



Open letter to the Prime Minister

## **Mister Trudeau, we must talk about Nathalie Morin**

As Canada is welcoming a young Saudi women wishing to escape the repressive laws of her country against women, attracting the attention of the world over this act of generosity and compassion, we question the little interest shown by your government for the fate of a Canadian citizen and her four children stuck in this same country for thirteen years.

And yet, for all these years, her mother, Johanne Durocher, has been in the media, trying to raise consciousness with the public and has been questioning your government in order to free her daughter and grandchildren from Saudi Arabia.

For thirteen years, Nathalie Morin has been cut off from the world, locked in an apartment in Dammam and the victim of physical, psychological and sexual violence. She is raped, beaten, starved, under the terror of her male guardian. She struggles for her survival and that of her four children who are also mistreated by their father (three have been born in captivity), She has no access to services, survives from charity, has not seen a doctor in years and remains detained.

This is the story of Nathalie Morin, prisoner of a country that is barely concerned by human rights and even less for those of women. Her story entirely fits with the values you defend internationally by defending the liberation of Raïf Badawi and by welcoming the young Saudi, Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun.

With regards to the asylum accorded to Ms. Al-Qunun, you declared "That is something that we are pleased to do because Canada is a country that understands how important it is to stand up for human rights, to stand up for women's rights around the world". We thus ask you: Is this also true for your country's citizens who are prisoner of a repressive regime abroad? Why are so few efforts made for five of your fellow

citizens who are living hell on earth in Saudi Arabia?

When Ms. Freeland, standing next to Ms. Al-Qunun at the Pearson airport in Toronto, explains that "Human rights, absolutely including women's rights, are very important. It's a priority for us in our foreign policy and it's a priority for our domestic policy. We are working for women's and girl's rights here in Canada and throughout the world", we tell her that the story of Nathalie and her children is a blatant case of violation of these rights that are so important to her. These fundamental rights that she vindicates for all human beings, five Canadians are deprived of these and for all too many years.

So as not to be misconstrued, we fully support the aid accorded by Canada to Mr. Badawi and to Ms. Al-Qunun. We do not know the fate Saudi Arabia has for them and are convinced that Canada must welcome them.

However, the case of Nathalie Morin is also one of violation of human and women's rights. Why does your government not work for her return to Canada as it does for these two Saudis?

For thirteen long years, Nathalie Morin is living a nightmare and her only wish is to return to her country. Her first son, Samir, was born in Canada. He was only three when he saw Montreal for the last time, but he dreams of returning home.

Nathalie Morin requires the intervention and support of the Canadian government in order to escape a country that keeps her from coming home with her children. Some years ago she was given the possibility to leave Saudi Arabia, without her children. Of course she refused. What mother would leave her children in a country that offers them little future and no freedom, a country where her daughter is condemned to live the life that she is suffering and that Ms. Al-Qunun fled?

For several months we have been without any news from Nathalie. She is entirely cut off from the outside world and no longer has access to a phone or computer. Since the deterioration of relations between Canada and Saudi Arabia last summer, the Canadian Embassy in Riyadh has not been able to contact her. How are Nathalie, Samir, Abdullah, Sarah and Fowaz? We have no idea... Nathalie is alone in the world. She can no longer express her distress, as the young Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun did before Canada came to her rescue.

Dear Prime Minister, in a few days you will be meeting Ms. Ensaf Haidar, the wife of Raif Badawi, in Sherbrooke. We ask you to also meet with Johanne Durocher, who has been fighting for thirteen years for her daughter and grandchildren to return to Canada. She lives in Longueuil, less than twenty kilometres from your constituency's office. You

will have the occasion to show her and all Canadians that women's and human rights are as important to you when they concern your own citizens as they are when they involve foreigners.

### Nathalie Morin's Support Committee

(1) "Canada grants asylum to Saudi woman who escaped to Thailand", Mike Blanchfield, The star, January 11th 2019.

(2) Televised declaration by minister Freeland at Toronto's Pearson airport January 12th 2019 captured by Radio Canada.