

Supporters defy law, buy plane ticket for Montrealer stuck in Sudan

Abousfian Abdelrazik remains on UN anti-terror blacklist

A group supporting a Montrealer once labelled an al-Qaeda operative has bought the man a plane ticket to return to Canada, in defiance of federal law.

More than 100 Canadians have donated money to pay for a ticket for Abousfian Abdelrazik, the 47-year-old arrested and detained in Sudan during a visit in 2003.

Authorities released him after finding no evidence to support any charges of links to terrorist organizations.

However, because his passport expired while he was in prison, Abdelrazik has been stuck in Sudan ever since.

Canadian authorities have told him they will not issue him new travel documents until he buys a plane ticket, something he says he cannot afford.

His supporters decided to buy the \$1,000 ticket for him, running afoul of Canadian law. Abdelrazik's name remains on a United Nations anti-terror blacklist, despite a request by Canada to have him removed.

Under Canadian law, it is illegal to financially support anyone on that list.

The maximum penalty for anyone found guilty of the offence is 10 years in jail.

Donations came from students, artists, politician

Contributors include professors, labour representatives, artists, filmmakers, students and human rights advocates. The list includes Warren Allmand, a former solicitor general of Canada in the 1970s who is currently a municipal councillor in Montreal.

'This plane ticket strips away another excuse the government has used to prevent my client from returning home.'—*Yavar Hameed, Abousfian Abdelrazik's lawyer*

Yavar Hameed, Abdelrazik's lawyer, said the people who donated the money know they risk imprisonment for doing so.

He called the gesture a powerful one, and asked the Canadian government to issue his client an emergency passport before the plane is scheduled to leave on April 3.

"This plane ticket strips away another excuse the government has used to prevent my client from returning home," said Hameed at a press conference Thursday in Montreal.

Dominique Peschard, president of the Quebec-based Rights and Liberties League, said the Canadian government is violating Abdelrazik's rights by denying his return to Canada.

Detention followed family visit

Abdelrazik was visiting his ailing mother in Sudan in 2003 when he was arrested for alleged terrorist links.

Sudanese investigators found no evidence to support criminal charges and released him. Abdelrazik alleges he was tortured during his detention.

The RCMP have also said there is no information linking Abdelrazik to criminal activities.

He has been living in the lobby of the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum for nearly a year.