

No place like home

Meg Hewings and Stefan Christoff

Grassroots campaign helps Abousfian Abdelrazik to return to Montreal

Accompanied on a very long trip home by his lawyer Yavar Hameed, Abousfian Abdelrazik arrived to a welcoming throng and marching band in Berri Square at midnight Saturday.

Abdelrazik smiled broadly, hugged his family, and made a victory sign.

"I am very happy to come back home, to be in this lovely city with very kind fellow Canadians," spoke Abdelrazik. "It is your support that allowed this to happen now and I thank you very much for everything."

In many ways, the moment marks only the beginning of the end of a six-year ordeal for Abdelrazik, a Montrealer abandoned in Sudan after authorities there arrested him on suspicion of having links to terrorism, only to release him without charge. While in a Sudanese prison, Abdelrazik says he was tortured. He has spent years trying to exonerate his name, and the last 14 months sleeping on a cot at the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum fighting to obtain clearance to come home.

Despite being cleared by both the RCMP and CSIS, Abdelrazik remains on the UN's notoriously spotty no-fly list.

[Project Fly Home](#), a countrywide grassroots campaign, called for his return, bringing the Canadian citizen's case to public light - hundreds of supporters even forked up the money to buy his ticket when the government refused to comply with the Charter of Rights and repatriate him in April.

On June 4, a court order found the federal government had breached Abdelrazik's rights according to the

Charter by obstructing his return to Canada. The landmark ruling also found CSIS was "complicit" in Abdelrazik's initial detention by Sudanese authorities in 2003. At the time, [Federal Court justice Russell Zinn's judgment](#) read: Abdelrazik is a "prisoner in a foreign land" and "as much a victim of international terrorism as the innocent persons whose lives have been taken by recent barbaric acts of terrorists."

Even now that he's home, Abdelrazik's inclusion on the UN blacklist will likely prevent him from getting a job and opening a bank account.

Project Fly Home has long warned that Mr. Abdelrazik's ordeal mirrors that of other Canadian Muslims, such as Maher Arar, Ahmad El Maati, Abdullah Almalki and Muayyed Nureddin, who were all detained, tortured and interrogated abroad, with the involvement of Canadian officials.



Abdelrazik's arrival in Montreal
photo: Tatiana Gomez

Arar was awarded a \$10-million settlement after it became clear Ottawa played a part in his detainment and torture at the hands of Syrian officials. In a weekend editorial for The Globe and Mail entitled "[How many more Abdelraziks?](#)", Arar writes: "Canadians deserve to know why so many of this country's citizens, all of Muslim background, have been imprisoned and tortured abroad. Human-rights organizations, activists and national-security experts have been calling for the current government to establish the credible oversight agency that was recommended by Judge O'Connor several years ago. Their calls have landed on deaf ears."

Abdelrazik will give his version of events to the Federal Court judge in Ottawa on July 7. His lawyers say they will spend the next months clearing their client's name.

Opposition critics and Abdelrazik's supporters have called for an inquiry into his case, as well as into overzealous security practices like the seemingly wide use of "obtaining information by proxy."