

'STATELESS' MAN HELD IN SEPT. 11 SWEEP TO GO FREE

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Body

A "stateless man" held by immigration authorities for two years as part of post-9/11 anti-terrorism efforts has been ordered freed by a federal judge in Harrisburg, Pa.

Farouk Abdel-Muhti, who supporters say has been held because of outspoken activism against Israel, especially during appearances on WBAI radio, could be freed within 10 days.

The Daily News detailed Abdel-Muhti's plight in a May 25, 2003, special report that identified the self-described Palestinian freedom fighter as perhaps the last of 1,200 illegal immigrants detained since the 9/11 attacks who had not been charged with a crime, released, deported or classified as a material witness.

U.S. District Judge Yvette Kane said Abdel-Muhti, 56, should be released because the federal government had failed to show there is any likelihood it would deport him in the foreseeable future.

According to federal case law, a detainee should be released when there is no reasonable expectation that he or she will be deported within six months.

In her ruling, released Thursday, Kane noted that the government has been trying to deport Abdel-Muhti for years, but neither the United States or Abdel-Muhti had success getting a country to accept him.

Abdel-Muhti's dilemma played out against several important issues beyond his control: the war on terrorism, the unresolved Middle East peace process, open U.S. borders and the chronic failure of the former Immigration and Naturalization Service, now known as the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, to keep track of known illegal aliens long before Sept. 11, 2001.

But, as The News detailed in its report last year, Abdel-Muhti contributed greatly to his plight. During a 40-year game of cat and mouse, he claimed numerous birthplaces, including Honduras, Jordan, Cuba, Israel, Puerto Rico and the West Bank.

Records show that Abdel-Muhti used 11 dates of birth and more than a dozen aliases, including Albert Hadad, Faruk Abedelmuhit, Faruk Mahmoud Abdel Muhti and Firuk Multi.

Kane rejected the government's argument that it was Abdel-Muhti's fault that he couldn't be repatriated. She concluded that he had made substantial unsuccessful efforts to obtain travel documents from numerous nations.

Graphic

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ROBERT MECCA GIVE HIM LIBERTY Self-described Palestinian freedom fighter Farouk Abdel-Muhti, jailed two years ago in post-9/11 terror sweep, may soon go free.

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