative of Amnesty International will be available for interviews in Toronto. A representative of the Canadian Council for Refugees will be available for comment in Montreal. Libby Davies, Vancouver East MP, and Borys Wrzesnewskyj, Etobicoke Centre MP, will also be available to speak to journalists.

For further information or to arrange interviews, please contact: Lee Zaslofsky, War Resisters Support Campaign, 416-598-1222 and 416-369-0864; or Colleen French, Canadian Council for Refugees, 514-277-7223 ext. 1; or Beth Berton-Hunter, Amnesty International, 416-363-9933 ext. 32 and 416-904-7158 (cell); or the office of MP Libby Davies, 613-992-6030; or the office of MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj, 416-249-7322 and 613-947-5000.