

Appendix A: Cast of Characters

The Toronto 18

Listed here are short descriptions of the members of the Toronto 18, their involvement in the group, and the particular significance of their cases. They are organized into the two plots that eventually emerged once the group splintered in March 2006.

The Parliament Hill Plot (Scarborough Group)

The members of this group intended to storm Parliament Hill with guns and behead prominent politicians including then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The groups' activities consisted primarily of military-style training camps and attempts to procure funding and weapons. The group was infiltrated at an early stage by a confidential informant named Mubin Shaikh, who provided much of the insight and testimony about the inner workings of the group.

Fahim Ahmad

The leader of the Parliament Hill plot, Ahmad, was a young father and ideologue who created and led the original Toronto 18. He organized two training camps where he attempted to radicalize his young recruits with propaganda videos and teach combat skills. After Zakaria Amara broke with the main group, Ahmad continued to act as the leader of his plot, though he struggled to obtain funds and weapons. He pled guilty partway through his trial and was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

Steven Vikash Chand

As a former Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) reservist, Chand was the only member of the Toronto 18 with military experience. He helped Fahim Ahmad set up and oversee the training camps and served as a "sniper" during paintball exercises. He was consulted for his opinion on a potential safe house. When money became an issue, he introduced Ahmad to a friend who ran bank fraud schemes as a potential source of revenue for the group. He pled guilty and was sentenced to ten years.

Mohammed Ali Dirie

Dirie was originally arrested at the U.S. border trying to smuggle handguns into Canada and sentenced to two years. He used his time in prison to seek out new recruits and weapon suppliers. Dirie was committed to the cause and concerned about the motivation of other recruits. Ahmad planned to hand leadership over to Dirie on his release. He pled guilty to his terrorism charges and was sentenced to seven years. After his release, he breached his peace bond and travelled to Syria to join ISIS, where reports indicate that he was killed.

Amin Durrani

Durrani attended both of Ahmad's camps and served as a secondary leader. He led marching drills and posed alongside Ahmad in a video recorded at the second camp. When Ahmad scouted a potential safe house with Shaikh and Chand, Durrani was also present. He also offered to recruit new members to the group, though there is little evidence that he actually did. He pled guilty and was sentenced to seven years and six months.

Asad Ansari

A former University of Toronto Student, Ansari attended the camps and offered to provide his computer expertise to help the group. He struggled with the physical tasks at the camps but helped Ahmad with video editing and computer service. He was convicted by a jury and sentenced to six years and six months. He lost an appeal of his conviction in 2015.

Jahmaal James

James spent little time with the rest of the group. In November 2005, he travelled to Pakistan, where he intended to meet up with a contact and receive training at a terrorist camp so that he could return to Canada and train the others. However, he became ill and remained that way for most of his trip. He returned to Canada in March 2006 and was disappointed with Ahmad's leadership, so he distanced himself from the group. He pled guilty and was sentenced to seven years.

Nishanthan Yogakrishnan (N.Y.)

The youngest member of the group to serve time, Yogakrishnan turned 18 in January 2006, between the two camps. In fact, his name was originally

hidden from publication, and he was tried as a youth. He was considered an enthusiastic and able recruit after physical trials at the first camp and came under Ahmad's wing. His primary involvement was a string of shoplifting, stealing camping equipment and supplies for the group. He was arrested at least twice for this behaviour. He was found guilty and sentenced to two years and six months, which he appealed unsuccessfully.

Qayyum Abdul Jamal, Yasin Abdi Mohamed, Ahmad Ghany, and Ibrahim Aboud

Charges were stayed against the four other adults in the Parliament Hill Plot on April 15, 2008, nearly two years after the arrests, in exchange for signing peace bonds. Jamal was a janitor at the mosque attended by most of the members and by far the most senior member at 43 years old. Mohamed accompanied Dirie on his trip to buy guns in the U.S. but was reportedly far less fanatical than Dirie. Ghany attended only part of the first camp. Aboud was barely 18 at the time, and he was arrested two months after the other 17.

