

Law professor's testimony contributes to human rights tribunal victory

A decision in favour of a Canadian Muslim man barred from flight training at a Montreal facility because he had been placed on U.S. security watch list is a victory for human rights and Canadian due process, according to a UWindsor law professor who testified at his tribunal.~

"This is recognition of the fact that racial profiling and stereotyping do not contribute to national security," said [faculty of law professor Reem Bahdi](#), who spent a day testifying last May at a Quebec Human Rights tribunal on the case of Javed Latif. "This is the first case in Canada to take Islamophobia seriously and to recognize that harm was done because of it."

In a ruling announced Tuesday, the tribunal awarded Latif \$319,000 in damages, ruling that his human rights were violated when Bombardier Inc. barred him from its flight training facility. At the time of the incident in 2004, he had been a pilot for 25 years and had flown over U.S. airspace many times. He had applied for training under his Canadian pilot's licence but was rejected because of the American threat label.

Tribunal judge Michele Rivet criticized Bombardier for taking the U.S. designation on faith and not objectively assessing whether he really posed a security threat, noting that the company could have consulted Transport Canada or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

According to a [Globe and Mail account of the proceedings](#), much of the Quebec Human Rights Commission's case hinged on the Bahdi's testimony. She spoke at length about how Islamophobia is reflected in official U.S. policy as well as in attitudinal research.

"There are policies in the U.S. that specifically target or disproportionately impact on Arabs and Muslims," she said. "Those policies have been proven to be ineffective because there are no clear criteria for being added to a watch list and there's no accessible mechanism for challenging inclusion on a watch list."

Bahdi compared Latif's case to Maher Arar's and said even though he wasn't deported and tortured, he suffered from this false accusation.

"This was an innocent man whose life was torn apart because someone labeled him a security threat," she said. "His reputation was severely tarnished."

— *Stephen Fields*



Law professor Reem Bahdi's testimony helped win redress for a Canadian pilot rejected for flight training.