

Canada's baffling exile

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Why won't Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government bring Abousfian Abdelrazik home? The Montrealer was arrested in Khartoum in 2003 for suspected Al Qaeda ties, at the behest of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, his lawyer Yavar Hameed contends. People who said they were CSIS agents questioned him. Yet he was freed in 2004, rearrested in 2005 and freed again in 2006. Despite being "essentially exonerated," he remains stuck in Sudan.

Canadian officials refuse to issue Abdelrazik a passport, Hameed told reporters yesterday. Nor will they help get him off a United Nations terror suspect list, or the international "no fly" list. And they never took up a Sudanese offer to fly him home on a private plane.

The oddness doesn't end there. Although Liberal and Conservative governments have had "nebulous security concerns" about Abdelrazik the Canadian embassy in Khartoum let him stay there last night, Hameed said. And Ottawa loans him \$100 (U.S.) a month.

This looks incoherent, at best, and demands an explanation.

Abdelrazik once knew Ahmed Ressay, who planned to blow up a U.S. airport, but says he knew nothing about the plot. He was also known to suspected terrorist Adil Charakaoui. And the U.S. claims he was associated with an Osama bin Laden lieutenant, which he denies.

Whatever Ottawa's suspicions, Abdelrazik has been convicted of nothing. He is a Canadian abandoned in Sudan, as Maher Arar was in Syria. He should be brought home. If he poses a security threat, he can be dealt with here. He should not be left an exile forever.