

**MAHER ARAR
11TH ANNUAL POLITICAL SCIENCE DISTINGUISHED LECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, 18 APRIL 2007**

A SAMPLING OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The 11th Annual Political Science Distinguished Lecture delivered by Mr. Maher Arar was held at the Winspear Centre, in Edmonton's Arts District. It was the Department's main town and gown event, a way to show its commitment to public intellectuals, to connect with communities, to contribute to public debate and dialogue and to help cultivate a well-informed and engaged citizenry. The lecture by Mr. Arar was attended by some 1,300 people.

Below are included a sampling of some of the community's feedback, sent to Dr. Malinda Smith, event organizer and Speaker Series Coordinator, and Dr. Linda Trimble, Political Science Chair:

"I was in attendance at the Maher Arar lecture this evening. I wish to commend you, your Department and the University for this event. It was extremely well done. The CART [Communication Access Realtime Translation] service was just amazing. The sequence of speakers was very well crafted. All speakers were exceptional. The venue was exquisite. What a great service from our university. It ranks up there with International Week. I am a senior and chair of a social action group made up of seniors concerned about advancing the civil society here and beyond (SALT). We are sometimes briefly discouraged by contributions of our institutions in tackling social justice issues, ecological integrity and related matters. You did your university proud in my view."

"Malinda, that was clearly the high water mark in the history of the department. And I can only imagine how hard you (and Nisha) have worked to do this and the rest of the speakers' series too. Thank you; it was a very important night."

"Thank you Malinda for working so hard to do such an important and moving event, as well as a fantastic speaker's series! I am happy to be in the department I am because of the engagement of people like you, and I would say the Arar talk was the most important public event our department has ever supported!"

"As a fourth-year Honours political science student, I just wanted to thank you and the rest of the department for putting together the spectacular Arar lecture last week. I've been trying madly to juggle my Islamic politics and analysis of political science finals, and much of what was said brought coherence to many of my ideas; coherence and also direction. So, job well done. Thanks."

“Congratulations Malinda on a job well done. The Maher Arar event last night was of high calibre and I really enjoyed the way it was student focused. The political science department is one of the only department’s in this University that is committed to unearthing and critically assessing the promises and failures of multiculturalism. With your leadership I am sure we will continue to improve and refine this imperfect Canadian system... making it better for all.”

“Just a short note to congratulate you on the Arar event. Several lawyers from my office (as well as several lawyers from other offices) attended the lecture. To a person, we were all impressed with the programme and in particular, Mr. Arar’s lecture. The lecture series is a testament to the important role the University plays in our community in bringing to light pressing questions about the rights of citizenship and the role of the State. In particular, this year’s lecture highlighted that such questions are not just a theoretical exercise, but have significant implications for all of us as Canadians. At any rate, I wanted to congratulate you on producing a powerful and (based on turnout and media coverage) highly successful event. I also wanted to thank-you for the hours of effort that you and the organizing committee must have committed to ensure such a flawless evening.”

“I just wanted to send a note of congratulations on the Maher Arar event. I should note that the ... was also in attendance with me and he too thought the event was outstanding. Beyond being well-organized and a very enjoyable evening, I think that credit must be given to the Department of Political Science for pursuing a public discussion on the question of citizenship. Mr. Arar was a powerful speaker and his message of accountability was not only moving, but empowering. I think this is exactly what an annual lecture should accomplish. I must say that I was proud to be a product of our Department and in some small way associated with the event.”

“Congratulations on organizing an excellent series, and on bringing [Maher] Arar. It was important to hear him speak on many levels. Thanks for introducing him to us - I would have liked to have talked more but I know it was a meet and greet too. Congrats again. It was a very impressive evening.”

“...I appreciated the Maher Arar lecture at the Winspear on 18th April 2006... I write to you to let you know in concrete fashion the difference events like this make in shaping the socio-cultural life of Edmonton. The Arar case has marked an important moment in Canadian political life, challenging notions of citizenship, belonging and nationality in a multicultural country. By bringing Maher Arar to Edmonton, the Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, gave us the opportunity to meet and talk to this courageous man, this man of conviction, who refused to be silenced by injustice. But the event was not just the feting of an individual; it was a reminder that as citizens and residents of Canada, we all need to bear witness when stories of trauma and the triumph over them are told. I was especially touched that the department had thoughtfully decided not to have a Q&A at the end of this very moving event: I think sometimes we just need to listen and honour the tale. I would like to commend the department on doing

what it should do, and in this case, done so well: be the political conscience keepers and record makers of the nation. I hope the department will organise more such events.”

“Congratulations! What an amazing night this was... extremely professional, commanding of respect, incredibly succinct with your words and altogether a genuine leader. I found all of the speeches moving but especially Maher’s counsel and Maher himself. One cannot imagine the way in which your entire being would be altered after an event of such magnitude. I loved how he revered his wife and acknowledged how women are stronger than they are given credit for. It was very sobering to me that people can survive such horrors and still come out the other side, sane. It makes one’s own concerns a lot less important... Thank you for keeping me informed. I am inspired to participate more than I have been. I enjoyed being in such a intellectually astute forum and realized that I am lacking stimulation in that area. Again, congratulations on a fine night that came to conclusion without any glitches - it was worth any Academy Award.

“...the entire evening was overwhelming well done. Hopefully you are basking in some of that glory!”

“It was an incredible success; that it was appreciated by University and community members alike is evidenced by the very full house at the Winspear Centre.”

“I just wanted to say congrats for an excellent event last evening [18 April]! Thanks for bringing Maher’s story to us.”

“Bravo to Malinda and to Nisha, Tara, and Linda! That was an amazing event, and I feel privileged to have met Maher Arar and Julian Falconer.”

“...a quick note of thanks for and congratulations on last night [18 April]. It was a splendid evening and an important event. Thank you for all the work you did to make that happen.”

“Thank you for organizing the Arar lecture. It was profound. And your [Smith] words were incredibly crisp and piercing.”

“Mr Arar - thank-you so much for the invitation. His presentation was one of the most moving I have ever heard.”

“I want to thank you once again for giving us the opportunity to be involved with this absolutely stellar event. It combined everything that an engaged scholarship aims for. Your immense effort and wisdom made it happen, to all our benefit. It is an evening we will never forget.”