

Dozens rally behind Canadian held in Sudan

Man jailed in 2003 on terror suspicion can't get passport

Charles Enman, The Ottawa Citizen

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Under steady drizzle, about 30 people came out yesterday to a rally in support of Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Canadian citizen holed up in the Canadian Embassy in Sudan and waiting to receive a passport from the government so that he can rejoin the family in Canada that he has not seen in five years.

Mr. Abdelrazik, a Canadian from Montreal, was incarcerated in Sudan in 2003 on suspicion of terrorist activity. He had gone there to visit his sick mother. He was held until July 2006, when he was released without ever being charged -- but he has not been able to return to Montreal because of the government's refusal to replace his now-expired passport.

There have been allegations that Mr. Abdelrazik belonged to al-Qaeda and had gone to a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, allegations he has always denied.

At the rally at the Human Rights Monument on Elgin Street, his lawyer, Yavar Hameed, deplored government inaction in bringing him home.

"The question we need to ask is why does the government refuse to repatriate Mr. Abdelrazik, who has not been convicted of any crime and has not faced indictment?"

Mr. Hameed contrasted this case with that of Brenda Martin, a Canadian woman who was convicted in Mexico of participating in a fraudulent online investment scheme and was nonetheless repatriated by the Canadian government last May.

The lawyer criticized what he described as "a system of two-tiered citizenship, of institutional racism, of the marginalization of Canadian Muslims."

Monia Mazigh -- the wife of Maher Arar, the Canadian tortured in Syria after extraordinary rendition by the American government and later exonerated and compensated by the Canadian government -- said "no citizen deserves this degrading treatment."

Ms. Mazigh added that "it is discouraging that this government still leaves citizens in a limbo. In a democratic system, everyone, regardless of suspicions and rumours and allegations, has the right to due process.

"As far as I know, there is no Canadian law that prevents a Canadian citizen from returning back home."