

Press Release

Quebec human rights organizations join family and lawyer of Abousfian Abdelrazik in call to bring Montreal man home

8 May 2008, Montreal - Quebec human rights organizations today joined the call to repatriate Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Montreal man whose name may take its place alongside Maher Arar, Abdullah Almalki, Ahmad El Maati and Muayyed Nureddin in a growing list of victims of a Canadian version of 'extraordinary rendition'.

"What particularly concerns us in the case of Mr. Abdelrazik are the apparent similarities with other cases where we know that Canadian officials have contributed to the illegal detention of Canadians in countries where they have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. It is of crucial importance that the actions of governments are in conformity with international law, which applies in all circumstances. There is no exception," stated Ms. Beatrice Vaugrante, Secretary-General, Amnistie Internationale Canada (Francophone section).

"The state must undertake its responsibilities and repatriate Mr. Abdelrazik without delay," stated Mr. Denis Barrette, spokesperson for the Ligue des droits et libertés (Quebec Civil Liberties Union). "The government must stop delaying the establishment of a mechanism to oversee national security activities, which was recommended by the Arar Commission."

"Canada has an obligation to treat all of its citizens equally," said Mr. Salam Elmenyawawi, President of the Muslim Council of Montreal. "It has the obligation to bring its citizens home and to support its citizens in times of need, particularly when they are abroad. Canada has not properly discharged its obligations in the case of Mr. Abdelrazik. It seems that the government has not learned from the experience of Maher Arar and continues to make similar mistakes."

The call was issued in a press conference attended by Mr. Abdelrazik's step-daughter, Wafa Sahnine, and two of his children, Jioyria Abdelrazik and Kouteyba Abdelrazik. Mr. Abdelrazik's family, based in Montreal, has not seen him for more than five years, when he left to visit his mother in Sudan.

Serious and unanswered questions are raised about the role played by Canadian officials in the arrest, imprisonment and exile in Sudan of Mr. Abdelrazik, who is a Canadian citizen.

A Department of Foreign Affairs 'media lines' document about Mr. Abdelrazik, obtained recently under the Privacy Act, states that "Sudanese authorities readily admit that they have no charges pending against him but are holding him at our request". (This and all other documents obtained under an access to personal information request are available to journalists on request.)

While in prison in December 2003, Mr. Abdelrazik was interrogated by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), despite Canadian doubts about Sudan's human rights record. Since his release in July 2006, he has been blocked from returning home to Montreal.

An internal government memo, dated July 2004, discusses the steps Mr. Abdelrazik's wife was taking to try to bring him home, concluding, "should she get a private plane, there is very little we

could do to stop him from entering Canada. He would need an EP and I guess this could be refused, but on what ground.”

“The Canadian government has come to the assistance of Canadians in distress overseas, as in the case of Ms. Brenda Martin, who was charged and convicted in Mexico. There is no reason whatsoever that Canada cannot immediately repatriate Mr. Abousfian Abdelrazik, who has never been convicted let alone charged, in any jurisdiction of the world,” said Yavar Hameed, Mr. Abdelrazik’s lawyer, also present at today’s press conference.

“Canada is obliged under domestic and international law to repatriate him immediately,” Hameed concluded.

Since the story became public, government statements have failed to clarify the situation. Last week Mr. Abdelrazik was granted ‘temporary safe haven’ in the Canadian Embassy in Khartoum but on Friday last week was denied access to his legal counsel and to journalists.