

# CANADIAN-BORN OMAR KHADR FACES TAINTED US TRIAL

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✘ [Editorial](#) , 16 November 2009

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Prime Minister Stephen Harper should demand that Khadr get equal treatment. Or better yet, be shipped home. Instead, the PM is acquiescing in this travesty. Federal lawyers were in Canada's Supreme Court last week trying to persuade the court to defer to Ottawa's dubious handling of this file, which includes refusing to ask for Khadr's repatriation. Harper's obtuseness is embarrassing.

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U.S. President Barack Obama's administration deserves credit for announcing Friday that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the self-described mastermind of 9/11, and four alleged accomplices will get the benefit of a fair trial. But prosecutors see these as airtight cases. In five other cases, including Khadr's, they are less sure of a win. Obama has wrongly chosen to put this group before military judges and juries. That won't hurt the odds of convictions.

On Friday, the American Civil Liberties Union slammed this approach while welcoming "due process and the rule of law" for the Al Qaeda five. The ACLU pointed out that Khadr and others face an "illegitimate" and "unsalvageable" military trial process that has been criticized for its "disregard for basic due process rights."

✘ Canada's Federal Court rightly ordered Ottawa to ask for Khadr's return, after finding that Canadian officials who colluded with the U.S. breached his constitutional right not to be treated in a cruel and unusual manner. He's *still* being treated unfairly. But Ottawa argues in the Supreme Court that "the realm of diplomacy" gives it the unfettered right to let human rights abuses go unchecked. We hope the Supreme Court decides otherwise.

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Kelly McParland. *The one-sided world of Khadr coverage*

## Updated Citizenship Guide to Canada: Good, Bad and Ugly

By Chantal Hébert, [The Toronto Star](#), 16 November 2009

Reading the 1995 edition of the federal Citizenship guide, an immigrant to Canada might have been forgiven for thinking he or she was signing up to join the Boy Scouts or the Girl Guides.

After all, few countries instruct their future citizens to take care not to litter, to turn off their lights and taps and to help their neighbours.

Mind you, the sheer notion that there might actually be neighbours to help must have been comforting to some prospective citizens for the booklet also insisted heavily on the sparseness of Canada's population.

Readers of the old guide also could only wonder whether French had become one of Canada's official languages through sheer luck of the draw. Perhaps because it was drafted around the time of the last referendum, the booklet was silent on anything remotely related to the unity issue.

On that score, it read like a 1950 procreation manual, the kind that waxed on about the so-called miracle of life without ever touching on the specifics of how babies came to be conceived.

The new Citizenship guide makes a serious effort to address many of the shortcomings of the previous version.

Off the top, it introduces the concept of three founding people: aboriginal, French and British. For the first time, Métis leader Louis Riel, the 1960 Quebec Quiet Revolution and the two referendums on sovereignty are introduced to new Canadians.

The booklet connects some, if not all, of the dots between the rise of Quebec nationalism and the subsequent advent of the Official Languages Act. It describes Quebec's quest for autonomy as a live element of the Canadian debate. The House of Commons' 2006 nation resolution is mentioned.

The authors tiptoed their way through this previously ignored minefield. The same cannot be said of the section that deals with gender equality. For the first time, a federal government spells out limits to Canada's cultural tolerance and uses uncharacteristically strong language to do so.

The booklet warns that "barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, 'honour killings,' female genital mutilation, or other gender-based violence" are punishable crimes in this country. In the more innocent Canada of 1995, such an admonition would have been unthinkable.

A number of luminaries were consulted on the new guide and not all of them are charter members of the Conservative family. But they are unlikely to have provided the input for an appeal to new Canadians to consider joining the armed forces. That section of the guide reads like a recruitment

poster from the two world wars.

The old guide was so bland as to leave no lasting trace in the minds of its readers. This one exhibits significantly more editorial direction. It does highlight Canadian features that are less liberal than the previous edition. Gay marriage, for instance, did not make the cut and the section on the environment has been cut to a paragraph.

But it is also more honest about the complexities of Canada and more candid about the fact that it does not always get everything right, including, at various times in its history, fair treatment of minorities.

Ultimately, the immigrants who will read the new booklet will be introduced to a less sanitized version of Canada than they would have through the pastel version drafted by the Liberals in 1995. For the many Canadians who doubt that Stephen Harper has the potential to bring about transformative change to the country's fabric, it should be required reading.

