

NDP MP makes pitch to bring Canadian home from Sudan

Canwest News Service (in Ottawa Citizen)

May 27, 2009 4:43 PM

OTTAWA — The lawyer of a Canadian man stranded in Sudan since 2003 said Wednesday Abovsfian Abdelrazik will attempt to fly home next month in order to appear before the House of Commons standing committee on foreign affairs before the summer break.

Lawyer Yavar Hameed said plans are for the return to take place June 12.

NDP foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar has called on Ottawa to allow Abdelrazik to travel to Canada to appear before the committee, telling reporters Wednesday Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon should issue the required travel documents so that Abdelrazik can be a witness and his story can be heard directly by Canadians.

Abdelrazik, 47, has been confined mostly to the Canadian Embassy in Sudan for six years

He has been in Sudan since visiting his ailing mother in 2003. He was arrested by the Sudanese in 2003 and again in 2005, serving a total of 20 months in prison, but was never charged.

A news release by supporters Wednesday said Abdelrazik's flight home has been paid for by "a solidarity fund to which over 250 people and organizations from across Canada have contributed," adding various groups were preparing to send a delegation to Sudan to accompany him home.

Supporters say this was being done "in defiance of the risk of being criminally charged for making a financial contribution to Abdelrazik, whose name was placed on the UN 1267 'black list' by the Bush administration."

Abdelrazik has made several attempts to return to Canada, but has been blocked because his name appears on airline and U.S. no-fly lists and a United Nations list that labels him an associate of al-Qaida.

Abdelrazik, a Montreal resident, has been cleared of any terrorism links, but Ottawa has refused to issue him a passport, saying he first has to get his name off the no-fly list.

However, Abdelrazik's supporters say the UN co-ordinator of the monitoring team for the list, Richard Barrett, has since clarified that it is up to the state in question whether it wants to allow a person to come back or not.

"Really, what we are talking about here is we are asking the government to comply with the wishes of the committee of the House of Commons," said Dewar who succeeded in having a motion passed at the committee to call Abdelrazik to appear for testimony.

Dewar said Cannon has suggested he won't comply with providing travel documents.

"I think the message for him today is to reconsider that. This is about a House of Commons committee that has asked to have a witness come forth — and as a servant of the committee system, as a minister, what we're asking him to do is to comply with the request."

On May 7, Abdelrazik's legal team asked the Federal Court to order the government to bring him home by any safe means possible, but the court has yet to render its decision.

With files from Ottawa Citizen

© Copyright (c) Canwest News Service