

Canada's shame: the incarceration, torture, and exile of Abousfian Abdelrazik

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Good morning, Bonjour:

For more than five years, our government under both Liberals and Conservatives, has victimized one of its citizens and continues to negate his most basic citizenship rights.

What happened, is still happening to Abousfian Abdelrazik adds another sad and disturbing case of rendition, torture and denial of responsibility by one of the nations taking pride in its Charter of Rights. Regretfully, this is our country, the place many of us, immigrants of all origins sought for Freedom and Respect of Human dignity.

The revolting story of Abousfian Abdelrazik is the nightmare of every Muslim man and family. What did Abdelrazik do wrong? He went to visit his ailing mother in Sudan. He is also a Muslim and a black man.

What difference should this make? None. What difference did this make? Unfortunately, a great deal. I might even say all the difference in the World.

Because of his faith Abdelrazik became a suspect. And he has not given a chance to defend himself. Worse, he was tortured to confess his alleged crime at the request and with the blessings of CSIS whose agents traveled to Sudan to participate in his interrogation.

Abdelrazik has never been charged, let alone convicted, of any crime either in Canada or Sudan. Nor has our government initiated proceedings to strip him of his citizenship. Naturalized citizens who obtained their citizenship

fraudulently or who have committed certain crimes can lose their status as Canadians.

Yet Ottawa has prevented Abdelrazik from returning to Canada and condemned him to live in isolation and poverty in Sudan.

What is our government waiting for to allow Abousfian Abdelrazik to come home? In the name of “the war on terror,” our government has collaborated with foreign governments in the detention without charge and torture of Canadian citizens.

Martin Scheinin, special rapporteur of the UN on protection of Rights and Freedoms in the scope of the campaign against terrorism exhorts allied countries, including Canada to investigate its role in cases of torture and recommends the adoption of appropriate measures to avoid such recurrences.

What is irrefutable is that the Canadian government made sure Abdelrazik was unable to leave Sudan after his original imprisonment and to this day continues to deny him the right to return to his home and family.

Soon after his first release in 2004, Abdelrazik’s wife paid for an airline ticket to bring him back to Canada. But Air Canada and Lufthansa refused to issue Abdelrazik a ticket because, soon after he had traveled to Sudan in the beginning of 2003, his name had been placed on a no-fly list.

At one point, the Sudanese government offered to repatriate Abdelrazik on a private plane, but the Canadian government aborted this project by refusing to pay the costs.

The question of costs is a transparent excuse. On repeated occasions since the summer of 2004, Canadian government planes have travelled to Sudan for official trips by Canadian representatives, including Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin in 2004 and Conservative Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier in 2008. But Ottawa has consistently refused to provide Canadian citizen Abdelrazik with an airplane seat.

This is in striking contrast to the treatment Ottawa accorded Brenda Martin, a Canadian woman who was jailed in Mexico for her reputed involvement in a scam. The Conservative government pressed for Martin to be repatriated to Canada, then dispatched a government-chartered jet to bring her home.

Would it be right to talk about selective citizenship?

I hope not. I hope that the dream of so many immigrants, including myself of living in a country of Rights can still be restored. Allowing Abousfian Abdelrazik to return to Canada will certainly be a step in the right direction.

Thank you