

Canadians disobey terror law



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By David Koch

In an act of civil disobedience, more than 100 Canadians have pooled their money to purchase a plane ticket for Abousifian Abdelrazik, a Canadian national stranded in Sudan. Abdelrazik was arrested and allegedly tortured by Sudanese officials – before they declared him innocent – while visiting Sudan in 2003. Following this, Abdelrazik was designated as a terrorist by the United States, and labelled as an Al-Qaida operative by the United Nations.

At a press conference on Thursday, supporters of Abdelrazik released the names of 115 people who have contributed money to purchase a \$997 plane ticket to bring him home to Canada.

“We are doctors. We are lawyers, teachers, artists, activists, mothers, and we have put our money together because we would like [Abdelrazik] to get home as soon as he can,” said Cory Legassic, a Montreal teacher who donated \$20 for the ticket.

Under the Al-Qaida and Taliban Regulations of Canada’s United Nations Act, it is a federal offence to knowingly collect or provide funds to be used by “Usama bin Laden or his associates.”

Since Abdelrazik's name appears on a UN blacklist – known as the UN Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee Consolidated List – he is considered one of these “associates.” Violating the act may lead to a prison sentence of up to ten years, according to Abdelrazik's lawyer, Yavar Hameed.

“Those people who have collected the money to purchase this ticket have done so at great peril and personal risk,” Hameed said.

Human rights activist Samaa Elibyar, who contributed \$20 for the ticket, said the case of Abdelrazik calls into question the basic freedoms of Canadians.

“When I see that the government is intimidating us, and saying that we will be penalized if we help Abousifian to return home, I just say no,” she stated.

The flight, on Etihad Airways – an airline based in the United Arab Emirates – is scheduled for April 3, from Khartoum to Toronto via Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Supporters of Abdelrazik attempted to purchase him a ticket to Canada last year, but Passport Canada said in an email to Hameed that they would not issue the travel documents until a paid ticket and itinerary were confirmed.

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Daniel Barbarie declined to comment about whether Passport Canada would issue the necessary travel documents. He also refused to confirm whether Abdelrazik's supporters would be charged with violating the United Nations Act.

However, Barbarie did state that as a member country of the UN, Canada has “an obligation to implement the declarations of the Security Council,” including regulations that prohibit the financial support of terrorists.

These recent developments in Abdelrazik's ordeal follow the release of classified documents suggesting that Sudanese authorities arrested him on the recommendation of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Canada's intelligence agency. Hameed obtained these documents last month under the Privacy Act and the Canada Evidence Act.

CSIS released a document marked “secret,” and “Canadian eyes only,” large portions of which were blacked out says that “Abdelrazik was arrested on September 10, 2003 [blacked out] and recommendation by CSIS, for suspected involvement with terrorist elements.”

The document also states that Canadian officials interviewed Abdelrazik after the arrest. Hameed said that the Sudanese authorities tortured Abdelrazik before the interview.

“Our understanding of the situation...is that CSIS is the one that actually recommended Abdelrazik be detained in order to facilitate the process of having him as a captive,” Hameed said. “Opportunistically, they capitalized on that [situation] to interrogate him.”

Hameed described this practice as Canada “outsourcing torture.”

When asked about Canada's role in Abdelrazik's detention, CSIS spokesperson Manon Berube said that an earlier statement, published in a *Globe and Mail* article on March 5, still stands: “CSIS does not and has not arranged for the arrest of Canadian citizens overseas...In the case of Mr. Abdelrazik, CSIS reiterates that it acted in accordance with the CSIS Act, law and policy.”

However, this is cold comfort for Saskatchewan farmer and former Progressive Conservative

Member of Parliament David Orchard, who donated \$400 towards Abdelrazik's plane ticket.

"I'm against torture, period. And I'm against the torture of Canadians," he said. "And I'm against my country asking foreign nations to torture people for us."

The UN put Abdelrazik on its terrorist blacklist in 2006, following the lead of the U.S.. But in a letter dated November 2007, an assistant commissioner for the National Security Criminal Investigations wing of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said that no "current or substantive evidence" supports his continued listing.