

Committee calls on Cannon to let Abdelrazik appear in Ottawa

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A parliamentary foreign affairs committee has passed a unanimous motion calling on the federal government to allow a Montreal man stranded in Sudan for six years as an al-Qaeda suspect to testify in Ottawa, a New Democrat MP said Wednesday.

Paul Dewar, who has championed the cause of Abousfian Abdelrazik, presented the motion to the 47-year-old's defence lawyers at a press conference in Ottawa.

The NDP committee member told reporters it is now up to Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon to decide whether to grant Abdelrazik a special passport to return to Canada — something Dewar said Cannon has invoked his special powers as minister to prevent on a previous occasion.

"Mr. Cannon is a servant to Parliament," Dewar said. "As a servant of the committee system, what we're asking is the minister to comply with the motion."

Abdelrazik was arrested and detained while visiting his mother in Sudan in 2003. For the last year, he has been living in the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum.

Both the RCMP and Canadian Security Intelligence Service have cleared Abdelrazik of any terrorist connections, but the Conservative government refuses to issue him travel documents to return home because his name was added to UN Security Council list banning travel for terrorist suspects.

Calling his case "complex," Cannon has previously said Abdelrazik must get himself removed from a United Nations blacklist before he can return to Canada.

But Canadian media reports have quoted UN officials as saying Canada can repatriate Abdelrazik any time it wishes, whether or not his name is on the UN list.

"There is a way," the NDP's Dewar said Wednesday. "We could do it tomorrow and have him come home."

Abdelrazik's lawyers have argued in Federal Court the government has violated his right to mobility under Section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

His Ottawa lawyer, Yavar Hameed, told reporters several Canadian groups acting in support of Abdelrazik's previous request to appear before the committee have already purchased a ticket for him to return on June 12 and have offered to escort him along the way.

The groups include Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Canadian Postal Workers Union, he said.

"We have the will of the people, we have the will of Parliament ... and we also have no obstacle under international law," Hameed said.

"It is up to Canada, and solely up to Canada, whether or not to bring Mr. Abdelrazik back."