

Rally in support of Abdelrazik: “I’m in a prison without walls”

12 December 2009, Montreal -- To mark International Human Rights Day, a lively rally was held in Montreal in solidarity with Abousfian Abdelrazik today, still “imprisoned” by the United Nations 1267 list. About 60 people gathered in the cold to listen to very spirited speeches, holding signs and banners denouncing the “1267 prison” and chanting slogans demanding that the government immediately free Mr. Abdelrazik from the sanctions regime. A group of young people travelled from Sioux Lookout, northern Ontario, to join in the rally.

“I arrived back in Canada in June 2009 after six very, very difficult years,” said Abousfian Abdelrazik, speaking at the rally. “I hoped that my troubles were over and I could return to a normal life with my children. But that was not the case. I am still in a kind of prison, a prison without walls,” he stated. “These people must stop playing with my life.”

Abousfian Abdelrazik was arrested while on a visit to Sudan in 2003. Never charged, he was beaten, threatened and tortured during two periods of detention totaling a year and a half. In this context, he was questioned by CSIS agents. The Federal Court concluded in June 2009 that the initial arrest probably took place at the request of CSIS. Repeatedly blocked by Canadian officials from returning home to Montreal, Mr. Abdelrazik went public with his story in April 2008 and took refuge in the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum, where he remained for 14 months. The Federal Court finally ordered the government to bring him home in June 2009.

In 2006, while he was still in Sudan and trying to return to Canada, Mr. Abdelrazik's name was placed on a list established by UN Resolution 1267. Listed individuals are subject to a complete asset freeze and travel ban. Canada formally petitioned the UN to delist Mr. Abdelrazik in 2007, after its own intelligence agencies cleared him, but failed to put the necessary muscle into the request. (Fact sheet on the 1267 List: peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik/1267.php)

“The federal government must restore Mr. Abdelrazik’s liberty immediately and then work hard to ensure his name is taken off the list,” said Emilie Breton, speaking on behalf of Project Fly Home. “Canada has done so in the past, in the case of Mr. Labin Hussein. Why not now, when its own secret services have given it the green light? Is this political?”

“The UN 1267 list violates the most fundamental principles of justice. Evidence supporting the allegations is secret and there is no judicial process allowing listed individuals to contest their inclusion in the list. Listed individuals are entirely at the mercy of the good will of the State which listed them.” stated M. Dominique Peschard, President of the Ligue des droits et libertés, who took part in the rally.

Other speakers stressed that the 1267 list, as well as Mr. Abdelrazik’s struggle, cannot be viewed in isolation.

Tatiana Gomez, active in the People’s Commission Network, said, “The 1267 list and the regulations which enforce it in Canada are part of a broader pattern. Mr. Abdelrazik and others who have been subject to CSIS harassment, indefinite and arbitrary detention and torture, are the victims of racist scapegoating, just as the Japanese-Canadians interned in camps during the Second World War were.”

“The Muslim community continues to be heavily targeted and harassed by CSIS,” said Imam Salam Elmenyawy, President of the Muslim Council of Montreal, congratulating people for coming out in the cold to support Mr. Abdelrazik, who he noted, “is the most frozen of us all, as his entire life is frozen by the 1267 list”.

“Is it fair to terrorize someone on behalf of the war on terror?” asked Gaynde Djibril, who spoke at the rally on behalf of the Groupe de la recherche pour l’indépendance et la libération de l’Afrique. “There is a necessity for more transparency in the handling of the case of Abdelrazik Aboufian. As long as his name is not cleared from this list, this absurdity challenges the very principle of universal equality of the citizens. It indicates the paradox of claiming the democratic political culture of Canada, yet depriving a Canadian citizen of his basic human rights without even a speck of justifiable evidence, on foreign soil, away from the public opinion.”

“As a member of the labour movement in Canada, I know that hundreds of trade unionists and their unions supported Aboufian's struggle to return home and his fight for justice,” said Lynn Carlile, from the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, Local CULR-1. “We have a saying in the labour movement, ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’. What happened to Aboufian and what is still happening to him is not acceptable and we must continue to stand in solidarity with him, until he has justice.”

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Media contacts: peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik Source: Project Fly Home – People’s Commission Network, projectflyhome@gmail.com