

Raphael Alexander: More pieces to the Abdelrazik puzzle

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[A report today indicates](#) that Canadian secret agents interrogated Sudanese-Canadian Abousfian Abdelrazik in a Sudanese jail as early as 2003, but did not inform the Liberal government or his family about where he was or what was happening to him. Government documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that in a briefing to former Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, Mr. Abdelrazik had been originally imprisoned in Sudan at the request of unidentified Canadian authorities.

This has all the makings for a Maher Arar type of scandal. The note for Mr. Bernier shows that it was dated for February of 2008, and confirms that Mr. Abdelrazik had been arrested “at the request of the government of Canada.” Despite being released to the press, however, the eight-page memo detailing which specific Canadian authorities had arranged with Sudan’s police to arrest and imprison Mr. Abdelrazik has been blacked out. Every single word.

There is something chilling about this kind of move, not because it reveals what intelligence agents under a former government did, but because the current government appears to be taking great pains to keep this information from the public. Reminiscent of the former Bush regime memos that were released to the media heavily blacked out, the concept of openness and transparency with this government appear to have officially left the building.

The internal fallout from this should be interesting. CSIS is now upset at Foreign Affairs for suggesting that the agency was solely responsible for imprisoning Mr. Abdelrazik, and has asked for an investigation by the Security Intelligence Review Committee. But internal contradictions show that CSIS appears to have been the first ones aware of this case, according to available government documents. [Paul Koring has a thorough synopsis of the events](#), although it’s a little disappointing that the word “Liberal government” appears nowhere in the text. After all, much like Maher Arar, Omar Khadr, and a host of other Canadians detained abroad, these men appear to have all run into trouble under the watch of the Chretien-Martin government.

Having said that, it’s strange that the current Conservative government seems to be so opposed to returning Mr. Abdelrazik to Canada, particularly after the RCMP and CSIS have cleared him from any ties to terrorism. The fact is that the government has reneged on what needs to be done to get him his official travel documents to return back to Canada, [as I have documented in depth before](#). Canada has even rejected Sudan’s offer to fly him home, as the government there says it only held him at the behest of Canadian agents.

[Although there have been sinister theories put forth that the Conservatives have kept Abousfian Abdelrazik from returning to Canada at the behest of the U.S.](#), or that it simply enjoys randomly denying the repatriation of Canadian citizens, I still believe there is a much simpler explanation. After 9/11 there were rapid changes in intelligence gathering, some overzealous and exuberant service agents who investigated many people, and during this

time they made quite a few glaring errors. There is every reason to believe that CSIS agents under the former Liberal government requested that Abdelrazik be detained in Sudan and interrogated under harsher methods than could be allowed here. Aye, and there's the rub. If the government brings him back now, the subsequent investigation could bring undue attention, and -- now that there's the appearance of protecting these unnamed CSIS agents -- there could be a severe backlash.

What I can't understand is why the Conservatives didn't simply return Mr. Abdelrazik when CSIS and the RCMP cleared him as a terror risk, and then shifted any culpability to the former government. There are pieces of the puzzle here, but unfortunately a lot of them are still missing. To be more specific, a lot of them have been blacked out.