

Government ignored proof of Mohamud's ID: lawyer

CTV.ca News Staff

Published Thursday, August 27, 2009 12:27PM EDT

The lawyer for a Canadian woman who was stranded for months in Kenya wants to know why the federal government ignored evidence that could have cleared up the confusion about her identity, weeks before she was allowed to return to Canada.

Julian Falconer says there are many ways the government could have checked whether Suaad Hagi Mohamud -- a 31-year-old Toronto woman who travelled to Kenya to visit her mother -- was the person who she said she was.

"Suaad Mohamud had identification and there were easy ways to have checked on that identification, such as phone calls to her employer, phone calls to her family to confirm that she was travelling. None of these things were done," he told CTV's Canada AM during an interview from Ottawa on Thursday morning.

RELATED LINKS

[Woman detained in Kenya suing Ottawa for \\$2.5M](#)

[Gov't. to issue docs to another stranded Canadian](#)

[Diplomat involved in passport fiasco back in Canada](#)

PHOTOS



Suaad Hagi Mohamud testifies before the standing committee on foreign affairs on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2009.



Suaad Hagi Mohamud testifies before the standing committee on foreign affairs on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2009.



Julian Falconer, lawyer for Suaad Mohamud, speaks on Canada AM from CTV's studios in Ottawa, Thursday, Aug. 27, 2009.

The Somali-born Mohamud was stopped in a Nairobi airport on May 21, when it was suggested that she did not look like the person in her four-year-old passport photo.

After going to the Canadian High Commission to prove her identity using various pieces of identification -- including an Ontario driver's licence, her health card and a Canadian citizenship certificate -- officials voided Mohamud's passport and sent her to Kenyan authorities for prosecution.

During Mohamud's ordeal, she was forced to spend eight days in a Kenyan jail, faced court proceedings and ended up having to pay a bond to stay out of jail. Her travel documents were also seized.

"What is apparent is that a presumption of guilt appeared to attach to Ms. Mohamud from the moment she sought help from the High Commission," said Falconer, when speaking with Canada AM. "And it's important to understand, not only did they not help, they actively undermined her."

Falconer said the Canadian High Commission told Mohamud that it had conclusively investigated her case and considered her to be an impostor.

"That was utter nonsense, they didn't conclusively investigate a thing," Falconer said.

And after she had been stranded in Kenya for two months, the government went to her workplace in Toronto to speak to her co-workers, more than three weeks before she returned to Canada.

"Co-workers identified photographs of her -- in other words, positively identified her on July 22," Falconer said.

But Mohamud still could not convince the government of her identity.

"They were sitting on a positive ID, yet they still participated in an exercise of seeking DNA and everything else after that," Falconer said.

Falconer said he has many questions about Mohamud's treatment and the reasons why the government appears to have had a "bias against this woman."

When a DNA test proved Mohamud's identity and she was allowed to return home. She flew home to Toronto two weekends ago.

On Wednesday, Mohamud went to Ottawa to speak to the foreign affairs committee about the incident.

Mohamud is now suing the federal government for \$2.5 million and she has demanded an apology from Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon.

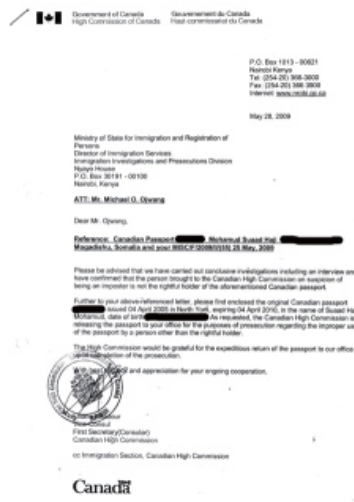
Her lawyers are also asking for a public inquiry.

But Falconer said that if an inquiry happens, it should be handled by independent investigators and not by people involved in the incident.

"They talk about an inquiry by the same people that bungled the investigation, there should be an independent inquiry," Falconer said.

With files from The Canadian Press

Login



A copy of the May 28 letter the High Commission of Canada sent to Kenyan authorities that suggested Suaad Hagi Mohamud was not who she said she was.



Suaad Hagi Mohamud, left, kisses her 12-year-old son Mohamed Hussein upon arriving at Pearson International Airport in Toronto on Saturday, August 15, 2009. (Darren Calabrese / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

Write a comment

0 Comments

SortSubscribe

Use of this Website assumes acceptance of [Terms & Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)