



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01510**

BY: **MR. JOHNS (COURTENAY-ALBERNI)**

DATE: **JUNE 13, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSTIA FREELAND**

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Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Foreign policy**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

A hostage taking is a horrible and unimaginable ordeal for families and loved ones. Canada takes hostage takings of its citizens very seriously.

Terrorist hostage cases are treated as a priority and resources are mobilized accordingly with dedicated experts.

In all hostage cases, Canada works closely with foreign authorities and its allies, at every level, to free Canadians and bring them home. Canada's response also includes support from trained negotiators and investigators; intelligence gathering and assessment; and consular support to families and to victims once released.

The Government of Canada's policy against paying ransoms is longstanding. The Government of Canada is firm in its resolve to deny terrorists the resources they need to conduct attacks against Canada, its allies, and its partners. Furthermore, the payment of ransom creates greater incentive for terrorists to resort to hostage-taking, increasing the risks for Canadians traveling and working abroad, and thereby would endanger the lives of every single one of the millions of Canadians around the globe.

When pursuing the safe release of a Canadian, the government always assess possible options. That being said, the Government of Canada will not disclose operational planning before, during, or after a case, including on hostage rescue operations. To do so would jeopardize current and future efforts and put the lives of hostages and others at risk.

Family support remains an essential part of our response to these situations. Our family support officials strive to work as closely as they can with families to assist them during these trying ordeals. We know there is a lot to be done to improve the flow of information to families, and we're committed to making every effort to share as much information as possible. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Global Affairs Canada provide advice and support to hostage families over the course of a case, mindful of Canadian law and Canada's international legal obligations.

The Government of Canada regularly reviews its practices and procedures in complex cases such as these with an eye to identifying areas for improvement. Recent efforts have included interviews with family members who received direct support from officials during a case, as well as consultations with close international partners and other experts on best practices in supporting hostage families. The Government of Canada is actively applying these lessons learned.