

THE ABDELRAZIK CASE Canadians defy law in bid to bring home one of their own More than 100 supporters chip in for airfare for Canadian exiled in Sudan

DATE: 2009.03.13

PAGE: A1

BYLINE: LES PERREAUX AND BILL CURRY

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: MONTREAL and OTTAWA

WORDS: 632

WORD COUNT: 517

LES PERREAUX AND BILL CURRY MONTREAL and OTTAWA More than 100 Canadians have chipped in airfare and exposed themselves to criminal prosecution in an effort to force Ottawa to allow a Canadian citizen to fly home from Sudan, where he's been stranded since being labelled an al-Qaeda operative by the United Nations.

The donors, including teachers, students and a couple of dozen university professors from across Canada, bought a \$997 airline ticket for Abousfian Abdelrazik.

Now, they say, it's up to the Harper government to live up to a promise to give him travel documents for his April 3 flight from Khartoum to Toronto via Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Abdelrazik, 47, is lost in a legal no-man's land. Canadian and Sudanese authorities have cleared him of being a terrorist suspect after years of questioning, imprisonment and torture.

But he remains on the UN terror list at the behest of the United States, according to his lawyer.

The Canadian government gave Mr. Abdelrazik "temporary safe haven" at the Khartoum embassy nearly a year ago.

Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Emma Welford would not say whether emergency travel documents will be issued, as promised, saying only that Canada is obliged to enforce a United Nations travel ban on Mr. Abdelrazik.

But that travel ban specifically permits citizens to return to their home countries.

Ms. Welford declined to comment on that section.

The Harper government has imposed increasingly difficult conditions on the return of Mr. Abdelrazik, at first saying he would need only a confirmed airline reservation and later a paid-for ticket before he would get the temporary passport.

At the same time, the government has warned it could charge anyone who helps the destitute man obtain airfare.

Mr. Abdelrazik's benefactors went ahead anyway. Assembled through word of mouth and Facebook, they are flouting a sweeping federal anti-terrorism law banning Canadians from offering financial help to anyone on the UN terror watch list.

If prosecuted, the donors could face up to 10 years in prison.

"I'm taking it seriously, I'm definitely afraid," said Cory Legassic, a Montreal school teacher who gave \$20.

"I admit I'm a coward, I don't know if I would do this alone.

But if I'm going to jail, there's 115 of us . . . it's going to get very messy." Ms. Welford said proper authorities would decide if the law has been broken.

Former Iraq hostages James Loney and Harmeet Singh Sooden and former Liberal solicitor-general Warren Allmand are among the donors.

Saskatchewan farmer David Orchard, who has dabbled in Progressive Conservative and Liberal leadership politics, gave \$400.

Mr. Abdelrazik, a former Montreal resident with three children and an ex-wife living in Canada, was arrested in Sudan in 2003 when he was visiting his sick mother.

Documents show both CSIS and the RCMP have informed Foreign Affairs there is no evidence Mr. Abdelrazik belongs on the UN list. Meanwhile, a routine CSIS summary continues to allege that he was trained in Afghanistan and "is an important Islamic Jihad activist." Sudanese officials have declared him innocent.

NDP MP Paul Dewar, who has been raising Mr. Abdelrazik's case in the House of Commons, says the government also needs to be more forthcoming about CSIS's role in Mr. Abdelrazik's detention in Sudan.

Government documents have suggested Mr. Abdelrazik was arrested in Sudan at the behest of CSIS, Canada's anti-terrorism agency.

Mr. Dewar says that raises questions as to whether this is a case of Canada participating in a CIA-style rendition along the lines of Canadian Maher Arar, who was detained and tortured in a Syrian prison.

Mr. Abdelrazik's Canadian lawyer, Yavar Hameed, says the answer is clear.

"This is a case of extraordinary rendition," he said. "We had Maher Arar, and now this."

EXILED IN KHARTOUM 'I just sit there. Nobody talks to me' Abdelrazik laments circumscribed life at embassy, but also fears being driven out

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IDN: 090720223

DATE: 2009.03.13

PAGE: A14 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: HEBA ALY

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: SPCL

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Khartoum SUDAN

WORDS: 428

HEBA ALY Special to The Globe and Mail KHARTOUM Late at night, from the quiet guardhouse at the Canadian embassy in Sudan's dusty capital, Khartoum, Abousfian Abdelrazik makes a call. He asks if the person on the line will be coming to see him.

He sounds desperate.

