

# Supporters of Montrealer stranded in Sudan pitch in for his plane ticket home

By: Andy Blatchford, THE CANADIAN PRESS

MONTREAL - More than 100 Canadians from coast to coast have chipped in to buy a plane ticket for a Montrealer who has taken refuge in the Canadian Embassy in Sudan.

A lawyer for Abousfian Abdelrazik said Thursday that those contributing financially to his plane fare can be prosecuted under Canadian law because his name is still on a UN terrorist blacklist.

Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen, has been linked by international authorities to Osama bin Laden, but he has never faced criminal charges.

Federal government documents show that CSIS operatives asked Sudanese authorities to arrest and detain Abdelrazik in 2003, a recent published report revealed.

Abdelrazik, 47, who has been holed up at the embassy in Khartoum for nearly a year, alleges he was tortured during his imprisonment in a Sudanese jail.

"We've lent our name to the use of torture against ... a Canadian citizen in Sudan and I'm very, very much opposed to that," donor David Orchard, the two-time Progressive Conservative party leadership candidate, said in a phone interview.

"If that results in me going to prison, well, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

The list of financial contributors contains the names of 113 Canadians across the country, one New Zealander and an anonymous donor.

Other notables who opened their wallets include former federal cabinet minister Warren Allmand and James Loney, a Canadian peace activist taken hostage in Iraq three years ago.

Orchard and Wilf Ruland of Dundas, Ont. each donated \$400, the largest contributions.

"There is risk (of imprisonment), I've talked about it with my wife and we agreed that something like this can't go unchallenged," Ruland, a scientist, said in an interview.

Montreal teacher Cory Legassic, who contributed \$20, said the state of Canada's immigration system scares him more than being hauled off to prison.

"I think if we don't stand up and do something now, that we risk far more worse scenarios in the future," Legassic told a news conference Thursday in Montreal.

"If I'm going to jail, there's 115 of us, and so we're going to have a lot of people supporting us and organizing around us.

"And it's going to get very messy if they try and put us into jail."

The group spent \$996.98 on a ticket for an April 3 flight on Etihad Airways from Khartoum to Toronto via Abu Dhabi. The leftover cash will be used to cover a plane ticket for Abdelrazik's lawyer, if he's required to have an escort, and to help him restart his life in Montreal.

Abdelrazik's passport has expired and Canadian authorities told his attorney, Yavar Hameed, that he must pay for his own plane ticket before they issue him travel documents.

"The only step now is for the Canadian government to act," Hameed told reporters.

"At this point there should be no further excuse."

Abdelrazik, who has a son, daughter and stepdaughter in Canada, was visiting his sick mother in Sudan in 2003 when he was arrested for alleged terror links.

He was not charged and was later freed because Sudanese investigators found no evidence to support criminal activity.

Hameed said Abdelrazik, who spends most of his time in the embassy weight room, is in contact with his family members in Canada.