

## Media Release

### From the country's national unions to local labour councils, organized labour rallies in support of Abousfian Abdelrazik's right to return

Montreal, 11 June 2009 -- Labour organizations and union activists from across the country are joining the call to Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon to abide by the the June 4th Federal Court order directing the Minister to ensure that Abousfian Abdelrazik is brought home to Canada by July 3rd.

A letter co-signed by **over 200 union activists from dozens of unions and every part of Canada** was sent to Minister Cannon this morning. Qualifying the government's actions in Mr. Abdelrazik's case as "disgraceful", the letter demanded that the Minister respect the Federal Court ruling and urged him to make use of a plane ticket already purchased for Mr. Abdelrazik by people from across Canada, for a flight scheduled to leave Khartoum tomorrow afternoon (local time), June 12th.

Paul Moist, National President of Canada's largest union, the **Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)** sent a letter to Minister Cannon just hours before the Federal Court ruling was issued last week. The letter also exhorted the Minister to issue the travel document that Mr. Abdelrazik needs to board the June 12<sup>th</sup> flight.

Moist noted that, "Many Canadians are trying to help this Montrealer return home from Sudan – but you and your government continue to thwart their efforts."

In a strongly worded letter calling on the government to immediately issue the appropriate travel documentation to Mr. Abdelrazik, Denis Lemelin, the National President of the **Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)** wrote to Minister Cannon on June 5th, "We fail to see how the continuing refusal to permit Mr. Abdelrazik to come home contributes to national security in any way. A Canadian citizen has once again experienced grave injustice abroad and was obstructed in exercising his rights by those charged to protect and uphold them. This is the opposite of "security"."

Lemelin asked, "Is this the kind of protection Canadian citizens can expect when traveling abroad? Will this practice now apply to all Canadian citizens?" CUPW was also planning to join a citizens' delegation traveling to Sudan in an attempt to escort Abousfian Abdelrazik home on June 12th. The delegation was suspended in response to the favourable court ruling, but remains on standby should it again become necessary.

Jean Trudelle, President of the **Fédération nationale des enseignantes et enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ)**, stated today that the FNEEQ executive was greatly pleased by the Federal Court decision in Mr. Abdelrazik's case and noted that it "shared the concerns of many other organizations about the government's intention to abide by the decision. FNEEQ notes that the judgement says that the breach of Mr. Abdelrazik's rights has the appearance of bad faith and hopes with all its heart that the Canadian government will allow Mr. Abdelrazik to return to the country as soon as possible."

The **Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)**, the **Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)**, the **Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)**, the **Confederation of Canadian Unions**, and the **National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)** have also lent their support to the campaign to bring Abousfian Abdelrazik back home to Montreal.

Labour is also supporting Mr. Abdelrazik at the local level. Le **Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain**, which contributed to the ticket fund for Mr. Abdelrazik, has also demanded that the government repatriate their fellow Montrealer.

Referring to the silence from the government since last Thursday's decision, the Conseil central stated that, "The stubbornness of the government once again tarnishes Canada's reputation in terms of its respect for the fundamental rights of its citizens. Minister Cannon must abide by the ruling of the Federal Court of Canada. Judge

Russell Zinn's ruling is unequivocal about the government's duty in this case. The Minister's hesitation is difficult to understand."

In a statement calling on the government to avail themselves of the June 12<sup>th</sup> ticket, as the easiest means to comply with the court order, Cathy Owen, secretary of the Human Rights Committee of the **Windsor District Labour Council** wrote, "As trade unionists, we know that an injury to one is an injury to all. We will not sit back while the Canadian government willfully violates the rights of its citizens. This flagrant abuse must stop."

Labour is just one aspect of the widespread public support for Mr. Abdelrazik's quest to return to Canada after six years of exile, including detention without charge engineered by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), torture, interrogation while in prison, and now over one year of "temporary safe haven" inside the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum. Thousands of individuals, including several Parliamentarians, have raised their voices, many denouncing what they consider to be racism colouring the government's handling of the case. Scores of people from across the country have written notes of encouragement directly to Mr. Abdelrazik. Almost 90 organizations have formally endorsed the campaign to bring him home while many others, such as the BC Civil Liberties Union, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and the Barreau du Quebec, have written directly to Minister Cannon or Prime Minister Harper.

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### **Contacts**

About the sign-on letter: Beth Smillie, CUPE Communications, Saskatoon, 306 382-8262.

About overall public support: Project Fly Home, 514 222 0205

### **For these and other solidarity statements, and further background:**

[www.peoplescommission.org/abdelrazik.php](http://www.peoplescommission.org/abdelrazik.php)

### **Project Fly Home**

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