

# **The Mohamud File: What did Harper know and when did he know it?**

October 6, 2009

OTTAWA – A comprehensive examination of government documents in the Suaad Mohamud case shows that Prime Minister Harper knew about the case as early as July 1st – and despite pressure from her local MP Joe Volpe and the media, still took no steps to resolve the situation, Liberal MPs said today.

“These documents reveal a shocking indifference by Mr. Harper,” said Mr. Volpe. “They show government officials scrambling to keep media and elected officials at bay – while doing nothing to help Ms. Mohamud – with Prime Minister Harper in the loop for a full six weeks of inaction.”

Documents made public today indicate that the Prime Minister was likely made aware of Ms. Mohamud’s case on Canada Day, while the Privy Council Office, Minister Cannon and Minister Van Loan knew about the case nearly a month earlier.

“Mr. Harper and Ministers Cannon and Van Loan were aware of this case and by all accounts asked no questions to get to the bottom of it, said Liberal Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae. “Even when officials wondered if the right policy was in place, the Prime Minister and his cabinet left no opening for wrongdoing in their public comments.”

Documents made public by the Liberals today show that the government left the onus on Ms. Mohamud to prove her identity throughout, despite similarities between photographs, providing ample identification, and appeals from her family in Toronto.

“The photos don’t lie,” said Liberal Consular Affairs Critic Dan McTeague. “Photographic experts have argued that it is the same Ms. Mohamud, albeit gaunt and tearful, in the photo taken of her in Kenya as appears in her passport photo. In this case, Harper government officials got it wrong from the start, and now they are on trial for their ongoing campaign to smear a Canadian citizen.”

No proactive measures were taken to prove Ms. Mohamud’s identity, even after initial concerns among officials that wrongful judgement could open the government up to prosecution. Even after repeated inquiries by Mr. Volpe and media on her behalf, finger-printing and DNA options were considered on July 3rd, but dismissed as too difficult to obtain or too expensive. She came home on August 15th after winning a court decision that ordered a DNA test.

## Background:

### Timeline of Events

[http://www.liberal.ca/pdf/docs/061009\\_mohamud\\_brief.pdf](http://www.liberal.ca/pdf/docs/061009_mohamud_brief.pdf)

**May 21, 2009** - Ms. Mohamud prevented from flying out of Kenya and accused of being an imposter.

**May 28, 2009** - Canadian High Commission sends a letter to Kenyan authorities stating Ms. Mohamud is an imposter and surrenders her passport to them "for the purposes of prosecution." [LIB-1]

A DFAIT Case Note is circulated with photocopies of Ms. Mohamud's Certificate of Canadian Citizenship, Ontario Health Card, Ontario Driver's Licence, and Royal Bank Client Card. [LIB-2]

**June 5, 2009** - First media inquiries made concerning Ms. Mohamud's arrest.

The Privy Council Office and Minister Cannon's Director of Communications approve media messaging provided by a spokesperson for DFAIT. [LIB-6, 7]

DFAIT agrees to give a "heads up" to the Canada Border and Services Agency (CBSA), headed by Hon. Peter Van Loan. [LIB-5]

**June 12, 2009** - Joe Volpe speaks with Lawrence Cannon and Parliamentary Secretary Deepak Obhrai and sends a fax to Obhrai to express concerns about the handling of Ms. Mohamud's case. [LIB-8]

**June 18, 2009** - Joe Volpe sends a letter to Cannon with copies to Obhrai and the High Commission asking for answers on efforts to resolve the case. To date, no written responses have been received to this correspondence. [LIB-12]

**July 1, 2009** - Cannon's Director of Communications sends two "urgent" emails – at 8:57 AM and 9:14 AM – asking for media lines for the Prime Minister in response to a Toronto Star article that morning. Later that same morning, the Prime Minister held a media event on Parliament Hill as part of the Canada Day celebrations. [LIB-14,18]

**July 2, 2009** - The Privy Council Office once again approves media messaging following inquiries from the Toronto Star, CBC and others. [LIB-19]

**July 3, 2009** - Officials from DFAIT and the High Commission begin questioning whether fingerprinting or genetic testing is warranted. The downside of genetic testing is described as "expensive (\$500+ ?) and time consuming." [LIB-23]

**July 7, 2009** - DFAIT staff request an "update" on Ms. Mohamud's file at Minister Cannon's request, to be provided by the next day. [LIB-22]

**July 14, 2009** - In advance of a meeting with Cannon where the case was to be raised, Cannon's Director of Communications reacts to a news report entitled "DFAIT Info Incorrect: Woman stranded in Kenya gets no help from Ottawa":

"What's going on here? I said many weeks ago the lines don't cut it, we need more information. Anything new? Will anyone be accused? A passport revoked? I am going to the Min/DM [Minister/Deputy Minister] meeting and this will be raised." [LIB-25]

Later that day, DFAIT was removed as the department responsible for the case.

DFAIT staff write: "To give you an update from DFAIT, after this morning's lovely and completely accurate article, it has been determined that this issue should be led by CBSA as it is considered a border issue." [LIB-26]

**July 24, 2009** - Mr. Volpe writes letter to Minister Van Loan as he now has exclusive carriage of file requesting update on file.

**August 14, 2009** - Mr. Volpe writes a letter to Van Loan requesting a copy of the CBSA report that investigated and concluded that Ms. Mohamud was an imposter, and assurances that the CBSA's subsequent investigation would be made public. [LIB-28]

To date, following additional letters, the government has yet to make public either the initial report or findings of the subsequent investigation. [LIB-30, 31]

**August 15, 2009** - Ms. Mohamud is permitted to return back to Canada after DFAIT asks Kenyan authorities to drop charges and they issue her an emergency travel document. DNA testing proved she was the real Suaad Hagi Mohamud.

**August 18, 2009** - Prime Minister Harper states during a press scrum:

"When we became aware of the case last week, we asked our officials in various departments to give us some information. Obviously there as some troubling information here. We're glad that this individual has come back to Canada. I will just tell you that it's a complex case. I have asked my officials for a thorough review of the matter. I'm expecting to get some basic answers to this. And then based on the first set of information we get, we'll then decide what further inquiry we do have to do in this matter." (CPAC, August 18, 2009)