



## Ottawa university slammed for firing terrorism suspect

BY JOANNE LAUCIUS, OTTAWA CITIZEN    JULY 29, 2009



Carleton University in Ottawa "cravenly caved to external pressure" when it relieved terrorism suspect Hassan Diab of a summer teaching job, says the executive director of the union that represents university professors.

**Photograph by:** Sketch by Ronn Sutton, The Ottawa Citizen

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OTTAWA — Carleton University in Ottawa "cravenly caved to external pressure" when it relieved terrorism suspect Hassan Diab of a summer teaching job, says the executive director of the union that represents university professors.

There were no questions about Diab's qualifications, and both the provost and the dean signed off on the contract hiring after consulting with the university's lawyer, said James Turk, executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, which represents about 65,000 university teachers, librarians and researchers.

The university reversed its decision to hire Diab to fill in for a few weeks in an introductory sociology course and "summarily fired" him after the Jewish advocacy group B'nai Brith released a statement critical of the hiring, said Turk.

Diab was terminated without consulting with the dean or the departmental chair, he said.

"They did this solely because of external pressure," said Turk. "It's an abdication of the responsibility of universities to be insulated from these kinds of pressures."

Carleton University declined Wednesday to comment on the decision to terminate Diab, pointing to a

statement released Tuesday saying the lecturer was being replaced "in the interest of providing its students with a stable, productive academic environment that is conducive to learning."

The Lebanese-born Diab is accused in France of killing four people and injuring dozens more in the 1980 bombing of a Paris synagogue. He faces an extradition hearing in January and is under virtual house arrest.

Diab must wear an electronic monitoring bracelet, must report regularly to the RCMP and can't own a cellphone.

Turk said the allegations against Diab have not been tested in court and the judge was satisfied that Diab would be out on bail and working.

Meanwhile, the union that represents Diab said it will grieve the decision to terminate him.

"He's innocent until proven guilty," said CUPE local 4600 organizer Stuart Ryan.

Ryan said Diab was delivering his fourth lecture in the course Tuesday when a letter was deposited in his mailbox notifying him of his dismissal.

B'nai Brith Canada's executive vice-president, Frank Dimant, said the organization did not approach Carleton University or its administrators about firing Diab.

"'Cravenly caved to external pressure.' If that means the sense of morality of Canadians, if this means their sense of outrage at this situation, then I think it's a good thing for Canada," said Dimant, who applauded Carleton for its actions.

"When teachers are accused of inappropriate actions whether inside or outside the classroom, the normal action is to take a leave of absence," said Dimant.

In its statement, B'nai Brith said Canadians "should be concerned that an alleged terrorist, accused of committing such heinous acts, will be teaching our youth at a leading Canadian university.

"We find it deplorable that university officials believe there is nothing wrong with employing Diab. The safety and security of the community as a whole, and of the Carleton University campus in particular, are of great concern to us."

Turk said the Canadian Association of University Teachers is considering censuring the university, a step that has not taken place in decades although proceedings have been initiated in dozens of cases.

When a university is censured, the Canadian Association of University Teachers urges academics not to work for the university, and advises organizations not to hold conferences there.

"The only acceptable alternative is to apologize and reinstate him. Otherwise the integrity of Carleton will be questioned across the country," said Turk. "Everyone understands people will be displeased. If you cave in to that, you undermine academic freedom."

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