



Press Release

Montreal delegation en route to United Nations in support of Abdelrazik

Montreal, 15 June 2010 -- Today, a seven-person delegation is leaving for New York in an effort to help a Montreal man regain the freedom that was taken from him when he was arbitrarily placed on a UN blacklist in 2006. The delegation, which is backed by over 90 Canadian organizations, will meet with a representative of the UN Security Council 1267-Committee which is responsible for overseeing the UN blacklist that has kept Mr. Abdelrazik in a "prison without walls" for five years.

As a listed person, Mr. Abdelrazik is subject to sanctions - an asset freeze and an international travel ban. This means that it is a crime to provide Mr. Abdelrazik with any financial assistance. The latest blow to Mr. Abdelrazik was a refusal by the Quebec government to grant child assistance benefits to his two children because of the sanctions.

«The situation makes me very tired and almost hopeless» admitted Abousfian Abdelrazik. «Why am I not heard? Why doesn't the Canadian government intervene so that my case becomes a priority? Why doesn't the 1267-Committee take my situation into account so that I can be delisted as quickly as possible?» In a video message that the delegation will present to the 1267-Committee, Mr. Abdelrazik appeals to the members of the 1267-Committee to «come spend a single day with me, to understand my life».

Abdelrazik is on the list indefinitely, with no access to the 'intelligence' supporting the general allegations against him, and no meaningful opportunity to defend himself.

«It's outrageous! The 1267 sanctions regime is obviously inconsistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the founding documents of the UN,» stated Dolores Chew, who is joining the delegation on behalf of the South Asian Women's Community Centre (SAWCC). «Whether it is the right to freedom, the right to a fair trial, the right to earn a living, the right to association, the right to security of the person, Abousfian's fundamental rights and dignity are being violated.»

«We are travelling to New York because we want to make sure that the people who have the power to delist him - the members of the Security Council - are aware of the number of people and organizations in Canada who are not only concerned about Abousfian's situation, but are categorically opposed to the very existence of so called preventive lists, whose goals are far more political than practical», said Emilie Breton from Project Fly Home.

The delegation will meet with a representative of the UN Security Council 1267-Committee on June 16, the same date that its members will, according to news reports, meet to consider delisting Taliban members as part of a political deal in Afghanistan.

«Why is the 1267-Committee not moving forward on - or even talking about - the situation of people like Mr. Abdelrazik, which is urgent? Why not use their meeting to put this question on the table?» asked another delegate, James Loney, participating on behalf of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

In this spirit, and in a spirit of increasing the transparency of the regime, members of the delegation sent a letter to all members of the Security Council asking if they could participate in the 1267-Committee meeting that will consider delisting Taliban members.

At the same time, the delegation hopes to put pressure on the Canadian government. «Canadian intelligence agencies have clearly said that they have nothing against Abousfian. The Canadian government should step up. It can free him from the sanctions in Canada immediately, and could put diplomatic pressure on members of the Security Council to delist him. It has the power to ensure that this man could recover something of a normal life», said Breton. «We hope that our message will be heard, by the various decision-makers, here in Canada as well as in the United Nations.»

The 1267 sanctions regime is under severe criticism from human rights organizations, who have referred to it as Kafka-esque. Mr. Abdelrazik has launched a charter challenge to the regulations implementing the regime in Canada. A letter dated 6 April 2011 and signed by eleven states, including Security Council members, recognizes the serious gaps in the listing and delisting processes, and highlights the lack of power of the recently named ombudsperson.

The delegation also includes Mr. Karl Flecker, Canadian Labour Congress; Ms. Nicole Leach, Regina Solidarity Group; Mr. Pierre Jasmin, Artists for Peace; and Mr. Sameer Zuberi, Canadian Muslim Forum. The group, accompanied by several journalists, leaves for New York immediately after a press conference in Montreal.

THE MEETING WITH THE 1267-COMMITTEE SPOKESPERSON WILL TAKE PLACE ON THURSDAY MORNING, AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A PRESS POINT AT THE VISITORS' GATE TO THE UN COMPOUND IN NEW YORK AT NOON.

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