

## Holed up in embassy, a citizen's fate in limbo

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Abousfian Abdelrazik has been told by Canadian diplomats that he will have only a few days in the "temporary safe haven" of the Canadian embassy in Khartoum, his lawyer said yesterday.

But it is not yet clear whether the Harper government plans to bring home the Canadian and terrorism suspect, either to freedom or to face trial, or intends to toss him back into the streets of Khartoum, where he fears for his safety, Yavar Hameed said.

Mr. Abdelrazik, who has been marooned in Khartoum for nearly five years, said he was grateful for the support he was getting in Canada, Mr. Hameed said.

"He's very emotional," Mr. Hameed said after speaking by telephone with Mr. Abdelrazik, who had spent a second night holed up in the Canadian embassy, a status the government described as a "temporary safe haven."

Mr. Abdelrazik has been labelled an al-Qaeda member and a member of a Montreal terrorist sleeper cell by Canadian, French and U.S. intelligence agencies. He has been denied a new Canadian passport since he was released from a Sudanese prison in July of 2004.

Diplomats have told him that he would be staying only "a few days, maybe three days," in the embassy, said Mr. Hameed, who gave an extensive account of his conversation with Mr. Abdelrazik.

But despite Mr. Abdelrazik's hopes that he might soon see his family in Montreal, Mr. Hameed said the Harper government had yet to answer his demand for a government or military plane to fly him home, an option that would allow him to circumvent the international no-fly list of suspected terrorists that bars him from taking commercial flights.

Opposition MPs accused the government of abandoning another Canadian citizen abroad.

NDP foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar said Mr. Abdelrazik's plight is "not reassuring for Canadians after the Arar case." Maher Arar is another Canadian originally fingered by CSIS as a terrorist. He ended up being tortured in a Syrian prison and has since received an apology and compensation from the Canadian government.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier said that Mr. Abdelrazik's case is being reviewed, but reminded the House of Commons that the Sudanese Canadian is not able to return to Canada by his own means because he is on the UN list of presumed terrorists and he is suspected of being affiliated with "[al-Qaeda leader Osama] bin Laden."

Liberal MP Bob Rae said Mr. Abdelrazik should be brought back to Canada to challenge the allegations against him.

“He has not been charged with anything ...,” he said. “Bring Mr. Abdelrazik back to Canada and allow the Security Intelligence Review Committee to do its work and to review whatever evidence or information CSIS may or may not have.”

CSIS has refused to give its reasons for labelling Mr. Abdelrazik a suspected al-Qaeda member.

Although he was allowed to leave Canada unhindered in March of 2003, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have thwarted his efforts ever since to return to Montreal and his family. Secret CSIS documents seen by The Globe say that Sudan kept Mr. Abdelrazik in prison “at our request.”

Mr. Dewar said “two governments and four ministers of foreign affairs have refused to bring him back to Canada.

“Mr. Abdelrazik has rights,” he added.

Mr. Hameed said Mr. Abdelrazik was very emotional, uncertain as to whether his long ordeal was ending or whether he faced the prospect of being thrown out of the embassy.

“He's very concerned and he doesn't know what's going to happen,” Mr. Hameed said. “He's under a lot of stress.”

Mr. Abdelrazik is a dual national. He was born in Sudan but came to Canada in 1990, and became a citizen five years later. For the government to grant a citizen “safe haven” in an embassy in the country of his other citizenship is unprecedented. It also seems unprecedented for the government to allow a suspected terrorist and alleged al-Qaeda member to camp out in one of Canada's embassies.

“We all are hoping for some kind of resolution but it appears to a situation that is constantly being re-evaluated,” Mr. Hameed said.