

Government 'failed' Abdelrazik, lawyer says



Abousfian Abdelrazik, front, smiles as he returns to Canada at Pearson International airport in Toronto after a six-year exile in Sudan on Saturday, June 27, 2009. (Nathan Denette / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

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A lawyer for a Canadian man who arrived home this weekend after being stranded in Sudan for six years on suspicions of terrorist links says the federal government "failed" his client for repeatedly changing the terms under which it would allow him to return to Canada.

Khalid Elgazzar said the Canadian government repeatedly promised to provide his client, Abousfian Abdelrazik, with travel documents if he could provide a travel itinerary.

When he did so, the government then said Abdelrazik had to show he could pay for his travel expenses, despite a freeze on his assets, Elgazzar said.

On June 4, a Federal Court judge ordered the government to return Abdelrazik to Canada within 30 days.

"As the Federal Court found, the government of Canada decided they were going to obstruct his return to Canada and they continued to move the goal posts, so to speak, with respect to the requirements for him to return," Elgazzar said Monday on CTV's Canada AM.

"I think in many respects the Canadian government failed my client," he said later in the interview.

Abdelrazik was reunited with his family in Montreal around midnight Saturday after flying from Khartoum to Abu Dhabi to Toronto, before carrying on to Quebec.

The 47-year-old had left Canada in 2003 to visit his ailing mother in Sudan, where he was arrested on suspicion of having ties to terrorist groups.

Abdelrazik said he was tortured while in prison, though he was released without charge.

Despite being cleared of any terrorist links by both the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the RCMP, Abdelrazik was barred from entering

Canada because he remained on a United Nations terror watch list.

He spent 14 months sleeping on a cot at the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum because Ottawa refused to issue him the passport needed to get home.

"To my supporters from coast to coast in every town, every city, every village, thank you very much for supporting me," Abdelrazik told a throng of reporters upon his arrival. "Through your efforts, now I am here."

According to Elgazzar, Abdelrazik not only left Canada to visit his mother, but also to escape harassment he suffered at the hands of federal authorities.

Elgazzar said Abdelrazik was "detained at the request of CSIS."

On Sunday, Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae said Abdelrazik's lawyers could launch a suit against the Canadian government if Ottawa shared information with Sudanese officials that led to his arrest.

"This (case) does raise very basic questions," Rae told CTV News Channel.

Abdelrazik is scheduled to make an appearance in Federal Court on July 7, which his lawyer said is a mere formality to show that the Canadian government complied with the return order.

"I think it's a signal, given the bad faith that's been shown by the government on this file, that the court wants to see for itself that Mr. Abdelrazik has in fact been repatriated and that the government has actually complied with the order," Elgazzar said.