
Canada asks UN to take citizen off terror suspects list

Section: News

Outlet: The Ottawa Citizen

Title: Canada asks UN to take citizen off terror suspects list

Page: A18

Date: 2008-05-03

Source: Agence France-Press

Canada has asked the United Nations to take a Sudanese-Canadian who has been blocked in Sudan for five years off a list of terror suspects, the man's lawyer said yesterday.

Attorney Yavar Hameed complained of "an inherent contradiction" in the Canadian government's position in Abousfian Abdelrazik's case.

"At some level within the government, there are obviously some people who have been trying to frustrate efforts to bring Mr. Abdelrazik back to Canada," he said.

"In other departments there have been some efforts, or at least some movement, to try at least to have him delisted and to try to go through some of the motions necessary to bring him back.

"But to the extent that it is not a coherent position it's not possible for any forward movement to happen," Mr. Hameed said.

Mr. Abdelrazik, 46, went to Sudan in 2003 to visit his mother. He was arrested and jailed based on intelligence supplied by Canadian services that suspected him of ties to al-Qaeda, Mr. Hameed said.

Mr. Abdelrazik was later set free, but could not return to Canada because he no longer held a passport and was on the UN and airline black list that stops him from boarding a plane. He currently is at the Canadian embassy in Khartoum.

Ottawa serait prêt à aider Abdelrazik

Section: Nouvelles générales

Outlet: La Presse

Title: Ottawa serait prêt à aider Abdelrazik

Page: A27

Date: 2008-05-03

Ottawa Source: La Presse Canadienne

Le gouvernement canadien serait en faveur du retrait du nom d'un Canadien d'origine soudanaise d'une liste d'individus soupçonnés de terrorisme compilée par le Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies.

Le quotidien torontois The Globe and Mail a écrit hier qu'un haut dirigeant du ministère canadien des Affaires étrangères avait pris cet engagement dans une lettre transmise à l'avocat d'Abousfian Abdelrazik, qui a été arrêté au Soudan il y a cinq ans.

Abdelrazik a été appréhendé en 2003 quand plusieurs agences occidentales de renseignement l'ont identifié comme étant un membre important du réseau Al-Qaeda et un proche d'un terroriste impliqué dans les attentats du 11 septembre 2001.

Il ne fait toutefois face à aucune accusation et a depuis été libéré. Il lui est par contre impossible de rentrer au pays parce que son nom se trouve sur la liste des individus à qui il est interdit de prendre l'avion. Le Montréalais de 46 ans clame son innocence et demande que son nom soit retiré de cette liste.

Ottawa serait prêt à aider le Canadien arrêté au Soudan

Section: Actualités

Outlet: Le Droit

Title: Ottawa serait prêt à aider le Canadien arrêté au Soudan

Page: 43

Date: 2008-05-03

Source: La Presse Canadienne

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Aucune accusation

Il ne fait toutefois face à aucune accusation et a depuis été remis en liberté.

Il lui est par contre impossible de rentrer au pays, puisque les autorités canadiennes ont refusé de lui émettre les documents de voyage nécessaires et que son nom se trouve sur la liste des individus à qui il est interdit de prendre l'avion.

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Selon le Globe and Mail, un haut dirigeant du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Sean Robertson, a indiqué par lettre à l'avocat d'Abdelrazik qu'Ottawa "a exprimé" son appui envers ce retrait.

Pressure mounts to repatriate Canadian citizen

Section: International News

Outlet: The Globe And Mail

Byline: PAUL KORING AND CAMPBELL CLARK

Title: Pressure mounts to repatriate Canadian citizen

Page: A17

Date: 2008-05-03

Human-rights groups and opposition MPs demanded yesterday that the Harper government repatriate Abousfian Abdelrazik, the Canadian labelled an al-Qaeda threat but now sheltered in the "temporary safe haven" of the Canadian embassy in Khartoum.

Bring him home and charge him in Canada if he is a terrorist, the Harper government was told.

"Get him out of there and bring him home now," said the NDP's foreign affairs critic, Paul Dewar.

"If there are allegations against Mr. Abdelrazik, charges should be laid and he should be tried in Canada," said Ihsaan Gardee, a spokesman for the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Roch Tassé, co-ordinator of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, which represents more than a dozen rights groups across Canada, said Mr. Abdelrazik's plight – left in a foreign prison and then involuntary exile for nearly five years by successive Canadian governments that denied him a passport – echoes that of Maher Arar, the Canadian falsely fingered by the RCMP as a terrorism suspect and later shipped by the United States to Syria where he was tortured in prison.

"Mr. Abdelrazik's case brings to mind the Arar inquiry, and the current Iacobucci inquiry, which is examining the involvement of Canadian officials in the overseas detention and torture of Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad El Maati and Muayyed Nureddin," he said.

Mr. Abdelrazik also claims to have been beaten and abused while in prison in Sudan, an incarceration that secret Canadian documents obtained by The Globe and Mail acknowledge was "at our request."