More than 10 months into his unusual stay at the high-walled embassy, Mr. Abdelrazik's contact with the outside world has been reduced to small talk with embassy staff and strangers in the waiting room and increasingly occasional visits from some members of his extended family still living in Sudan.

The phone call to this Canadian journalist in Khartoum is short.

Mr. Abdelrazik is told the previously planned visit will have to be cancelled. He sounds disappointed. Few people have shown interest in his life; he has few threads left to hang on to.

"I'm alone," he says over a crackly telephone. "I just sit there.

Nobody talks to me." After 4 p.m., he says, when staff go home for the day, only he and the guards remain inside the razor-wired concrete embassy walls.

The boredom and loneliness are overwhelming. "For me, it's just hopeless. I don't see no light nowhere. For me, it's very dark now." He says the days go by slowly. "I just watch TV and exercise sometimes.

If I sit down just to think about my problems, [I feel like] my head is going to blow off." If guests come to use the pool, Mr. Abdelrazik is asked to leave the area. If the embassy has any kind of party, he is not included.

He says he feels ignored and not in control of his own life. "It's a matter of dignity . . . I live in humiliation . . . They treat me like a dog." He worries that if he leaves the embassy, Canadian

officials won't let him back in, or he'll be rearrested by Sudanese authorities.

He says he feels abandoned by his Canadian government.

A practising Muslim, Mr. Abdelrazik wears a traditional white robe and kufi cap.

His beard has grown long, black at the roots but white everywhere else. He believes that the government's refusal to bring him home is linked to his black skin and Muslim faith.

And he believes his perceived negative treatment - which he calls "indescribable" - is part of a wider plot to drive him out of the embassy for good.

"[The Canadian] government looks very bad in front of the Canadian public with my story. If I go out of here, they get rid of me and that's it."

Donors 'at great peril' come to Canadian's aid; Montrealer a victim of extraordinary rendition, his supporters say

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SECTION: News

PAGE: A06

ILLUSTRATION: Abousfian Abdelrazik is living at the Canadian embassy in Khartoum.;

BYLINE: Andrew Chung

SOURCE: Toronto Star

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WORD COUNT: 381

Despite threats of prosecution from the federal government, more than 100 people have chipped in to buy a plane ticket to Canada for a Montreal man who has been suspected of terrorist affiliations.

Abousfian Abdelrazik has been living in the weight room of the Canadian embassy in Khartoum, Sudan, unable to come home because he's named on a United Nation's terror watch list.

Most of the 115 contributors from across Canada, including university professors, teachers, lawyers, artists and even a couple of farmers, have given sums of \$10 or \$20 to buy Abdelrazik's \$996 ticket from Khartoum to Toronto. They called it an attempt to "call the government's bluff" on charging them under anti-terror laws.

"Because it's a serious federal offence to directly or indirectly collect money for him, these people ... have done so at great peril and risk," his lawyer Yavar Hameed said.

Donor Cory Legassic, a Montreal teacher, told a news conference yesterday he's fearful of being charged, but is comforted by the fact the government would presumably have to go after 114 others.

The list of donors includes Joseph Carens, political science professor at the University of Toronto, and Canadian peace activist James Loney, once held hostage in Iraq.

Abdelrazik is listed under a UN resolution that imposes sanctions on individuals associated with either Al Qaeda or the Taliban. Canada must abide by this resolution, which includes a travel ban for such individuals, the government says.

A spokesperson for the foreign affairs department would only say yesterday that consequences would be decided later.

Abdelrazik's supporters believe he's a victim of a Canadian version of extraordinary rendition, the highly criticized practice used frequently by the former Bush administration, under which Canadian Maher Arar was sent to Syria, where he was tortured.

Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen who was living in Montreal, alleges he was jailed and tortured in the Sudan, after returning there to visit his ailing mother in 2003.

His lawyer obtained internal government documents as part of the federal court battle to bring his client back to Montreal. The documents, Hameed said, reveal Abdelrazik was jailed on the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's recommendation. Eventually cleared of suspicion in the Sudan, he has not been able to make it home.

Last December, the lawyer received a letter from the government that an emergency travel document could only be issued if Abdelrazik presents a paid- for plane ticket, something the man could not afford.

