

Canadian Woman Continues to Fight to Obtain a Passport

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In the fall of 2012, 20-year-old Damian Clairmont of Calgary received a new Canadian passport. He received it despite the fact the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) had been monitoring him and knew he intended to fly to Turkey and then go into Syria to join an armed extremist organization, according to information his mother, Christianne Boudreau, was told by CSIS agents.

In sharp contrast, in the spring of 2016, the Canadian government forced Boudreau to surrender her Canadian passport. Unlike her son, who had been indoctrinated then recruited to join a terrorist group, since her son's death, Boudreau has worked with other parents internationally to create and promote educational programs to counter extremism.

Dr. Daniel Koehler, director of the German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies, described her role:

"Christianne Boudreau was one of the first mothers to speak out publicly against violent radicalization with her own painful personal experience of losing her son Damian. Together with Christianne, I built up a network of affected parents around the world – the Mothers for Life Network, which currently includes about 150 families from 11 countries. It is the only international parental self-help group addressing the needs of those parents. I also trained Christianne to be a family counsellor to help other parents of children undergoing violent radicalization."

Mothers for Life works with the important goal of countering extremist ideology and violence that has exploded in the West as well as the Middle East. It uses human connections and sharing among families who have experienced radicalization, not just lectures and lofty seminars.

Boudreau has travelled and spoken at many places across Canada and internationally. She says the problem is not Islam or religion. A writer who covered Boudreau's visit to the Islamic Institute of Toronto in an article titled "[Christianne Boudreau's visit to Toronto left us inspired](#)," reported: Chris was asked, "Do you blame Islam and Muslims for the death of your son? Everyone held their breath. I couldn't look her in the eyes. 'No, I don't blame Muslims or Islam for what happened to my son. I blame misguidance and bad choices. It is ideology similar to that of gangs and cults. It is the same. They prey on young impressionable adolescents and exploit them.'"

Boudreau has also [criticized](#) the intelligence service of her native Canada. When CSIS

agents first contacted her in January 2013 and told her they had been monitoring Damian for nearly two years, she asked why they had not warned her about his real intentions. Why did they not prevent him from getting a new Canadian passport?

Blamed CSIS for not doing more

Image on the right is from National Post



After Damian's death, Boudreau said she thought CSIS had some responsibility for his actions and death. In May 2014, she wrote a letter to CSIS: "We, as a family, have a right to know what has happened, and how our system has failed us."

She described her efforts to get answers, how a CSIS agent had asked her to stop speaking out and asking questions. Finally, almost six months later, CSIS director Michel Coulombe responded to her inquiries.

Coulombe did not answer her specific questions, yet concluded that "the service acted professionally and within its legislated mandate."

Regarding the warning of a CSIS agent, Coulombe evaded the issue, saying: "We have found no indication of an attempt to interfere in your relationship with other parties."

Regarding the disturbing consequences of radical indoctrination and violence, Coulombe said CSIS "is conducting research to better understand this phenomenon in Canada."

This "research" is small comfort to a woman whose son was misled into joining a violent terrorist group, perhaps killing innocent Syrians and being killed himself.

Despite the CSIS subterfuge and request that she not speak publicly about the matter, Boudreau continued her work reaching out to other families, speaking out against radical extremism and violence.

Canada takes away Boudreau's passport

Fifteen months later, in February 2016, Citizenship and Immigration Canada acted in a way that definitely restricted and interfered with "her relationship with other parties." While Boudreau and her other son, Lucas, were visiting family in France, the Canadian government ordered her to surrender her Canadian passport. Boudreau and her son were stuck in France, dependent on the generosity of family, for the next 18 months.

Finally, in November 2017, when Lucas's father was dying of cancer, the Canadian embassy in France provided temporary emergency documentation so that Boudreau and her son could return home to Calgary.

The official reason Canada took away her passport

Boudreau has tried repeatedly to get her passport back. The official reason it was taken away and cannot be returned is that she provided "false or misleading information" in the passport application for her son Lucas. The "false and misleading" information was that she did not include the name of Lucas's father on the passport application and did not disclose

court orders from 2004-2007 that defined the father's visiting rights with the child, who was born in 2004.

Lucas's birth certificate does not include the father's name because the father wanted no responsibility, according to Boudreau. The applications for Lucas' previous passports in 2007 and 2010 were filled out the same way without raising any objection by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. In addition, there was a court order and signed agreement between Boudreau and the father in January 2016 that confirmed a summer visit with the father.

'Very few people have been denied passports'

Ray Boisvert, former head of CSIS counter-terrorism, was previously asked why CSIS did not prevent Damian Clairmont from receiving a passport if CSIS knew about his radicalization and intentions. [Boisvert responded](#) that denying a passport to a Canadian citizen was an infringement on freedom of movement and required solid evidence. "There have been very few people who have been denied passports because the threshold is so high. And rightfully so."

If Boisvert's assertion is true, then why has CIC acted so harshly against Boudreau? The violation in the passport application caused little or no harm. The complaint by the biological father was resolved in January 2016 by court order and agreement. This was not an issue of parental joint custody because Boudreau had been the sole parental custodian of the child since his birth.

Boudreau's effectiveness in countering extremism

This decision is not only harming Boudreau and her children. It is also hurting the international campaign against extremism and violent radicalism.

As Koehler, the director of the German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies stated in correspondence, "(Boudreau)'s work depends on her ability to travel, meet with other parents, participate in workshops, educate about the threat of violent radicalization and help affected families around the world. She was a main driving force behind the Mothers for Life Network and her absence from these important activities have caused serious harm to global issue of helping families in need."

Dr. Amar Amarasingam, senior research fellow at the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society at University of Waterloo, has said in support of Boudreau:

"Since the loss of her son Damian, Christianne Boudreau has been tirelessly working to try to prevent other young men and women from traveling abroad to fight. She traveled around the world to meet with other parents and families, gave talks and conducted workshops. Especially now, with ISIS fighters and families being captured by Kurdish forces and parents in Western countries trying to get in touch with them, (Boudreau)'s activism is much-needed. She is trusted by families the world over and would be an invaluable resource today. I'm not too familiar with the particulars of her case, but her ability to travel is fundamental to her work and I hope it gets sorted out soon."

In 2016, as Boudreau was having her Canadian passport revoked, the CBC produced a documentary describing her good work. Producer Gail McIntyre and director/writer EileenThalenberg have recently written, "Christianne Boudreau was the focus of our film, A

Jihadi in the Family, which was broadcast on CBC – TV in 2016. Over a period of two years, we covered her important work as founder and driving force behind the movement Mothers for Life. This organization was set up to support families and to inform educators, the public and policy-makers about the early signs of radicalization and how to prevent it. Her work in this area was far-reaching – uniting mothers in North America and Europe.... Without her passport, she is unable to continue with her high-profile work. This not only impacts anti-radicalization efforts, it severely affects her ability to support her herself and her son.”

Public Appeal to return Boudreau’s passport

Boudreau, who was born in Toronto, is still being denied a Canadian passport. She deals with the anguish of knowing her son died in a foreign land. She has the pain of not knowing what he might have done with others in the terrorist group. She has difficulty finding a job when employers easily see and identify her as the “jihadi’s mother.” She was punished by being left in a foreign country without a passport for a year and a half. She has been mentally and emotionally abused by Canadian government authorities. Why is this being done and who is benefiting from this?

A petition to “Return Christianne Boudreau’s Canadian Passport!” has been launched and can be seen [here](#).

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