

Sign on Statement in Support of Deepan Budlakoti and against Double Punishment

Under Canadian immigration law, non-citizens who are convicted of criminal offenses are punished twice: first when they are sentenced for the crime; and a second time by being declared ‘inadmissible’ and deported from Canada.

We believe this policy of “double punishment” is unjust. It applies a double-standard and punishes people twice for the same thing. We reject double punishment.

Double punishment is often the direct result of racial profiling. The targeting of racialized and immigrant communities puts a disproportionate number of people of colour in the criminal justice system. This can lead to deportation when people don’t have citizenship. We reject racial profiling.

Double punishment reinforces a negative perception of immigrants; implying a link between criminality and immigration. It is a way for jingoistic politicians to win cheap votes. We reject this link as racist and false.

Double punishment, like the rest of immigration law, treats certain people as ‘undesirable’ or ‘disposable’; throwing them out of the country when it no longer has use for them. They are often sent, with few resources, to places where they have little or no connections. We uphold the inviolable dignity of all immigrants.

Double punishment treats other countries, often former colonies, as dumping grounds for its ‘deportees’. However, these people are at least in part the product of Canadian society; their choices structured by its racisms, violent exclusions and structural poverty. We believe Canada should take responsibility for its own.

The case of Deepan Budlakoti exposes the injustice of double punishment in an extreme way. Deepan was born in Canada. His entire family lives in Canada. He grew up believing he was a citizen and held a Canadian passport stating he was Canadian. However, an obscure part of Immigration law allowed the Canadian government to contest his citizenship because of his parents’ alleged status at his birth and thus, when he got in trouble with the law, to punish him twice for the same thing.

Deepan is now facing deportation to India, where he has never lived, has no family, no ties and of which he has little knowledge. Moreover, India does not recognize him as a citizen and has refused to issue a travel document for him.

Because of this situation, Deepan remains indefinitely under strict conditions, including a curfew and the requirement to live with his parents. He has no status and needs to apply for a work permit in order to work and is denied access to basic social services.

Deepan is a Canadian and a member of our community, and we stand with him as he fights to remain with his family, friends and community in Ottawa and to uphold his full dignity. We reject the unjust and racist policies that seek to dehumanize and throw him out of our community and the country.

We demand that Deepan be immediately released from the conditions imposed on him and that his citizenship be restored to him without delay.

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