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## Details of case against accused Paris bomber remain hidden

Presented by



**Dave Rogers and Cassandra Drudi , Canwest News Service**

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OTTAWA -- A bail hearing for an Ottawa university teacher arrested for the terrorist bombing of a Paris synagogue in 1980 has been adjourned until Thursday to give both the Crown and defence more time to prepare.

Hassan Diab, a 54-year-old who has taught sociology and anthropology at both Carleton University and the University of Ottawa, was arrested by the RCMP at his home on Thursday.

French authorities are seeking to have him extradited on murder and attempted-murder charges for his alleged role in the bombing during a Sabbath service, which killed four people and prompted increased security at Jewish community buildings worldwide. The bombing has been attributed to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Special Operations.

Federal Crown prosecutor Claude Lefrancois obtained a publication ban on evidence that will be heard at the hearing and convinced Justice Michel Charbonneau to seal the details of the charges against the accused under the Extradition Act.

The media can only report the fact Mr. Diab appeared in court, the charges he faces and whether he is released pending an extradition hearing. The public is not allowed to know details of the French government's case against him or any evidence that will be presented at the bail hearing.

Justice Charbonneau said the order was justified under the Extradition Act, but the media can challenge it.

He agreed to adjourn the hearing after defence lawyer Rene Duval explained he had not had time to read the sealed information about his client and Mr. Lefrancois said he needed time to interview a police officer.

Mr. Duval said outside of court that his client has been in shock since his arrest.

"Mr. Diab was treated like a violent bandit," Mr. Duval said. "He is now going to spend time in a common jail where he doesn't belong.

"We will oppose his extradition because this is a case of mistaken identity. It will be difficult for the prosecution to

make its case because all this happened 20 years ago."

Mr. Duval said Mr. Diab has been under stress for more than a year because two men, possibly French police officers operating in Canada, followed him daily to his home and workplace.

The news of Mr. Diab's arrest in connection with the bombing was met with disbelief by two of his former professors.

"It's not credible to me," said Louis Kriesberg, who has continued to write letters of reference for Mr. Diab after he earned his PhD in sociology from Syracuse University in 1995.

"I've known him for a long time as a student. He's a very productive and very bright scholar, and he does good work," he said. "He's very intelligent, very committed to his professional work. He's a lively person -- I enjoy him."

Mr. Kriesberg, who is Jewish, is a professor emeritus of both sociology and social conflict studies at Syracuse University.

He said he never knew Mr. Diab to be in any way anti-Semitic.

"We were good friends, in so much as a professor and graduate student are likely to be," Mr. Kriesberg said. "I never sensed that he was in any way very actively involved in politics. He seemed to be paying attention, but that in no way struck me as unusual. I saw no evidence of any religiosity."

John Agnew, who was on Mr. Diab's dissertation committee, was baffled by news of Thursday's arrest.

"He was not very sectarian," Mr. Agnew said, adding that he remembered Diab was married to an American woman in upstate New York at the time and was "a very secular kind of guy."

"This is not someone who was very militant at all, and not someone who was an Islamist in the least."

Mr. Diab, who is not a Palestinian, never expressed any interest in the Palestinian national cause, Mr. Agnew said.

"Either he spun a tall tale consistently over years or someone else is spinning a tale about him," Mr. Agnew wrote in an e-mail. "I tend to the latter."

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