

## **Ottawa denied Abdelrazik diplomatic assistance**

PAUL KORING – Globe and Mail

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WASHINGTON — The Harper government rejected pleas that it allow diplomats to accompany a Canadian citizen called in for joint interrogation in Khartoum by Sudanese police and U.S. counterterrorism agents, secret government documents reveal. Although ministers told the House of Commons last spring that Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen, had received full consular assistance, the documents show a senior Foreign Affairs official explicitly ordered Canadian diplomats in Khartoum to stay away from the interrogation by U.S. agents.

"Mission staff should not accompany Abdelrazik to his interview with the FBI," ordered Sean Robertson in a secret cable to the Canadian embassy in Khartoum on April 3, 2007.

Mr. Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen since 1995, has been stuck in Sudan since 2003. He was arrested - but never charged - while visiting his ailing mother in Khartoum. He says Canadian Security Intelligence Service operatives interrogated him in a Sudanese jail in December of 2003. He was eventually released in the summer of 2004 but Canadian diplomats refused to return or reissue his expired passport. While in prison, the Bush administration had put him on the U.S. no-fly list and airlines refused to allow him to return to Canada.

When faced with interrogation by Sudanese and FBI agents, Mr. Abdelrazik feared he would again be imprisoned and tortured in Sudan's notorious jails and pleaded for a Canadian diplomat to accompany him to the interrogation. Although ordered to stay away, they did offer to telephone him afterward. When they did, there was no answer, according to government documents in possession of The Globe and Mail.

More than a month later, the diplomats told Ottawa that the U.S. FBI agents had warned Mr. Abdelrazik he would never see Canada again unless he implicated others as al-Qaeda operatives.

If he doesn't co-operate fully, "he will never return to Canada," the FBI agents told him, according to a Canadian embassy official who reported back to Ottawa after debriefing Mr. Abdelrazik after his interrogation by the U.S. and Sudanese counterterrorism agents. "He told us he is very concerned he said he was threatened by the FBI agents and they told him clearly that if he did not stand by the FBI view and 'fully co-operate' with them, he will never leave Sudan," the Canadian embassy official told senior Foreign Affairs officials.

There is no indication that the Harper government ever sought an explanation from the Bush administration as to why a Canadian citizen was threatened by FBI agents,

although large sections of the 1,125 pages of mostly classified documents have been blacked out by government censors.

Yavar Hameed, Mr. Abdelrazik's Ottawa lawyer, says he believes "there is some kind of complicity between the Canadian and the American security and intelligence authorities." In an interview yesterday, he said "the Harper government would rather bow to pressure from the Americans than do the right thing."

The documents show senior officials have advised ministers that Mr. Abdelrazik has a right to return home and that there is no evidence linking him to terrorism or other criminal activity.

Since The Globe first published details of his years in enforced limbo last April, Mr. Abdelrazik has been allowed to live inside the Canadian embassy in Khartoum, but the government has so far failed to give him any of the assistance required to allow him to return to Canada, most recently refusing to issue him emergency travel documents when an airline was willing to flout the U.S. no-fly ban and issue him a ticket to Montreal.

"Mr. Abdelrazik has the benefit of full consular assistance," then-foreign-minister Maxime Bernier told the House of Commons last spring.

Officials in the office of the current minister, Lawrence Cannon, didn't respond yesterday.

Eugénie Cormier-Lassonde, a spokeswoman for Foreign Affairs, said, "We continue to provide Mr. Abdelrazik with consular assistance," but added: "As this matter is currently under litigation, we cannot comment further."

The department declined to answer questions about its policy on providing Canadian citizens consular accompaniment when they faced interrogation by U.S. or other foreign security agents.

Canadian diplomats did accompany Canadian and U.S. counterterrorism agents interrogating Omar Khadr in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but he had no choice in the matter.

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