

Foreign Affairs and
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Beijing, November 20, 2009

Mr. Rick Casson
Chair, Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr Casson:

At the November 18, 2009 hearings of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Afghanistan, witnesses testified on the transfer of Afghan detainees from Canadian to Afghan custody. During the hearing, some very serious allegations were made. Some touched directly upon my work, that of my colleagues and of the Government of Canada. I would welcome the opportunity to address those allegations and to set the record straight.

In that context, I would like to have the opportunity to appear before the Committee to be certain that the members get a better appreciation of everything that we have done to assist the Afghan authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

In the interest of the Committee's study on this very important issue, I would be available to appear next week to testify on the Government of Canada's actions with regard to the transfer of Afghan detainees.

I can attest to the work that Canadian officials, civilian and military, have done to put in place a very robust system to assist Afghanistan in meeting its domestic and international commitments for the humane treatment of detainees. This includes an interdepartmental Canadian effort to train and build Afghan capacity, and a monitoring regime enshrined in the supplementary arrangement that we signed with the Afghans in 2007. In the process of designing and implementing this new arrangement, we reviewed all relevant reports, documents and analysis.

I can also assure the Committee that I encouraged officials to report freely and honestly, while expecting them to meet the highest standards of accuracy, objectivity and professionalism.

Our officials working in Afghanistan are some of Canada's best public servants. They are working in a war zone. In conducting each prison visit, Canadian officials are putting their own lives at risk, travelling on some of the most dangerous roads on this planet in order to monitor the treatment of those detainees that Canada transferred. We report fully on each visit and, as experience has shown, are ready to act according to the information we obtain. Canada is at the forefront of detainee monitoring in Afghanistan.

We have always recognised that the human rights situation in Afghanistan was cause for concern and have taken important steps to help the Afghan Government and other Afghan institutions to address these problems. Our aim has been to provide coherent evidence based reporting and to develop sound policies to address concerns as they arise.

Sincerely,

David Mulroney
Ambassador of Canada to the People's Republic of China