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## **Ottawa imposes another hurdle for Abdelrazik**

### **Canadian must pay for his ticket home**

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The Harper government has imposed another condition on Abousfian Abdelrazik - the only Canadian citizen labelled an al-Qaeda operative by Washington - before it will allow him to return home.

Mr. Abdelrazik must present a fully-paid-for ticket home before "Passport Canada will issue an emergency passport," the government said in a Dec. 23 letter to his lawyers. But Mr. Abdelrazik, who is living in the Canadian embassy in Khartoum, is destitute and the government has warned that it could criminally charge anyone who lends or gives money for a ticket under its sweeping anti-terrorist regulations.

Previously, the government had repeatedly promised to give Mr. Abdelrazik an emergency passport if he managed to get a confirmed reservation from an airline willing to fly him from Khartoum to Montreal.

For years that seemed unlikely, as no airline was willing to issue Mr. Abdelrazik a ticket as he is on the U.S. "no fly" list.

But when just such a reservation on Etihad Airways was confirmed for Mr. Abdelrazik, the government refused the promised travel documents. Since then it has added the new requirement that the ticket be paid for in advance.

"It has intentionally added another roadblock to Abdelrazik's repatriation," said Yavar Hameed, the Ottawa lawyer representing Mr. Abdelrazik, who has been marooned in Sudan for nearly six years. "That he is now being made to have to purchase the ticket up front is a dishonest tactic employed by the government to keep him in Sudan."

Canadian consular officers can lend citizens in distress the money to buy a ticket home, but no such offer has been made to Mr. Abdelrazik.

Although the Harper government says it wants Mr. Abdelrazik removed from the UN Security Council terrorist blacklist - and says it formally supported such a request in a diplomatic note to the UN - it has refused to help him return to his family in Montreal.

Since last April, Mr. Abdelrazik has been living in the Canadian embassy in Khartoum in what was originally described as a "temporary safe haven" by then-foreign-affairs-minister Maxime Bernier.

"It's become indefinite internment in the embassy," said Paul Dewar, the NDP foreign-affairs critic, who said he has asked Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon to intervene but has not yet had a reply.

"This should be a no-brainer for the minister; we have helped lots of Canadians get home in the past," Mr. Dewar said.

Mr. Abdelrazik is the only Canadian labelled a "high-level" al-Qaeda operative and included on the UN Security Council terrorist blacklist by the Bush administration, which also put him on its own "no-fly" list.

Mr. Cannon is scheduled to meet U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tomorrow in Washington.

Mr. Dewar said he hopes the wide-ranging promise by President Barack Obama to review the human-rights abuses of the former Bush administration will extend to a review of the Abdelrazik case.

"I have no information on the topics to be discussed," Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Lisa Monette said.

The RCMP has already cleared Mr. Abdelrazik of suspicion. "The RCMP conducted a review of its files and was unable to locate any current and substantive information that indicates Mr. Abdelrazik is involved in criminal activity," wrote Mike McDonnell, the force's assistance commissioner for national security criminal investigations, in a Nov. 15, 2007, letter that formed the basis for the government's request that Mr. Abdelrazik be taken off the UN blacklist.

However, that request was blocked by at least one member of the UN Security Council - presumed to be the United States.

The United States regards Mr. Abdelrazik as a terrorist suspect because of "his high-level ties to and support for" al-Qaeda.

Mr. Abdelrazik denies any links with al-Qaeda. He says he left Canada to visit his ailing mother in Sudan in 2003. In Khartoum, he was twice imprisoned for a total of nearly two years, and interrogated by Canadian and U.S. agents. Eventually the Sudanese released him, said there was no reason to detain him, absolved him of the accusations that he was linked to Muslim extremists and offered to fly him home. The Canadian government rejected that offer.

Despite the RCMP exoneration, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service continues to regard Mr. Abdelrazik as a dangerous extremist.

"At least part of the government doesn't want him to return to Canada," Mr. Hameed has said.