

Abdelrazik renews request to meet with Harper government in light of “permanent solution” memos

Montreal, 20 July 2009 –Abousfian Abdelrazik is renewing his call for a meeting with Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon and Public Security Minister Peter Van Loan in light of chilling memos obtained under the *Privacy Act*. (Original memos: www.peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik/secret.php .)

A series of exchanges between top Foreign Affairs officials in Ottawa and Canadian consular staff in Khartoum reveal that Ottawa was warned in March 2006 to act quickly to repatriate Mr. Abdelrazik because a branch of the Sudanese government was apparently considering a “permanent solution” to his case.

“When I saw these documents, I was in shock. How could Canadian officials have gotten such a clear warning and still refused to bring me home?” said Abdelrazik. “My life was in the balance and they slammed the door closed. What were they thinking?”

“These documents reveal that Canadian authorities conducted themselves in ways that should gravely concern all Canadians,” said Brian Aboud, a Project Fly Home spokesperson in Montreal. “This conduct is all the more troubling in light of the Federal Court ruling of 4 June finding that CSIS was probably involved in having Mr. Abdelrazik detained in Sudan in the first place.”

“The two Canadian embassy officials responsible for the memo warning of a possible ‘permanent solution’ later testified under cross-examination that they believed Mr. Abdelrazik, who was in Dabak prison at the time, was being tortured,” continued Karen Cocq, another spokesperson for Project Fly Home. “They took the warning seriously and made Ottawa aware. But Ottawa continued to block his return.”

“By 2006 it was abundantly and very publicly clear that Canadians detained abroad on allegations in any way linked to terrorism were vulnerable to torture and other serious human rights violations. As such, to see such casual disregard for this sinister threat about a “permanent solution” from Sudanese officials is shocking and indefensible. It is time for explanations and accountability. That must begin with Ministers Cannon and Van Loan agreeing to meet with Mr. Abdelrazik to provide him with the answers he so rightly seeks,” said Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada.

Arriving home on 27 June 2009 after six years of forced exile, Mr. Abdelrazik wrote to Ministers Cannon and Van Loan on 7 July 2009, requesting a meeting to discuss just and appropriate responses to the serious abuses he experienced and to explore the steps the Canadian government must take to have him removed from the UN 1267 list.

UN resolution 1267 imposes a total asset freeze on listed individuals. Canadian regulations implementing this list domestically prohibit anyone from providing Mr. Abdelrazik with any material aid – including salary, loans of any amount, food or clothing--even health insurance.

“I want to bring my life back to normal. I need some answers, I want real assurances that it stops here – not just for me but for everyone. I also need the government’s determined efforts to get my name off that list,” explained Mr. Abdelrazik.

Background: The “permanent solution”

Link to original memos: <http://www.peoplescommission.org/en/abdelrazik/secret.php>

A strongly worded memo marked “confidential” was sent to Foreign Affairs officials John Digangi and Daniel Livermore and copied to others in Ottawa on 21 March 2006. It states, “There is a clearly a very strong desire on the part of the Sudanese government to deal with this case once and for all: we judge as significant [the Sudanese government’s] verbal reference to a “permanent solution” to this case.” The memo goes on to warn that, if Canada does not act quickly to make arrangements for Mr. Abdelrazik’s repatriation, the case will likely be handed over to military intelligence, which, it notes, “operates with complete impunity – there is strong evidence that most of Sudan’s “disappeared” did so at the hands of military intelligence.”

A follow up memo on 17 April 2006 continues, “We expect to be called to a meeting with [the Sudanese government] shortly to iron out the details and the conditions for the release and return of Abdelrazik to Canada. Vague responses will not be tolerated [by the Sudanese government] ...”

Ottawa’s chilling reply comes in a memo marked “secret” and sent on 21 April 2006. Digangi writes, “We are unfortunately not in a position at this stage to offer specific information as to how return would be effected. ... Notwithstanding the expected displeasure of the Sudanese with this response, you should ... make no further comment ... You should also be aware that no/no consideration is being given at this time to any kind of special flight for subject’s return to Canada.”

More background: www.peoplescommission.org/abdelrazik.php

Source:

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