

Canadian Manual Has US on Torture List

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Global Research, January 19, 2008

The New York Times 19 January 2008

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

Ottawa - A training manual for Canadian diplomats lists the United States among countries that potentially torture or abuse prisoners.

The manual is an internal document of the Department of Foreign Affairs. A spokesman for the foreign minister confirmed the contents of the manual after news reports about it circulated on Thursday.

The manual appears to contradict the public stance of Canada's Conservative government, which accepts assurances from the United States that it does not mistreat prisoners, including those at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

One Canadian, Omar Khadr, is being held there; he was captured in Afghanistan in 2002.

In an e-mail message, Neil Hrab, a spokesman for the minister of foreign affairs, Maxime Bernier, said the manual was "not a policy document or any kind of a statement of policy" and did not "convey the government's views or positions."

A spokeswoman for the United States Embassy here was quoted by Reuters as saying, "The United States does not permit, tolerate or condone torture under any circumstances."

The manual, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, is used for training diplomats in how to protect Canadians detained by foreign governments from torture and how to handle suspicions that inmates are abused.

The torture training program for diplomats was set up largely because of the case of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian.

He was detained in 2002 by United States officials, who sent him to Syria after reviewing erroneous information from Canada suggesting that he was linked to terrorist activities.

A Canadian inquiry concluded that Mr. Arar was tortured while in Syrian custody. Last year the Canadian government paid Mr. Arar and his family 11.5 million Canadian dollars in compensation.

The government turned the manual over to the Canadian branch of Amnesty International because of a legal action by the group. Amnesty International is challenging Canada's policy of handing over prisoners taken by Canadian troops in Afghanistan to the Afghan government.

The document also lists Israel, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and China as countries suspected of torturing prisoners.

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