

Jan 30, 2002

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The Right Hon. Jean Chretien, Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A OA6

Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Terrorism against children and families in Canada

Recently, I travelled from my home country of Lebanon to visit my son in Canada. A number of years ago my son emigrated to your country with dreams of building a better life for his family in Canada. As his mother, I supported him then as I had heard that Canada was supposed to be one of the best countries in the world to live. Certainly Canada was supposed to be free of wars and terrorism that plague our part of the world.

After this latest visit, my opinion of your country has greatly changed. Canada is not the good place to live as I once thought it was. Canada is not the kind of place that I would want my son to emigrate to if given the choice again. Canada is simply not the fair and just place for a father to raise his family.

I have two grandsons, ages 6 and 8, who live in the province of Ontario. My son and his wife are separated. During my visit, my son tried to arrange for me to spend some time with my grandchildren. As with most grandmothers, one of the first things I wanted to see was my grandchildren.

However, my son told me that the mother would not allow the children time to be with me. I was told that because the mother was considered a "sole custodial" parent, she had this right. Even though I traveled thousands of miles to see my family and would have loved to see my grandchildren, the mother kept the children away from me and my son out of spite when they could have spent some time with me rather than being left at home alone. I was only allowed to see the children when my son had short periods of "access" consisting of 1 night every two weeks. The mother did her utmost to keep the children from seeing their loving grandmother, including refusing to pick up her phone. To say the least, I was shocked to learn about how the family justice system in Canada abuses children and their families and treats parents in a biased and unequal manner.

My son has told me that in your country mothers have almost total control over children and that fathers are considered next to worthless in the lives of their children. It seems that the legal system in your country finds it acceptable that one parent terrorize the other parent and family by having what is called "sole custody". This seems to be one big difference between our countries. Our culture embraces family values whereas your court system seems to destroy fathers and their families.

When I did meet my grandchildren, their anger over this situation was clearly evident. They were angry at their mother and angry at the court for putting them in such an unfair situation. They told of being instructed by their mother to create problems while they were at their father's and to say that

they don't want to come to his home. They were terrified and fearful of the mother because from their perspective, their father was rendered powerless by the courts to help them.

My home town of Beirut, Lebanon certainly does not have the reputation of being the most peaceful place in the world to live and our people may not be as wealthy as those in your country, but after seeing what your country does to destroy its own children and families, I can only say that I would much prefer to live in my country where there still is some respect for the family unit and for fathers. What your family courts do to families is almost beyond comprehension in a civilized country. In our country families are important. In our country, families would never have to endure the kind of terrorism that your family courts seem to use against your families.

Your family court system has already turned my grandchildren into angry young boys. Angry children become angry men. Destroying the minds and spirits of children by allowing vindictive mothers to damage children in this way will not create the kind of responsible adults that will contribute to your country and make it stronger. If you allow the family court system to mess up the children you will only breed a generation of children bent on crime and disrespect for the law.

After seeing what your family court system has done to my son and my grandchildren, I am only left to wonder just what is in store for my grandsons when they grow up. The biggest fear I have is the uncertainty of what is going to happen to them when they get older and have children of their own in your country. Will they have their rights and their children stripped from them in the years to come just as I have seen done to my son? It is not reassuring to think what the future holds for my grandsons if they choose to remain in Canada. I hope and pray for their sake that when they are older they will seek to raise their families in some other more family friendly country other than Canada.

Strong families build strong, confident and well-adjusted children. Strong families build strong and proud nations. If the Canadian family court system is any indication of what the leaders of Canada believe in, then clearly they have their priorities wrong. As a grandmother from a part of the world where we understand what terrorism is about, I can say that Canada is no longer the strong and proud nation that I once looked up to and certainly not a place where mothers should send their sons to find a better life. A country with leaders that allow its court system to terrorize its own people is a country heading down the path of eventual moral collapse and economic ruin.

Just look at what your family court system is doing to children and families and ask yourself, is this the kind of Canada that your brave young Canadian men who gave their lives during the wars would have wanted? I think not.

Your comments would be appreciated.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Souad Yahya". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Souad Najjar Yahya, a loving grandmother

cc: The United Nations