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# A credit to Canada, or a threat?

## Refugee U of A researcher gives feds an ultimatum: 'Give me landed status or declare me a threat to national security'

DON RETSON  
Journal Staff Writer  
EDMONTON

A University of Alberta scientist alleged to be a terrorist by Canada's spy agency is challenging the immigration minister to declare

him a threat to national security.

Saren Azer, a world-renowned asthma researcher and Kurdish refugee, has filed a document in federal court in Edmonton in a bid to force Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan to grant him landed-immigrant status or declare him a threat.

Azer, 33, was jailed three times in his native Iran and tortured for championing Kurdish culture. He still bears a 10-cm scar on his abdomen from iron-bar beatings he endured in jails in Iran and Turkey.

In Canada, he believes the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has tapped his phone, broken into his apartment as well as those of friends and stolen

computer files.

CSIS agents, he said, have interrogated him, his colleagues, friends and co-workers.

"This behaviour from 1995 to date has caused me tremendous emotional and mental stress and guilt that others, for no reason, have become the subject of CSIS's surveillance," he said in an affidavit.

"I have not had a moment of privacy for this period of time including the most intimate of times with my fiancée."

His lawyer, Shirish Chotalia, filed an application for judicial review in September.

"We're very disappointed that she (Caplan) is forcing us to do this," said Chotalia.

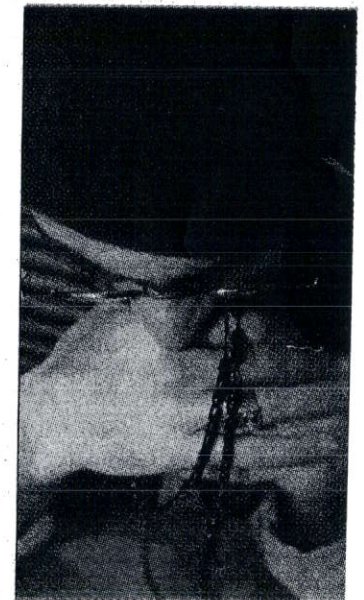
She had hoped to hear back from the minister by now.

Azer came to Canada in June 1994, and obtained refugee status the following January. In February 1995, local immigration officials told him he would receive permanent resident status in 12 months.

But the months dragged into years, despite letters of support from dozens of people, including MPs David Kilgour and Rahim Jaffer.

In March 1998, Azer said he realized CSIS was alleging he belonged to the Kurdish terrorist group, PKK, which has carried out bombings in Turkish cities.

See AZER / A14



JASON SCOTT, THE JOURNAL

Saren Azer clutches his prayer beads as he contemplates his future.