

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Gerald Caplan

The smears continue

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Last updated on Monday, Jul. 06, 2009 02:36PM EDT

As if six years of imprisonment, torture, isolation and endless betrayals by the Canadian government while he was in Sudan haven't been enough to break Abousfian Abdelrazik, rest assured his enemies will not rest now that he's home. Maher Arar can tell him exactly what to expect.

Mr. Arar's tormentors - the Canadian government, Canada's security agencies, Americans on the homeland security file, and any number of compliant media - are now Mr. Abdelrazik's tormentors.

Let's not forget how they smeared the innocent Mr. Arar. Both while he was locked in his Syrian coffin and once he returned to Canada, government and intelligence officials carried out a relentless campaign to discredit him as a terrorist agent. Completely fraudulent leaks were offered to reputable reporters, who duly repeated them, invariably citing "unnamed sources." It was as low a moment as Canadian journalism has seen, perhaps until now.

It's not enough that two RCMP officers flew all the way to Sudan to accompany Mr. Abdelrazik back to Canada, as if he were some dangerous criminal. Or that after a 30-hour trip from Sudan to Toronto he was not allowed to fly to Montreal, as if he's too dangerous to be allowed to fly in Canada (although he just had). Or that a man who has never been charged with any crime, who has no criminal record, who has been explicitly cleared by CSIS and the Mounties, is being followed and videoed by furtive spooks now that he's back home in Montreal.

On top of all that, Mr. Abdelrazik now has CBC Radio's *The Current* sully his reputation. Since *The Current* is one of the best public affairs programs in the world, it is particularly grievous that it would have allowed Mr. Abdelrazik to be repeatedly smeared without so much as a polite challenge.

On Monday, just two days after Mr. Abdelrazik returned to Canada, *The Current* interviewed an American named Neil Livingstone who runs a well-established U.S. security consultancy named Executive Action. Mr. Livingstone, a player in the vast and powerful American military-industrial-security complex with considerable controversy in his background, is on record as justifying torture by waterboarding, a fact *The Current* chose not to report.

During Mr. Livingstone's unchallenged hatchet job on Abdelrazik, which you can [hear for yourself online](#), he said that the U.S. puts people on terrorism lists on the basis of "private intelligence sources," so there is no specific information on Mr. Abdelrazik. "But we have general information." He offered no proof and was asked for none. There is "concern" that Mr. Abdelrazik was trained in an Afghanistan terrorist training camp, but Mr. Livingstone didn't say who the concerned are. (Perhaps Dick Cheney.)

Mr. Livingstone noted that Mr. Abdelrazik knew Ahmed Ressam, who planned to blow up the Los Angeles international airport, but fails to mention that Mr. Abdelrazik testified against Mr. Ressam. Nor is there an iota of evidence that Mr. Abdelrazik had any role in the LAX plot. So why did he raise Mr. Ressam at all? It

was the most flagrant guilt by association, but he was not asked about it.

Mr. Livingstone then smoothly added that there appears to be "other evidence," which he doesn't cite, that Mr. Abdelrazik had ties to al-Qaeda. But what was the earlier evidence? He had given none.

The interviewer asked if the American investigations were thorough. "Fairly thorough," Mr. Livingstone assured her, with not a hint of proof. Mr. Abdelrazik was incriminated by a senior al-Qaeda operative, Abu Zubaydah, though the host mildly noted that his testimony was elicited "under duress" - perhaps a new CBC euphemism for torture. In fact, Abu Zubaydah was waterboarded more than 80 times. How reliable could his confession be, she asked? "The information gathered under duress," Mr. Livingstone generalized, "has been "extremely valuable." From what we know, he said, Abu Zubaydah's evidence against Mr. Abdelrazik "is seen as very credible." (Perhaps by Dick Cheney.)

During the entire interview, Mr. Livingstone did not produce one shred of evidence for a single one of these assertions.

In this remarkable torrent of innuendo, distortion and smear, Mr. Livingstone got one thing right. Someone in the U.S. government badly wants to hurt Mr. Abdelrazik, so the Americans insist he remain on the UN Security Council's terrorist list - the 1267 list.

As Canadian authorities like Amir Attaran and Wesley Wark have documented, the 1267 Committee is truly one of the egregious nightmare institutions of the modern world - Kafka, Orwell and Joe McCarthy all rolled into one.

Any of the 15 Security Council members can have a name added to the 1267 list, for reasons no one ever knows. You wake up one morning and find you've been transformed into an international terrorist. You can no longer fly, you're not allowed to make a living, and anyone giving or lending you money for any purpose is guilty of a criminal act. How is Abousfian Abdelrazik, or any of the others on the list, to live? This bizarre creation of the Security Council contradicts every precept for which the UN was created.

Where is the international protest? Does the Obama administration know these Bush-initiated horror stories continue? Does it care? Will the Harper government, which has caused Abdelrazik such pain, finally help him to re-build his shattered life? Is CSIS allowed to smear innocent Muslims merely to enhance its own status at their expense?

I'm afraid that those who helped bring Mr. Abdelrazik home, and all Canadians who care about justice, still have much work left to do.

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