

Court hearing scheduled for Canadian stranded in Sudan

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MONTREAL — A Montreal man who has been stranded in Sudan for six years will watch by video link Thursday when an Ottawa courtroom hears a motion to force the federal government to bring him home.

Abousfian Abdelrazik, 46, has been holed up in the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum for more than a year because Ottawa has barred him from Canada as a security threat.

"Each day and night I wait for the moment when someone will tell me that the wait is over, that I will see my family and start my life again," reads a letter signed by Abdelrazik that his supporters circulated this week.

Abdelrazik's lawyers will argue in Federal Court that the Canadian citizen must be allowed to return under Article 6 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states: "Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada."

Abdelrazik's long exile started in 2003, when the father of three, who had come to Canada as a refugee in 1990, returned to the country in northeastern Africa to visit his sick mother.

Sudan arrested him as a suspected terrorist and detained him for 11 months from 2003-04 and for 10 months in 2005-06. Authorities released him in July 2006 after finding no evidence linking him to terrorism or al-Qaida. The RCMP has also reported it has no information connecting him to terrorism or criminal activity.

However, Abdelrazik remains the only Canadian whose name figures on a United National Security Council blacklist of suspected al-Qaida and Taliban terrorists.

This week, documents leaked to the media revealed contradictory messages about Canada's role in Abdelrazik's detention.

According to a February 2008 briefing document for former Foreign Affairs minister Maxime Bernier, Sudan arrested Abdelrazik in September 2003 at Ottawa's request. However, the briefing paper adds, Canadian authorities only learned from the Sudanese government that Abdelrazik was in custody two months later, in November 2003.

However, a letter to the Security Intelligence Review Committee dated April 14, 2009, reveals agents with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service interviewed Abdelrazik in detention in October 2003.

Paul Dewar, New Democratic Party foreign affairs critic, said the government must clear up the confusion about its intervention in the case.

"Those questions need to be answered," he said. "We have a Canadian citizen whose rights have been denied."

Lisa Monette, a spokeswoman for the Department of Foreign Affairs, said the government will not comment until after a court ruling on the case.

On Monday, the House of Commons' foreign affairs committee approved an NDP motion summoning Abdelrazik to appear before it.

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