

CAISSE POPULAIRE DESJARDINS FREEZES ABDELRAZIK'S ACCOUNT

Nine months after return to Canada, man on UN sanctions list "still stranded"

Montreal, 15 April 2010 -- Abousfian Abdelrazik, who was reunited with his family in Montreal last June after six years of forced exile, received a letter from Caisse Desjardins in late March, informing him that his bank account had been frozen because of sanctions imposed in Canada under the UN 1267 regime. The bank account contained Mr. Abdelrazik's sole savings, an inheritance from his deceased wife.

"The fact that Caisse Desjardins froze my bank account indicates to me that I'm still in prison. I don't have the right to even have normal things like a bank account." said Abdelrazik about Caisse Desjardins' actions.

This development also effectively leaves Mr. Abdelrazik without access to a bank account. Several months previously, in 2009, Abdelrazik tried to open a bank account with the Royal Bank of Canada, but was denied on the grounds that his "name appears on the United Nations' consolidated list (the 1267 list)". The Caisse subsequently agreed to open an account, only to freeze Mr. Abdelrazik's assets.

Mr. Abdelrazik is the only living Canadian on the UN 1267 list. His name was added to the list in 2006, shortly after he was released from prison in Sudan. The listing effectively delayed his return to Canada for three more years. The list is part of a UN Security Council sanctions regime that the Federal Court of Canada has described as "a denial of basic legal remedies and as untenable under the principles of international human rights." Without procedural safeguards of any kind, the UN 1267 sanctions subject listed individuals to a complete asset freeze and a travel ban. The Al Qaeda and Taliban regulations, which enforce the UN 1267 regime in Canada, effectively prevent Mr. Abdelrazik from earning a living, holding a bank account or enjoying any sense of security by making it illegal for anyone to provide him with any financial assistance. (More information.)

"The government must explain why, when Canada's own security agencies have cleared him, when Canada itself has requested that he be removed from the list and when a Canadian court has declared the 1267 regime to be "Kafka-esque", he remains under sanctions! The government needs to contact all Security Council members and inform them that delisting Mr. Abdelrazik is a priority for Canada. The government also has the power- right now - to lift the sanctions in Canada. Why, in the nine months that he has been home, has nothing been done?" asked Emilie Bréton, who is part of Project Fly Home, a solidarity group with Abdelrazik in Montreal

"Abousfian was imprisoned, tortured and stranded. The Federal Court found that CSIS was probably involved in the initial imprisonment. Not only has the government failed to apologize for this outrageous treatment, it continues to impose sanctions that make it impossible for him to live an independent life. He is stranded all over again, this time in a prison without walls." said Maria Forti, who is also part of Project Fly Home.

As part of a six month campaign leading up to the anniversary of Abdelrazik's return to Montreal, Project Fly Home is demanding that Canada immediately lift sanctions from Mr. Abdelrazik, strike down the "Al-Qaeda and Taliban regulations" in this country entirely, and inform UN Security Council members that having Mr. Abdelrazik delisted is a diplomatic priority.

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