

Canadian refused passport remains grounded in Sudan

By Mike Blanchfield, Canwest News Service
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OTTAWA — The Canadian government missed a "golden opportunity" Friday to comply with a Federal Court ruling and repatriate a Montreal man stranded for more than a year at Canada's embassy in Sudan, his lawyer says.

Abousfian Abdelrazik had a plane ticket home Friday, paid for by his supporters, which would have taken him through the United Arab Emirates to Montreal.

But Abdelrazik never boarded the plane.

The Canadian government did not issue him a passport.

"It was a golden opportunity for them to deal with this whole thing," Abdelrazik's Ottawa lawyer, Yavar Hameed, told Canwest News Service.

"The government is losing opportunities to comply with the law."

A Federal Court ruling on June 4 ordered the Conservative government to return Abdelrazik to Canada within 30 days.

The court ruling gave the government 15 days, until next Friday, to come up with a plan on his repatriation.

Hameed said he was disappointed with Friday's development, but so far he has heard nothing from the government about what it plans to do.

As per the court ruling, the government must notify Hameed if any plans are made to move Abdelrazik from the embassy in Khartoum.

Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon denied Abdelrazik's scheduled April 3 trip home on the grounds of national security.

Abdelrazik says he was tortured after he was arrested in 2003 when he returned to Sudan to visit his sick mother. Sudanese authorities have since released him, and his passport has expired.

The RCMP and CSIS, Canada's spy agency, say they have no information linking him to criminal activity. Abdelrazik is on a United Nations no-fly list.

Cannon did not answer a question put to him about Abdelrazik's case in the House of Commons on Friday.

"The minister is showing contempt for Parliament for not even responding to a request from a chair," NDP foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar charged, when the junior justice minister rose in Cannon's place in the Commons to field a question on the case.

"We have a judge from the Federal Court, who says that the government has absolutely no case, and that up until now, the government has been hiding behind the courts, but the decision could not be more clear: the government must plan for Mr. Abdelrazik's return by next Friday," Dewar said.

"Will the government respect the court, or will it show contempt for the courts as well?"

Cannon remained in his seat.

Daniel Petit, the junior justice minister, informed the Commons that the government would make a decision in the case at an "opportune moment."

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