Dozens face prosecution to help man in Sudan; Canadians dismiss legal risks, buy plane ticket home for man stuck in Sudan

PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)

DATE: 2009.03.13

SECTION: News

PAGE: C3

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WORD COUNT: 407

More than 100 Canadians from coast to coast are facing prosecution for chipping in to buy a plane ticket for a Montrealer who has taken refuge inside the Canadian Embassy in Sudan. A lawyer for Abousfian Abdelrazik said yesterday that those contributing financially to his plane fare can be charged under Canadian law because his name is still on a UN terrorist blacklist.

But donors remained defiant in the face of the possibility they could spend 10 years behind bars.

"If that results in me going to prison, well, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it," David Orchard, the two-time Progressive Conservative party leadership candidate, said in a phone interview.

Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen, has been linked by international authorities to Osama bin Laden, but he has never faced criminal charges.

Federal government documents show that CSIS operatives asked Sudanese authorities to arrest and detain Abdelrazik in 2003, a recent published report revealed.

Abdelrazik, 47, who has been holed up at the embassy in Khartoum for nearly a year, alleges he was tortured during his imprisonment in a Sudanese jail.

"We've lent our name to the use of torture against ... a Canadian citizen in Sudan and I'm very, very much opposed to that," said Orchard, who didn't know he could face jail time when he made the contribution.

"If there's some evidence against the man, charge him."

The list of financial contributors contains the names of 113 Canadians across the country, one New Zealander and an anonymous donor. Supporters amassed about \$4,000 on his behalf.

Other notables who opened their wallets include former federal cabinet minister Warren Allmand and James Loney, a Canadian peace activist taken hostage in Iraq three years ago.

Orchard and Wilf Ruland of Dundas, Ont. each donated \$400, the largest contributions.

"There is risk (of imprisonment), I've talked about it with my wife and we agreed that something like this can't go unchallenged," said Ruland, a scientist.

Montreal teacher Cory Legassic, who contributed \$20, said the state of Canada's immigration system scares him more than being hauled off to prison.

"I think if we don't stand up and do something now, that we risk far more worse scenarios in the future," Legassic told a news conference Thursday in Montreal.

The group spent \$996.98 on a ticket for an April 3 flight on Etihad Airways from Khartoum to Toronto via Abu Dhabi. The leftover cash -- about \$3,000 -- will be used to cover a plane ticket

for Abdelrazik's lawyer, if he's required to have an escort, and to help him restart his life in Montreal.

Abdelrazik's passport has expired and Canadian authorities told his Ottawa- based attorney, Yavar Hameed, that his client must pay for his own plane ticket before they issue him travel documents.

Hameed said even though Abdelrazik's name is on a no-fly list, he still has a right to return to his country of citizenship.

Canadians face terrorism charges over plane ticket

PUBLICATION: Waterloo Region Record  
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SECTION: Front  
PAGE: A4  
DATELINE: Montreal  
SOURCE: The Canadian Press  
COPYRIGHT: © 2009 Torstar Corporation  
WORD COUNT: 97

More than 100 Canadians from coast to coast are facing prosecution for chipping in to buy a plane ticket for a Montrealer who has taken refuge inside the Canadian Embassy in Sudan. A lawyer for Abousfian Abdelrazik said yesterday that those contributing financially to his plane fare can be charged under Canadian law because his name is still on a UN terrorist blacklist. Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen, has been linked to Osama bin Laden, but he has never faced criminal charges.

115 donors kick in for airline ticket; Canadian stranded in Sudan

PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette  
DATE: 2009.03.13  
EDITION: Final  
SECTION: News  
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KEYWORDS: TERRORISM; CANADIANS; FOREIGN RELATIONS  
BYLINE: IRWIN BLOCK  
SOURCE: The Gazette  
WORD COUNT: 336

From across Canada, donors have given from \$10 to \$400 to buy a \$997 airline ticket so Abousfian Abdelrazik can get out of Sudan.

Technically, all 115 donors risk prosecution because they're helping the only Canadian citizen labelled an Al-Qa'ida operative by Washington.

But donors like Gerald Caplan of Richmond Hill, Ont., a consultant to United Nations agencies on Africa, said any such move would only add another bizarre chapter to a Kafkaesque saga.

"This is such a twisted story - how many more lives do we have to destroy in the name of anti-terrorism?" he asked.

City councillor Warren Allmand, another donor, said Abdelrazik's treatment is "part of an illegal pattern of the Canadian government targeting its own residents for overseas detention."

"Canada must end its rendition program," Allmand stated.

Supporters showed the ticket to reporters yesterday and said they hoped Canadian officials would issue an emergency passport - his passport expired while in jail - so he can fly home April 3.

