

# CSIS probe of researcher 'conjecture'

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The Canadian Security Intelligence Service has been criticized by a federal watchdog for hounding an Edmonton academic called a "world-class" asthma researcher by his University of Alberta superiors.

The researcher, a 34-year-old Kurdish refugee, asked to be identified only as "Ahmad" because he fears family members in his Middle Eastern homeland will be persecuted if his name is publicly revealed.

Ahmad arrived in Canada in June 1994 carrying a false passport. But because he was jailed three times in his former country and tortured for championing Kurdish culture, Immigration officials granted him refugee status.

Later, CSIS investigated Ahmad and alleged he was violent and had ties to the pro-Kurdish group PKK, a faction of which has carried out bombings in most of Turkey's major cities.

Last month, Ottawa's Security Intelligence Review Committee, which oversees CSIS, ruled there was no evidence Ahmad "has ever been anything other than a peaceful, law-abiding individual." The committee said a CSIS-prepared brief on Ahmad was "of extremely poor quality" and "full of conjecture."

The watchdog agency ultimately recommended that Citizenship and Immigration Canada grant Ahmad permanent resident status.

But in the office of his lawyer, Shirish Chotalia, Ahmad recounted Thursday how the "humiliating" effects of the investigation hurt his academic career.

He spoke of intimidation at the hands of CSIS during interviews, and of being followed by a man who hid while snapping his photograph.

"I would say, 'Brother, if you

need a picture of me, I can give it to you. You don't have to go behind trees,'" said Ahmad.

He said his phone was tapped and his home broken into several times, with the burglars taking only computer disks, pictures and files. He said he is under medical care for several conditions aggravated by stress.

And because the spy agency's probe prevented him from ob-

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taining resident status, Ahmad could also not travel to the United States to accept honours for his research in pulmonary medicine.

Though he advocates an independent Kurdish homeland, Ahmad insists he is not a PKK member. He appealed to Elinor Caplan, the federal immigration minister, to grant him permanent resident status.

Immigration officials could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Chotalia, who produced 32 letters supporting Ahmad from prominent human rights activists, academics and politicians, said CSIS's investigation "doesn't meet Canadian standards of judicial fairness."

Dr. Dick Jones, the university medical department's director of graduate education, has known Ahmad for three years and wrote one of the letters. "It's a shame (Ahmad) hasn't been able to travel out of Canada, because he's world-class," Jones said Thursday.

"He's one of those people we should go after rather than give a hard time to."