

## **Government Response to the Report of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Trade**

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The human rights situation in Saudi Arabia continues to be cause for serious concern, particularly with regards to the use of capital punishment, torture, forced confessions, and the status of women. The Canadian Government has expressed its concern about the overall state of human rights in Saudi Arabia in our statements at both the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and has raised specific human rights cases and concerns in our bilateral dealings with the Saudi government. The Government will continue to monitor the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia and to express its concerns in this area in the future.

Education is an effective means of sharing Canadian ideas and values. Studying in foreign countries allows for exchanges on a person-to-person level. Several thousand Saudi students are presently in Canada, the majority in medical and engineering studies. In 2003, 428 visas were issued to Saudi students and by November 2004, 417 student visas were granted. The Government places much importance on educational exchanges and has a fully dedicated regional educational officer mandated to recruit students from the region to Canada placed at the Canadian Embassy to the United Arab Emirates. The total number of Saudi visitors to Canada has also increased, from 5246 persons in 2003 to 6423 for the period January-November 2004.

The Government hopes to host a parliamentary exchange with a delegation led by the President of the Shura Council from Saudi Arabia in 2005.

### **RECOMMENDATION 11**

**The Government of Canada should at the same time continue to impress upon the Government of Saudi Arabia the need for it to conduct a full investigation of the allegations of miscarriage of justice and torture made by Canadian citizen William Sampson, and the need for Saudi Arabia to comply fully with its international human rights obligations. Until justice is done, and seen to be done, bilateral relations will not be able to develop as constructively as we believe is in the mutual interest of both countries.**

The release and pardon of Canadian-British dual-citizen William Sampson, along with six other detainees, from custody in Saudi Arabia was the result of cumulative Government efforts over the entire course of his detention. On numerous occasions, the Government has strongly called on Saudi Arabia to honour its obligations, as a Party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture, by fully investigating any credible allegations of torture and providing redress to the victims. The Government has also consistently expressed its human rights concerns with Saudi Arabia through Canada's country statements at the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and intends to continue to voice such concerns in the future, as warranted.

### **RECOMMENDATION 12**

**In engaging the Government of Egypt in political dialogue, Canada should consistently encourage Egypt to institute democratic reforms and to respect basic standards of internationally recognized human rights, including in the necessary common efforts to curb political violence and religious extremism. Such efforts should also address underlying conditions of poverty and social exclusion.**