



Paul Dewar

M.P. for Ottawa Centre
Député pour Ottawa-Centre



27 July 2009

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon
Foreign Affairs and International Trade
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0G2

Dear Minister Cannon,

I am writing to you today to express my grave concern over the recent trial and conviction of Bashir Makhtal by an Ethiopian court. I believe there were serious irregularities in the court process that prevented Mr. Makhtal from receiving a fair trial and Mr. Makhtal is now at risk of being condemned to death as a result of this conviction.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. Makhtal is a Canadian citizen who was detained by Kenyan officials in December 2006 and subsequently transferred illegally to Ethiopia where he remains today. After more than two years of isolation and detention Mr. Makhtal was finally brought before first a military court and subsequently a civilian court to face charges related to his alleged high level association with the Ogaden National Liberation Front; charges which Bashir Makhtal repeatedly denied. However, Mr. Makhtal was regularly denied legal council and translation services. The evidence presented by the Ethiopian government in this trial is highly questionable with the civilian judge dismissing nearly all of the prosecution's witnesses as not being credible.

Earlier this year my staff was in contact with the Ethiopian Embassy in Ottawa and was told, prior to Mr. Makhtal being brought before the court, that Mr. Makhtal would be convicted as a member of the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The recent court ruling is the fulfillment of this comment and a further indication Bashir Makhtal was never going to receive a fair trial.

In light of the above facts, I respectfully request that the full consular services be provided to Bashir Makhtal prior to the sentencing hearing and during the subsequent appeal process, and that the Canadian government express, in no uncertain terms, that a death sentence in this case will not be tolerated.

Sincerely,

Paul Dewar, MP
Ottawa Centre

PD/tc/CEP232

c.c. Getachew Hamussa Haliemariam, Ethiopian Ambassador to Canada.

House of Commons
519 Confederation Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel: 996-5322
Fax: 996-5323
Dewar.P@parl.gc.ca

Constituency
1306 Wellington St. W
Suite 304
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 3B2
Tel: (613) 946-8682
Fax: (613) 946-8680

Chambre des communes
Pièce 519, Édifice de la Condédération
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0A6
Tél.: 996-5322
Télééc.: 996-5323
Dewar.P@parl.gc.ca

Circonscription
1306 rue Wellington
Bureau 304
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1Y 3B2
Tél.: (613) 946-8682
Télééc.: (613) 946-8680