But a Foreign Affairs spokesperson would not say whether such a document would be issued.

"We are continuing to provide Mr. Abdelrazik with consular assistance and the matter is currently under litigation - we can't comment further," Emma Welford said in Ottawa.

Abdelrazik, 46, a Canadian of Sudanese origin, was jailed in 2003 while on a visit to his ailing mother.

He was named by the Bush administration as an associate of Al-Qa'ida, and put on a UN terrorist blacklist.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service is alleged to have asked the Sudanese to detain Abdelrazik "for suspected involvement with terrorist elements," but CSIS denied this.

Abdelrazik says the Sudanese beat and tortured him during 11 months in jail, then cleared him of any terrorist involvement. But his attempt to fly home in 2004 was stymied when Lufthansa and Air Canada refused to accept him as a passenger because he was on a "no fly" list.

He was re-arrested in October 2005 and held for an additional 10 months, only to be cleared again.

In April 2008, Abdelrazik sought refuge in the Canadian embassy in Khartoum and in the fall was again unable to fly home because Passport Canada insisted he have a fully paid ticket before it will issue emergency travel documents.

The ticket cost was a pretext, said Samaa Elibyari Samaa, of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, describing his plight as "the nightmare of every Muslim woman, man, and family."

iblock@thegazette.canwest.com

Le Canada accusé d'empêcher le retour au pays d'un ressortissant, prisonnier de l'ambassade

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SECTION: LES ACTUALITÉS

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BYLINE: Lévesque, Claude

WORD COUNT: 478

L'avocat et les amis d'Abousfian Abdelrazik, un citoyen canadien qui a été arrêté en 2003 et présumément torturé dans son pays d'origine, le Soudan, demandent à Ottawa de faire le nécessaire pour rapatrier son ressortissant au lieu de multiplier les obstacles à cette procédure.

Après deux longs séjours en prison, où ses interrogateurs n'ont finalement rien trouvé à lui reprocher, M. Abdelrazik s'est réfugié en avril 2008 à l'ambassade canadienne à Khartoum, où il se trouve toujours. Il attend de recevoir un billet de retour, qu'il n'a pas les moyens de payer, et un nouveau passeport, que les services consulaires refusent de lui délivrer tant qu'il n'aura pas en main son billet d'avion.

Un groupe de 115 personnes vient justement d'acheter au nom de M. Abdelrazik une place sur des vols de la compagnie Etihad Airways à destination de Toronto via Abou Dhabi.

L'affaire, déjà assez kafkaïenne, se complique encore. Même si Abousfian Abdelrazik est innocent aux yeux de la police soudanaise comme de la GRC, il figure toujours sur la liste de sympathisants présumés d'al-Qaïda compilée par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Par conséquent, les personnes qui ont accepté de financer son retour au pays risquent d'être accusées de crimes passibles d'emprisonnement.

Selon l'avocat Yavar Hameed, qui participait hier à une conférence de presse, le gouvernement canadien a déjà fait planer cette menace. Des tentatives de rapatriement précédentes ont échoué en partie parce que le fichage en question entraîne une interdiction de vol.

Abousfian Abdelrazik, qui est père de quatre enfants, s'est rendu au Soudan en 2003 pour des raisons familiales. Il y a été emprisonné pendant neuf mois. Des documents obtenus par ses avocats tendent à prouver que le Service canadien du renseignement de sécurité (SCRS) a suggéré aux autorités soudanaises de l'arrêter.

Me Hameed a déposé cette semaine en Cour fédérale une requête visant à forcer le gouvernement canadien à délivrer un passeport à son client, s'appuyant sur la charte canadienne des droits et libertés et sur la déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme.

«Plutôt que de reconnaître ses responsabilités et de corriger promptement la situation, [le

Canada] ajoute aux graves violations de droits infligées à M. Abdelrazik celle de violer son droit inaliénable de retour vers son pays», a affirmé Dominique Peschard, président de la Ligue des droits et libertés.

«Malheureusement, il ne s'agit pas d'un cas isolé», a poursuivi M. Peshard, parlant d'un «programme de redditions made in Canada».

Ce terme fait référence aux «extraordinary renditions», une pratique de la CIA (l'agence de renseignement américaine) consistant à envoyer des prisonniers dans des États connus pour leur pratique de la torture. Le 22 janvier, le président américain Barack Obama a ordonné à la CIA de mettre fin à cette forme de sous-traitance de la torture.

