



## Activists and Carleton students rally in support of Hassan Diab

By Elissa Mendes - November 17, 2022

Protesters gathered Sunday outside the Ottawa Human Rights Monument to demand the Canadian government prevent the **extradition** of Carleton professor Hassan Diab.

Diab, a Canadian citizen who holds a doctorate in sociology, will face **trial** April 2023 in France in connection to a 1980 bombing outside of a Paris synagogue. The court's decision to try him has proven highly controversial, as a previous attempt to prosecute Diab for the same bombing was ultimately dismissed in 2018 due to a lack of evidence.

Although Diab spent more than three years in prison in France, he was never formally convicted and his charges were dropped. According to the CBC, French authorities have not yet **requested** Diab's extradition to France, and he could be tried in absentia.

In 2009, Diab was dismissed from instructing at Carleton amid public scrutiny of his case, but he has since returned to teaching part-time at the university.

The university did not return a request for comment in time for publication.

French prosecutors' case against Diab has also been plagued by findings that threaten its case, including the discovery that Diab was writing university exams in Lebanon and could not have been in Paris on the day of the bombings.

### Students rally for support

The rally was supported by Carleton students enrolled in SOCI 4071: Community Engaged Sociology. In the course, students work with local organizations to research social issues and complete an advocacy project. One group of SOCI 4071 students used social media and class presentations to raise awareness of Diab's case among Carleton students and staff.

Course instructor Deborah Conners said her students are working to collect signatures on a **petition** to refuse any future request for Diab's extradition. Diab's supporters hope the petition will encourage Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to reconsider the nature of Canada's extradition process, which has sparked debate among human rights advocacy groups.

Isabella Redmond, a SOCI 4071 student, said working on Diab's case has been a rewarding project.

"When we listened to Diab actually speak in our class, we were able to understand his case on a more personal level," she said. "My previous sociology courses have been theory based, and that removes the personal aspect of it."

Social justice advocate and freelance writer Matthew Behrens praised the students' efforts at the rally.

"I can think of no better example of the success of education than Conners' class," Behrens said.

## **Extradition remains unclear**

In 2008, when Diab last faced **extradition**, the process was complex and lengthy as the evidence that can be presented within Canadian extradition courts is very limited.

This rendered Diab's lawyers incapable of introducing sufficient evidence in his defense, according to Bessa Whitmore, a member of the Hassan Diab support committee and a professor at Carleton's School of Social Work.

"The judge in Diab's extradition case expressed that he felt he had no option other than to allow Hassan to be extradited, even though the extradition process is deeply flawed," Whitmore said.

To date, the petition urging Trudeau to protect Diab from extradition is just a few signatures away from reaching its 8,000-signature goal, and Conners has reported receiving an overwhelmingly positive response to her students' campaign.

“One of the things that the [Hassan Diab support committee] warned us about was that we might find some pushback from people who strongly felt like he was guilty,” Conners said. “But we haven’t heard a peep from anybody about that.”

Susan Spronk, the equity committee co-chair for the Canadian Association of University Teachers, said Diab’s treatment exemplifies systemic discrimination and racism in particular.

“I don’t think this would be happening to Hassan if he looked like me,” Spronk, who is white, said.

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*Featured image by Elissa Mendes.*