The Youth

There were three youth in the Toronto 18 whose names have never been released. The youngest was 15 years old. Their activities varied, but mostly they attended the training camps and accompanied Nishanthan Yogakrishnan on shoplifting missions. The charges against each of them were stayed.

The Bomb Plot (Mississauga Group)

The four members of this group planned to plant a series of bombs in and around Toronto, targeting CSIS headquarters, the Toronto Stock Exchange building, and a military base. They gathered materials to build fertilizer-powered shrapnel bombs and assembled them in a rented warehouse. The operation was infiltrated by an informant named Shaher Elsohemy, who supplied them with inert material instead of fertilizer.

Zakaria Amara

The leader of the bomb plot, Amara, was a young father who worked at a Canadian Tire gas bar. Originally Fahim Ahmad's second-in-command, he split with Ahmad and the main group around March 2006 over concerns

about Ahmad's efficacy and credibility as a leader. He was arguably the most effective member of the group, successfully building a remote detonator out of cell phone parts and obtaining three tonnes of (inert) ammonium nitrate for explosives. He was sentenced to life in prison, and his sentence was upheld on appeal.

Shareef Abdelhaleem

Uniquely among those found guilty, Abdelhaleem had a stable career and a substantial income. A computer engineer with a six-figure income, he served as a connection point between Amara and the fertilizer supplier (a police informer-turned-agent named Shaher Elsohemy). His plan was to profit from the bombings, taking advantage of the stock market chaos that would result from a terrorist attack. Abdelhaleem pleaded entrapment in his defence on the grounds that Elsohemy was a former friend of his with whom he had a turbulent relationship and who received compensation to act as an agent.¹ The Court rejected this argument, and ultimately, he was sentenced to life in prison.

Saad Khalid

Khalid was a high school friend of Zakaria Amara and only 19 years old when he was arrested. The industrial unit where the group planned to store their bomb-making material was rented under his name. Along with Gaya, he was to be the driver of a van carrying the explosives to their target on the day of the attack. Khalid was reportedly a foot soldier rather than a leader: he was not even aware that Abdelhaleem was involved in the plot. He pled guilty and was sentenced to 14 years. The Crown appealed the sentence, and the Ontario Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 20 years.

Saad Gaya

At age 18, Gaya was the youngest member of the bomb plot. His role was similar to that of Khalid, taking orders from Amara and performing various tasks. He helped build crates for holding ammonium nitrate and was arrested unloading the fertilizer truck. He gained attention for his clothing, which had the words "Student Farmer" printed on them as a cover story

¹ R v. Abdelhaleem, (2010) O.J. No. 5693 at paras 60-63.

for the purchase. He pled guilty and was initially sentenced to 12 years, which was increased to 18 years on appeal.

Supporting Cast and Other Key Figures

Mubin Shaikh

Shaikh was inserted into the Toronto 18 at a banquet hall dinner, first acting as a confidential human source for CSIS and then becoming a confidential police informant for the RCMP. He attended the first camp as well as many key meetings between Ahmad and Amara. Shaikh's testimony was the most complete picture of the inner workings of the group, and it was relied upon extensively throughout the Toronto 18 trials. He later wrote a book about the experience.

Shaher Elsohemy

Elsohemy was a former friend of Shareef Abdelhaleem and was approached by the latter in early 2006. Elsohemy's uncle owned a chemical business, and Abdelhaleem considered him a possible fertilizer supplier for Amara's explosives. CSIS and the RCMP approached Elsohemy about acting for them, and Elsohemy became a human source for CSIS, a police informer for the RCMP and finally, on May 10, 2006, a police agent so that his electronic communications could be wiretapped. He provided testimony and information against the members of the bomb plot.

“Talib”

A self-identified fraudster, Talib offered Ahmad advice on how to defraud banks in a mortgage scheme to raise money for the group. The proposed plan involved using “strikers” – people with good credit ratings to apply for loans which could then be cashed out. Talib claimed to have run this con successfully in the past using “white girls” – blonde women with addiction issues who looked presentable but were sufficiently desperate to engage in such activity.