

Ottawa judge orders publication ban in 1980 Paris bombing case

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Hassan Diab, centre, covers his face as he is escorted from the Ottawa courthouse on Friday. Diab is wanted by French authorities in connection with a deadly bomb attack in Paris in 1980. (Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press)

A judge has ordered a publication ban in a bail hearing for an Ottawa professor arrested in connection with a deadly bombing outside a Paris synagogue in 1980.

Hassan Diab, 55, appeared before Ontario Superior Court in Ottawa on Friday, where Justice Michel Charbonneau ordered the publication ban at the request of federal lawyers.

Diab, who teaches sociology at both the University of Ottawa and Carleton University, was arrested by RCMP officers at his Gatineau, Que., home Thursday at the request of French officials.

Friday's hearing was to determine whether Diab, a Lebanese-Canadian, can be released while awaiting an extradition hearing.

French authorities accuse Diab of making and planting a bomb that killed four people and injured 20 others on Oct. 3, 1980, outside the Copernic Street synagogue in Paris.

Under Canadian law, French officials have 45 days to provide more legal details to back up their extradition request.

Before the hearing, Diab's lawyer, René Duval told CBC News that authorities have the wrong man. He added that he's been tracking witnesses to the explosion.

"And we're in a position to establish that he didn't set foot in France the year in question," Duval said.

He alleges the French government is going after Diab because of a newspaper report that appeared in the French daily *Le Figaro* last year, which claimed Diab is connected to the bombing.

Michel Juneau Katsuya, a former Canadian Security Intelligence Service officer, said French authorities lost track of Diab for several years and Thursday's arrest came some time after they received a tip that Diab was in Canada.

"For a long period of time, they weren't sure he was the right man," he said.

Students shocked

Meanwhile, many students at the University of Ottawa said Friday they were shocked by Diab's arrest.

Kelleigh Ryan, a fourth-year sociology student, said she takes Diab's course on ethnic and national questions — a class where she said he would have lots of opportunities to air his views on the topic.

"I think he's a really nice person, he's a really sweet guy and he's never said anything questionable at all that would make me worry about him as a potential terrorist or anything like that," she told CBC News, adding that she finds the arrest very strange.

"I hope it works out for him."

French authorities claim that Diab was involved in a Palestinian liberation group at the time of the bombing.

Corrections and Clarifications

- Hassan Diab teaches sociology at the University of Ottawa. Contrary to comments made by a student interviewed earlier, he does not teach international development. As well, he was to appear in Ottawa court Friday, not Gatineau court. (*Nov. 14, 2008 / 15:05 PM ET*)

With files from the Canadian Press