

June 6, 2024

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
Canada  
SECU@parl.gc.ca

By email

To the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security:

We are writing to you today to express our deep concerns with the speed with which Bill C-70, the *Countering Foreign Interference Act*, is currently being studied by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. A rushed process for a bill of such scope will undermine the ability to hold a full and meaningful study of the bill, risking the adoption of laws that will violate the Charter-protected rights and freedoms of people in Canada.

We recognize the importance of addressing harassment, threats and violence against people, including when enacted by foreign governments in order to repress the exercise of fundamental rights or engagement in democratic processes.

However, the changes proposed by this legislation go much further. If adopted, this bill will bring extensive changes to Canada's national security, intelligence and criminal justice systems, in addition to creating a foreign influence registry of considerable, albeit uncertain, scope. As a consequence, this bill will have significant impacts on the lives and fundamental rights of people in Canada, including risks of increased surveillance, diminished privacy, limits on freedom of expression and freedom of association, undermining due process in courts through the use of secret evidence, and racial, religious and political profiling.

Introduced barely a month ago, with the Foreign Interference Inquiry ongoing, the bill is scheduled to fly through committee study within a week. This is faster than even the rushed 2001 study of the first *Anti-terrorism Act*, which was in committee for a month. The result is that organizations and individuals who would have requested to appear, or would have submitted written briefs, will be unable to do so on such short timelines. Developing specific amendments to suggest by this Friday's deadline is nearly impossible.

Rushing the parliamentary process, supported by a state of suspicion and ardent calls to protect national security, can lead to serious, negative and long-lasting consequences. An expedited study also risks missing ways the bill could be improved to better address issues of foreign interference.

We urge you to work with your colleagues in the House of Commons to extend this important study in order to ensure a fulsome debate and discussion of its wide-ranging provisions.

Signed by:

Amnesty International Canadian Section (English speaking)

BC Civil Liberties Association

British Columbia Gurdwaras Council

Canadian Association of University Teachers

Canadian Civil Liberties Association

Canadian Federation of Students

Canadian Muslim Lawyers' Association

Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council

Centre for Free Expression

International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group

Ligue des droits et libertés

National Council of Canadian Muslims

OpenMedia

Ontario Gurdwaras Committee