

Press Release

Canadian Labour Congress challenges Security Council "terrorist" list

18 May 2010, Ottawa -- Labour leaders, representing millions of workers Canada-wide, announced at an Ottawa press conference today that they are defying a UN edict by hiring Mr. Abdelrazik, an action considered illegal. Mr. Abdelrazik, whose story of being detained and tortured in Sudan with the involvement of the Canadian government made headlines last year, still remains on a UN blacklist known as the '1267 list'. The unions are paying Mr. Abdelrazik to work on documenting his story.

Under Canadian law it is illegal for any Canadian to "provide or collect by any means, directly or indirectly, funds with the intention that the funds be used" by listed individuals. This prevents Mr. Abdelrazik from working, since anyone paying him a salary could be charged. The penalty is up to ten years in prison.

Hassan Yussuff, Secretary Treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) stated, "We are taking this step in full consciousness that it could be deemed illegal. We are hoping that other unions and labour federations will join us in hiring Mr. Abdelrazik to document his story, so that other Canadians can be made aware of the impact of the security agenda on innocent people." CLC announced that it would hire Mr. Abdelrazik for one week.

"CUPW is proud to stand in solidarity with Mr. Abdelrazik by breaking these sanctions. We understand hiring him goes against the 1267 law, but it is important to take concrete action. We hope in this way to create a movement, with others joining in, until the Harper government takes real steps to remove his name from the list, and until the list is abolished," said Denis Lemelin, President, Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW).

In 2007, both CSIS and RCMP formally conducted reviews and concluded they had nothing against Mr. Abdelrazik. Although Canada then took the position that he should be removed from the 1267 list, the government continues to impose sanctions on him in Canada. Mr. Abdelrazik's bank account was frozen earlier this year.

Dave Ritchie, Canadian General Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers said, "The IAMAW is proud to be a part of this campaign especially because Mr. Adelrazik is a machinist by trade. Ironically, the United Nations Charter of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to work and live in dignity - and yet another small group with the same UN structure can deny someone this fundamental right - with no just cause or proof. The labour movement knows all too well how innocent people can be swept up and have their rights trampled on - and we are demanding an end to the mistreatment of a fellow worker, machinist and citizen of Canada."

"I may seem free, but in fact I am still in a kind of prison," said Mr. Abdelrazik. "I feel isolated from other Canadians, I don't have the same rights that everyone is supposed to have. I am simply seeking a normal life for myself and my family. The support from labour allies announced today makes me seem less alone; I feel that they are together with me."

A campaign titled JUST WORK, initiated by the Montreal-based Project Fly Home, invites organizations to provide financial support to Mr. Abdelrazik by hiring him for a day to document his story.

Earlier this month the Canadian Labour Congress issued a call to Federations of Labour and Labour Councils across Canada to join this campaign against the UN Security Council's 1267 regime in support of Mr. Abdelrazik and the right to work freely and with dignity. **The campaign resolution calls for Canada to 1) immediately lift the sanctions imposed on Mr. Abdelrazik by Canada; 2) actively lobby Security Council members to remove Mr. Abdelrazik's name; and 3) withdraw entirely from the 1267 regime.**

To date, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Labour Congress, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), and Windsor District Labour Council have joined the open rebellion against the sanctions regime. More labour federations, labour councils and unions are joining the campaign every day.

Background

The “1267 list” is not only a no-fly list; it imposes a complete asset freeze on listed individuals. The restrictions are severe and indefinite. Listed individuals have no right to a hearing before being listed, face vague allegations, and are provided with no evidence.

The 1267 regime is under increasing attack. In June 2009, the Federal Court of Canada delivered a blistering assault on its legitimacy, stating that "there is nothing in the listing or delisting procedures which recognizes the principles of national justice". In January 2010, the UK Supreme Court struck down implementing legislation in that country. In the same month, Canadian opposition parties held Parliamentary hearings on the issue. In March, Swiss Parliament passed a resolution striking at the regime. In April, more than 170 people from across Canada joined in a "sanctions-busting telethon", donating to Abdelrazik in open defiance of the legislation. Mr. Abdelrazik's lawyers have long been expected to announce a legal challenge to the regime.

Mr. Abdelrazik was arrested in Sudan on the request of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in 2003. Imprisoned without charge for two periods totaling more than twenty months, he was beaten and tortured. In this context, he was interrogated by two CSIS agents. Freed from prison, he was blocked from returning to Canada, in large part because his name was added to the 1267 list shortly after his final release from detention in 2006.

A public outcry – including a large mobilization from labour - and a Federal Court order finally forced the government to repatriate him in June 2009.

June 27, 2010 will mark the one-year anniversary of Mr. Abdelrazik’s return to Canada after six years of forced exile and wrongful imprisonment in Sudan. Although home, he is not yet free.

Media contacts:

Project Fly Home, 514 222 0205 cell

Karl Flecker, Canadian Labour Congress 613.614.7065 cell

More information:

Project Fly Home - www.peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik