

One hundred and twenty risk arrest to donate to Abdelrazik Sanctions-busting telethon a tremendous success

Montreal, 30 April 2010 – A sanctions-busting telethon held Wednesday in support of Abousfian Abdelrazik was a resounding success. More than 120 people from across the country responded to the appeal to donate to Abdelrazik, though they were aware that they risked federal prosecution by doing so.

“The telethon was a measure of the depth and breadth of Canadian opposition to this arbitrary sanctions regime. In a span of two hours, scores of people took an action they knew might result in criminal charges against them – it was a categorical rejection of the fear and racism these measures rely on,” said Cory Legassic, a spokesperson for Project Fly Home.

Because Abdelrazik’s name appears on a Security Council blacklist - known as the ‘1267 list’ after the resolution which established it – he is subject to financial sanctions imposed by the Canadian government. These stipulate that no Canadian shall “provide or collect by any means, directly or indirectly, funds with the intention that the funds be used” by someone on the 1267 list. Although both its security agencies cleared Mr. Abdelrazik in 2007, and the government’s official position is that he should be removed from the list, the Conservative government continues to impose the sanctions on him.

“People called in from Vancouver to Halifax; from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Nunavut. We even got a couple of calls from the United States. Our telephone operators were literally overwhelmed with calls for the full two hours – even after we tried to shut the line down, people kept calling. People also contacted Project Fly Home afterwards to let us know that they hadn’t been able to get through because the lines were so busy,” added Legassic.

At the event in Montreal, an eclectic mix of performances – poetry, story-telling, folk, classical oud, and cabaret – mingled with the voices of phone operators welcoming callers. Operators systematically read the section of the law that could be used against contributors, to ensure the callers understood the situation. As calls came in, the level of a giant “sanctions-busting barometer” rose to indicate the number of people breaking the sanctions, and pins were placed on a map of Canada showing where people had called from.

“People who called in were very determined; very indignant that Mr. Abdelrazik is being treated in this way, after all that he has already suffered at the hands of this and previous governments; and very concerned that people can be put under sanctions in such an arbitrary and Kafkaesque way,” said Liam Olson-Mayes, who helped take calls.

“Project Fly Home has also received copies of letters people have sent to Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon informing him that they have donated to Mr. Abdelrazik and urging him to immediately lift the sanctions his government is imposing on Mr. Abdelrazik and withdraw entirely from this draconian sanctions regime,” said Legassic.

“Seven years is enough, for me and for my family,” said Mr. Abdelrazik. “I spent six years trying to come home, I can’t spend another six trying to get off this list. This list makes me insecure and isolates me from others; until I am free of it, I won’t feel like I am truly home.”

The telethon was broadcast live on rabble.ca television and CKUT 90.3 FM broadcast live onsite.
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More information: 514 222 0205

Background: www.peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik

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