Mr. Abdelrazik, 46, "has a right to travel back to Canada, his country of nationality," said John Tackaberry, spokesman for Amnesty International Canada.

"There are worrying indications that Canadian officials have played a role in the fate that has befallen him, including his arrest, detention, interrogation, listing and effective exile," he added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Abdelrazik was spending his fourth night in the Canadian embassy in Khartoum, facing what may be a long wait while the Harper government seeks to have him taken off the UN Security Council list of al-Qaeda members.

Sean Robertson, a senior foreign affairs official, wrote formally to Mr. Abdelrazik's lawyers last month assuring them that the government of Canada had already "transmitted our support for Mr. Abdelrazik's de-listing request to the 1267 Committee," a reference to the Security Council resolution bearing that number that blacklists known al-Qaeda members.

But the government is refusing to provide Mr. Abdelrazik or his lawyers with evidence of that support and yesterday it refused to make it public.

"Officials now are making up for what I would suggest is the incompetence of [Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier.] Because they're scrambling to do what he had not initiated, and that is to get Mr. Abdelrazik off the UN list," Mr. Dewar said.

Mr. Abdelrazik has repeatedly denied he has any connection to al-Qaeda or has ever been to Afghanistan, and said he just wants to return to Canada and be reunited with the children he hasn't seen in nearly five years.

Mr. Bernier told the House of Commons this week that Mr. Abdelrazik was being well cared for in the Canadian embassy but his lawyer yesterday said, "Canada's treatment of Mr. Abdelrazik is cruel and extraordinary and is causing him extreme mental suffering."

Yavar Hameed, his Ottawa-based lawyer, said Canadian diplomats in Khartoum were deliberately trying to starve Mr. Abdelrazik into leaving the embassy, only days after he was given refuge.

"Over the weekend, consular staff has stated he will not be fed three meals daily. Consular staff has also stressed that Mr. Abdelrazik's personal amenities are capped at \$100 monthly, possibly not enough to go on feeding him throughout May. It appears the Harper government is trying to starve Mr. Abdelrazik out of the embassy," Mr. Hameed said yesterday in a statement.

He also said that Mr. Abdelrazik had been cut off from all information about the furor surrounding his case in Canada, denied access to newspapers, refused contact with Sudanese and Canadian news media and that his telephone calls to his lawyers were now being routed through the Foreign Affairs switchboard in Ottawa where they could be monitored.

"The commitment of Mr. Bernier to provide humanitarian aid and communication with his lawyer is being flagrantly violated," Mr. Hameed said.

Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae said, "if the Canadian government is taking the position that he's not a security risk, then they should get him home." He cannot be left at the embassy in Khartoum while Canada tries to have him removed from a UN no-fly list, Mr. Rae said. "It could be a very lengthy process."

Mr. Dewar said no-fly lists were often unreliable, pointing out that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was embarrassed this week when she was forced to admit that former South African president Nelson Mandela still appears on a U.S. watch list and cannot fly to the United States without special dispensation.

Maybe Ottawa only likes some of us

Section: Opinion

Byline: Thomas Walkom

Outlet: The Toronto Star

Title: Maybe Ottawa only likes some of us

Page: AA08

Date: 2008-05-03

Source: Toronto Star

In the end, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government pulled out all the stops for Brenda Martin. Huzzah. Too bad they won't do it for other Canadians.

Martin is the 51-year-old who was arrested, tried and convicted in Mexico last month for Internet fraud. Just days after a Mexican judge sentenced her to five years in prison, Ottawa whisked her home to serve her time. Yesterday, it announced that she is eligible for accelerated parole review. She is expected to be freed soon.

Most Canadians will not begrudge Martin her good fortune. She'd been in a Mexican jail for two years awaiting trial. But the government's alacrity in her case is decidedly unusual.

Consider the story of Bashir Makhtal, a Canadian businessman who has been in an Ethiopian prison for more than a year. Caught in Somalia during the U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of that country, he took Ottawa's advice and fled to Kenya. There, he was arrested and, in spite of his Canadian passport, deported to Ethiopia. He has not been charged with a crime. The only allegation against him seems to be that his grandfather helped found a separatist organization that Ethiopia (but not Canada) regards as terrorist.

Unlike Martin, Makhtal hasn't received visits from high-profile government MPs. The Ethiopians don't even allow him Canadian consular visits.

Junior foreign minister Helena Guergis argues that Ottawa can't intervene in cases before foreign courts. Tell that to the Mexicans. At one point during the Brenda Martin saga, Harper personally lobbied Mexican President Felipe Calderon.

Yet, Makhtal isn't unique. An equally disturbing story became public this week. This one involves a Canadian citizen named Abousfian Abdelrazik who for five years has been trapped in his native Sudan unable to get home. The reason? Apparently, Canada's spy service believes him to be a terrorist.

Indeed, unspecified agencies in Canada's previous Liberal government apparently asked Sudan to jail Abdelrazik five years ago when he went there to visit his ailing mother. (This, by the way, seems to have been part of a pattern. An unusually secretive royal commission is looking into allegations by three other Muslim Canadians that they too were victims of similar remote-control rendition schemes.)