Interrogée la semaine dernière par le quotidien torontois The Globe and Mail, une porte-parole du SCRS a affirmé que cette agence n'avait jamais provoqué l'arrestation de citoyens canadiens à l'étranger.

In Brief

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

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PAGE: B1

MONTREAL -- More than 100 Canadians from coast to coast are facing prosecution for chipping in to buy a plane ticket for a Montrealer who has taken refuge inside the Canadian Embassy in Sudan. A lawyer for Abousfian Abdelrazik said yesterday that those contributing financially to his plane fare could be charged under Canadian law because his name is still on a UN terrorist blacklist. But donors remained defiant in the face of the possibility they could spend 10 years behind bars. "If that results in me going to prison, well, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it," said David Orchard, the two-time Progressive Conservative party leadership candidate. Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen, has been linked by international authorities to Osama bin Laden, but he has never faced criminal charges.

Canada Sunflashes Column: Donors on hook for ticket

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PAGE: 34  
BYLINE: SUN WIRE SERVICES  
COLUMN: Canada Sunflashes  
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Helping Canuck stuck in Sudan could backfire

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun  
DATE: 2009.03.13  
EDITION: Final  
SECTION: News  
PAGE: 21  
BYLINE: CP  
DATELINE: MONTREAL  
WORD COUNT: 152

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PAGE: A18  
KEYWORDS: 0  
SOURCE: The Gazette  
WORD COUNT: 94  
Needs help

Re: "This is a vile way to treat a citizen" (Editorial, March 9).

When travelling abroad some Canadians seem to be walking a high wire without a net. We are now hearing about Abousfian Abdelrazik, who is confined to the Canadian embassy in Khartoum.

The case seems to be remarkably similar to that of other Canadian citizens who have been incarcerated and left to rot without due process by the Canadian government. He seems to have had little or no help from Canadian authorities, despite the Sudanese releasing him for lack of evidence.

Ray Anderson

Beaconsfield

Canadians buy plane ticket for man stuck in Sudan

Mar 12, 2009 05:42 PM  
Andy Blatchford  
THE CANADIAN PRESS

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"I think if we don't stand up and do something now, that we risk far more worse scenarios in the future," Legassic told a news conference Thursday in Montreal.

"If I'm going to jail, there's 115 of us, and so we're going to have a lot of people supporting us and organizing around us.

"And it's going to get very messy if they try and put us into jail."

The group spent \$996.98 on a ticket for an April 3 flight on Etihad Airways from Khartoum to Toronto via Abu Dhabi. The leftover cash – about \$3,000 – will be used to cover a plane ticket for Abdelrazik's lawyer, if he's required to have an escort, and to help him restart his life in Montreal.

Abdelrazik's passport has expired and Canadian authorities told his Ottawa-based attorney, Yavar Hameed, that his client must pay for his own plane ticket before they issue him travel documents.

Hameed said even though Abdelrazik's name is on a no-fly list, he still has a right to return to his country of citizenship.

"The only step now is for the Canadian government to act," Hameed told reporters.

"At this point there should be no further excuse."

Abdelrazik was granted refugee status in 1990 after fleeing a civil war in Sudan and became a Canadian citizen five years later.

In 2003, Abdelrazik, who has a son, daughter and stepdaughter in Canada, was visiting his sick mother in Sudan when he was arrested for alleged terror ties.

He was not charged and was later freed because Sudanese investigators found no evidence to support criminal activity.

The RCMP has also said there is no information linking him to any crime.

Hameed said Abdelrazik, who lives in the embassy weight room, is in contact with his family members in Canada.

The Foreign Affairs Department did not immediately return requests for an interview by The Canadian Press.

NDP foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar, who has been active in trying to repatriate Abdelrazik, said Thursday it's time to end an ordeal that has lasted almost six years.

"This has gotten to the point where Canadians have taken on the responsibility that their government should have been taking," Dewar said in an interview from England.

Dewar compared Abdelrazik's situation to that of Maher Arar, a Canadian who was jailed and tortured in Syria.

The federal government eventually apologized to Arar and paid him \$10.5 million in compensation.

"If they're not willing to bring him home now that we have Canadians literally putting their money on the table then I would suggest that we haven't learned anything from the case of Mr. Arar," Dewar said.

Asked if he would be willing to add his name to the list of contributors, Dewar said he's prepared to publicly shell out some cash if it's needed.

"What are they going to do – are they going to charge all of them? I think there's no way the government will want to take this on as a

case.