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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

CAIR-CAN SUPPORTS PRIME MINISTERS EFFORTS TO RELEASE CANADIAN HELD CHINA

(OTTAWA, CANADA NOV 16, 2006) The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) supports the Prime Ministers efforts to seek the release of Canadian citizen, Huseyin Celil, currently imprisoned in China.

Mr. Celil was first detained in Uzbekistan on March 26, only to be later deported and imprisoned in China in June of this year. Mr. Celils sister has stated that her brother is currently being held in a prison for political prisoners after being sentenced for 15 years. China does not recognize his Canadian citizenship.

Celil is a known and vocal human rights advocate in defence of the Uighur minority in the Xinjiang region of northwest China. According to Amnesty International Canada, the Uighur people have been subject to numerous, well-documented human rights violations at the hands of the Chinese government.

When commenting yesterday on a cancelled meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao at the APEC summit, Prime Minister Harper made a point of referring to Mr. Celil. The Prime Ministers meeting is currently being rescheduled.

When a Canadian citizen is taken from a third country and imprisoned in China, this is a serious concern to this country, the Prime Minister said.

I think Canadians want us to promote our trade relations worldwide. We do that, but I dont think that Canadians want us to sell out our values, our beliefs in democracy freedom and human rights. They dont want us to sell that out the almighty dollar, he added.

Mr. Celil has been held under arrest for 8 months, in two countries, without being charged under a recognizable criminal offence. China has yet to respect his right to have access to Canadian diplomats and consular officials.

The Prime Ministers efforts to see that Mr. Celil is released and allowed to return to Canada needs the support of all Canadians, said CAIR-CAN Executive Director Karl Nickner. Developing strong economic ties with China is vital to ensuring that Canadas growing interests in the Asia-Pacific region are protected. However, this cannot be done to the detriment of fundamental human rights, he added.

CONTACT: CAIR-CAN Communications and Human Rights Coordinator Sameer Zuberi at 613-795-2012, or CAIR-CAN Executive Director Karl

453 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Tel: (202) 488-8787

Fax: (202) 488-0833

www.cair.com

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