The Sudanese obliged but, after the usual round of beatings, released Abdelrazik without charges. He's not wanted for any crime by any country. Yet, because Ottawa won't renew his passport (it expired when he was in prison), he can't leave Sudan. He can't get on a flight home

because he's on the notoriously inaccurate no-fly list.

Talk about catch-22. Until The Globe and Mail broke the story, no one in Ottawa was willing to go to bat for this Canadian. Now, the Harper government is at least letting him hole up in its Khartoum embassy. Maybe Ottawa will eventually be embarrassed into helping him get home.

Finally, Omar Khadr. There's no danger of Ottawa feeling embarrassed here. The Harper government positively delights in the fact that this Canadian, arrested six years ago when he was just 15 and jailed since then at Guantanamo Bay, is set to go on trial for war crimes.

The evidence against Khadr is dodgy and the tribunal he is to appear before demonstrably unfair. Yet, from Ottawa, there is nothing. No high-profile visits. No pleas from Harper.

But then, like Makhtal and Abdelrazik, Omar Khadr is no Brenda Martin.

For one thing, no reasonable court has ever found him guilty of a crime.

Thomas Walkom's column appears Wednesday and Saturday.

Colour barrier is shameful

Section: The Editorial Page

Byline: Kris Kotarski

Outlet: Calgary Herald

Title: Colour barrier is shameful

Page: A12

Date: 2008-05-05

Source: Calgary Herald

I watched the unfolding sagas of Canadians Abousfian Abdelrazik and Brenda Martin this month, and I am ashamed to say my government's actions made me feel relieved that my last name is Kotarski, that I don't worship in a mosque and that my skin colour is a shade lighter than a chocolate milkshake.

Two recent cases involving Canadians stranded abroad made me feel rather uncertain about CSIS, Foreign Affairs, and whether all Canadians can count on our government to help us when we travel abroad.

On one hand, we have Brenda Martin, a middle-aged Caucasian woman with an easily pronounceable name. Martin's case became a cause celebre for Canadian MPs when it was learned she faced a lengthy prison term in Mexico after a fraud conviction.

In Martin's case, Ottawa closely monitored her trial, lent her the money to pay a fine and arranged for a prison transfer so she may serve her time in Canada, where she will be eligible for early parole.

During her ordeal, Nova Scotia MP Bill Casey called for a boycott of Mexico and MP Jason Kenney flew to Guadalajara to meet with Martin and arrange for her transfer to Canada. Guilty or not, this is type of treatment that should make us all proud of the maple leaf in our passports, and should make us feel confident when we travel abroad.

On the other hand, there is Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Canadian who did not acquire his citizenship by birth, who worships in a mosque and who was left in limbo by our own government for five years.

Abdelrazik was visiting his mother in Sudan in 2003 when CSIS officials asked Sudanese authorities to detain him on terrorism suspicions. Abdelrazik is alleged to have had some unseemly connections to terrorism suspects in Montreal, but although the Sudanese have since released him and no charges have been filed in Sudan or in Canada, Canadian officials have not provided Abdelrazik with documents to return to Canada to reunite with his five-year-old son, and have not made any efforts to repatriate him as he is listed on an international no-fly list. While the allegations against Abdelrazik are quite serious, the Maher Arar case has conditioned Canadians to expect the worst from our government in cases of suspected terrorism.

In this instance, it is difficult not to suspect darker motives. Why CSIS would tip off Sudanese authorities and ask them to detain Abdelrazik there, instead of holding and charging him in Canada to begin with?

It is also difficult to trust, at face value, the vague, inconsistent leaks and statements from Foreign Affairs, which continue to brand Abdelrazik as a threat. After the Arar case, Canadians (especially those of non-European descent) have a right to feel nervous about leaving Canada on business, holidays or to visit family. Why should we trust vague pronouncements from CSIS and Foreign Affairs after those same people proved so spectacularly wrong in Arar's case?

Abdelrazik may indeed be a dangerous man, or this could turn out to be Maher Arar part deux.

In either case, the Canadian government has a massive problem on its hands, since the optics are absolutely terrible.

There has never been a better moment to heed the calls for greater transparency in Canada's anti-terror laws and procedures. The government needs to show Canadians the standard here is not a double one based on race, colour or creed, and that terrorism suspects can expect the same basic due process afforded other Canadians.

What is the biggest difference between Brenda Martin and Abousfian Abdelrazik? A government spokesman will likely tell you the first is a case of fraud where a Canadian citizen may have gotten a raw deal, while the other is a case of suspected terrorism where the suspect may still be dangerous.

Though this may well be the case, there are other, far more obvious differences between the two individuals and, whatever the reasoning, the Canadian government cannot appear to treat certain ethnic and religious minorities as second-class citizens.

The shadow of Maher Arar gets longer and longer, and the differing government actions in this case raise uncomfortable questions that absolutely need to be addressed.

A leaked document quotes a Canadian official stating, "Should this case break wide open in the media, we may have a lot of explaining to do."

How very true.

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