

Summary of SIRC Reports

On April 7, reports into the official complaints of two refugees whose landing status had long been delayed due to security checks were released to the complainants and their counsel.

They were written by an appointed member of the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC), the civilian overseeing or watchdog body of the Canadian Secret Intelligence Service, CSIS.

CSIS has responsibility for conducting security checks on refugees to Canada, and for monitoring activity it believes to be a threat to Canadian safety. (The process is explained in the sheet “Security Screening of Refugees and Immigrants.”)

Despite numerous sections of the two reports that have been “severed” or covered over (the complainants and their counsel were issued “expurgated versions”), the Chair of the SIRC tribunal is unequivocal in his findings. He recommends both Sami Durgun and Suleyman Goven for landing, which means he considers them eligible to become citizens or permanent residents of Canada. Further, he makes extensive recommendations regarding, among others:

- ◆ the way CSIS conducts its operations on behalf of the department of Citizenship and Immigration;
- ◆ the lack of an appropriate definition of “membership;”
- ◆ the way “terrorist organization” is defined;
- ◆ the current lack of clarity in the process of interviewing and reporting on security investigations.

Sami Durgun, a 37-year-old Turkish citizen of Kurdish origin, first claimed refugee status on March 1, 1989 – eleven years ago. Suleyman Goven, 43, also a Kurd from Turkey, claimed protection as a Convention refugee on arrival to Canada on April 8, 1991 – nine years ago. Because they have not been landed, they have lived in “limbo” ever since – Sami unable to accept good jobs which he was offered, Suleyman unable to get Canadian credentials for his engineering skills and education. They have experienced high degrees of frustration, anger and depression as a direct result of this

ordeal. (Accompanying sheets give a chronology of events for both men, give further details about their stories and their actions).

Upon arrival in Canada, Suleyman Goven was involved in the creation of a centre for Kurdish Canadians. As a direct result, he was suspected of being a member of the pro-Kurdish party the PKK, a faction of which has been involved in activities that can fairly be considered terrorist. SIRC's report distinguishes between support for the PKK in a generalized way, shared by millions of Kurds, and direct membership which would involve the following of orders. The report states that there is no evidence to believe Goven ever held such membership.

Sami Durgun was not involved in the creation of the centre, but was caught in the net that saw any participation in the centre as support for the PKK. The SIRC report calls it "ludicrous" to consider Durgun a terrorist.

Further, it extends that finding to recommend that CSIS needs better definitions of membership and terrorist organization to prevent the delays Sami Durgun and Suleyman Goven experienced.

SIRC's investigation was begun as a result of letters of complaint issued by Goven and Durgun on August 1, 1997, through their representative Mary Jo Leddy, to CSIS Director Ward Elcock.

Leddy is the Director of Romero House for Refugees. She is, in turn, a member of the Southern Ontario Sanctuary Coalition, which has long been supporting Goven and Durgun.

◆ **See What the reports say for specific statements**