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CIJ News,

The Iranian Canadian Congress (ICC) wrote a letter published by CIJ on May 2nd. I, Medi Shams am writing on behalf of the ICC Members Association (ICCMA) to second only the first paragraph of that letter, which reads as follows: *"On March 28st, 2017, a letter from Shabnam Assadollahi titled "Urgent Plea from an Iranian dissident re: Bill S- 219" was published on your media outlet. Shabnam Assadollahi alleges that the Iranian Canadian Congress (ICC) is a lobby group for the Iranian government. These accusations are false and defamatory."*

While the ICC is not a lobby group for the Iranian government, the Board of Directors has behaved in a manner resembling agents of the Iranian Regime. They have distorted the Iranian community's need for consular services into a campaign for opening the embassies. By opposing sanctions against the hard-liners of the Iranian regime the ICC Board of Directors have discounted the suffering of those who escaped the tyranny of the Iranian regime and have taken refuge in Canada. Seeking expediency for financial transactions and improved relationships between financial institutions, even if done in good faith, would give way to money laundering. Furthermore, the signs of instability that have recently appeared within the Iranian government have prompted affluent individuals to move their financial investments from Iran to a more secure country like Canada.

Regretfully, the ICC Board of Directors' overt lack of respect for the not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-religious nature of the organization has resulted in a dramatic decline in the organizations membership. Currently, the ICC has a mere 400 members of a community of 300,000 individuals. It is the purpose of the ICCMA to better inform the Canadian society, media, and politicians in order to establish a more accurate opinion about the political views and requests of Iranian Canadians.

Sincerely,

Medi Shams on behalf of Iranian-Canadian Congress Members Association

ICC: Allegations that Iranian Canadian Congress is a lobby group for Iran are "false and defamatory"

Posted by: [CIJnews Staff](#) May 2, 2017

Tayaz Fakhri, Chair – Public Relations & Communications of the Iranian Canadian Congress (ICC), has sent on behalf of the Board of Directors of ICC the following response to Shabnam Assadollahi's letter to senators that was **published** on CIJnews:

On March 28st, 2017, a letter from Shabnam Assadollahi titled "Urgent Plea from an Iranian dissident re: Bill S- 219" was published on your media outlet.

Shabnam Assadollahi alleges that the Iranian Canadian Congress (ICC) is a lobby group for the Iranian government. These accusations are false and defamatory. The ICC is a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-religious grassroots organization that serves to safeguard and advance the interests of Iranian-Canadians.

The Iranian Canadian Congress is supported by a large community of Canadians from Iranian background who believe in the power of diplomacy and peace. Despite Assadollahi's claim that only a small number of Iranian-Canadians oppose Bill S-219 and support economic and diplomatic engagement with Iran, a parliamentary petition initiated by the Iranian Canadian Congress received nearly 16,000 signatures from Iranian-Canadians nationwide imploring the Canadian government to re-establish formal diplomatic relations with Iran. In recent months thousands of our community members have contacted their senators and demanded that they vote against Bill S-219. The strong opposition towards the bill in the community is fueled by the intention to establish diplomacy, peace and reengagement between Iran and Canada.

Furthermore, sanctions and diplomatic disengagement from Iran will primarily harm Iranian-Canadians. An estimated 300,000 Iranian-Canadians will be deprived of consular services and representation by Canadian officials in Iran, and exposed to further discrimination by financial institutions in Canada. A lack of diplomatic engagement in addition to sanctions on Iran will also prevent Canadian businesses from benefiting from the enormous business opportunities that exist in trade with Iran. For example, in the years between 2010-2014, Canadian businesses lost between \$1.18 and \$4.69 billion due to sanctions on Iran.

The Iranian Canadian Congress maintains its position that to advocate for human rights in Iran and around the world Canada must implement a policy of constructive engagement through diplomacy and dialogue. Additionally, Bill S-219 ignores the universal nature of human rights and our obligation as a member of the international community to be fair and unbiased in promoting respect for human rights around the world. Bill S-219 ignores gross violations of human rights by other countries in the region and around the world, some of whom have violated multiple UN resolutions. Respect for human rights is a universal obligation and should not be affected by political bias or become a currency for special interests and political manoeuvring. Additionally, passing Bill S-219 will create a legislative precedent that may lead to subsequent bills for imposing similar sanctions on other human rights violators, some of which are Canada's allies and trade partners in the region. This action will have significant and lasting impacts on Canada's relations with its partners around the world and its impact has to be considered and analyzed thoroughly.

The ICC believes that in order to achieve peace, safety and prosperity for all Canadians, and to safeguard the interests of Canada in the Middle East, Bill S-219 should be rejected.