

RACIAL PROFILING

Racial profiling is a double standard by which individual members of communities are considered responsible for every action of every other individual in their community and legislation is passed and legitimized to criminalize their civil liberties and human rights.

Increased Budget for Detentions

New budget allocations made by the federal government in December 2001 as part of the security response included increased amounts for immigration detention. Most of the money, however, is not being used to detain security-related cases. The big increase is in detention on identity grounds. It is a well-known fact that many refugees fleeing state persecution are unable to obtain travel documents and will frequently surrender their forged documents willingly to border officials.



Canadian Border Services Agency

On 12 December 2003, Prime Minister Paul Martin split Citizenship and Immigration Canada, transferring enforcement functions to the newly-created Canada Border Services Agency, which reports to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Among the functions transferred is the Pre-Removal Risk Assessment, which, far from being an enforcement function, is actually a mechanism to protect individuals who may face death, torture or other forms of persecution if removed. Having refugee claimants processed by an enforcement agency, sends the racist message that refugee claimants are a threat to public safety."

Bill C-18

This was the third time the government tried to get this piece of legislation through Parliament. The bill would have given the government the power to use secret evidence to strip a Canadian of citizenship and deport them "if the person has demonstrated a flagrant and serious disregard for the principles and values underlying a free and democratic society". There is currently talk of re-introducing the bill.

Direct Backs

On 27 January 2003 Citizenship and Immigration Canada introduced a new policy on "direct backs" at the US-Canada border. The signing of the safe third country agreement was used as a rationale to control the arrivals of hundreds of Pakistani and others fleeing the Special Registration Program and increasing racial profiling in the United States. Many claimants directed back were detained by the US authorities.

Security Certificates

Security certificates allow the government to deport a permanent resident or other non-citizen. Security certificates have been used to arbitrarily detain Muslim men on "secret" evidence in complete defiance of their basic civil rights, with no chance of bail for refugees, detention can be indefinite, and neither the person detained nor a defence lawyer is allowed access to the heart of the evidence. At least six people are currently being held on security certificates, all men, five of them Muslim and Arab.

Safe Third Country Agreement

On December 29, 2004 the Canadian and US governments implemented the Safe Third Country Agreement. The main effect is that asylum seekers who land in the US (a common transit point when travelling to Canada) would no longer be allowed to make their way to Canada to claim refugee status. This is yet another way to create a fortress in North America similar to Fortress Europe, reducing the number of refugee claims in Canada by an estimated 40%.



Operation Thread

In August 2003, Canadian newspapers were full of the stories of a group of Muslim men who had been arrested and detained as suspected terrorists under Operation Thread. Eventually there were a total of 22 Pakistani men and 1 Indian man. Incriminating details included a student pilot with a flight course over a nuclear plant and several young men living together in sparsely furnished apartments. It soon became clear that the suspicions were unfounded, with the RCMP backing away from the accusations first and immigration officials later acknowledging that there was nothing to it. But by then the damage was done: the detainees had been publicly labelled terrorist suspects and most have since been deported.