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Alleged ring leader in Ont. terror case gets bail

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The eldest suspect and alleged ringleader in the Toronto-area terrorism case was granted bail on Monday after the most serious charge against him was dropped.

Qayyum Abdul Jamal, 44, breathed a loud sigh of relief and smiled at his wife when the judge made the order inside a Brampton courtroom.

"I believe we were able to establish, during the preliminary inquiry, that there were a lot of problems with the Crown's case, and as a result of that the Crown ultimately ... dropped the charge against Mr. Jamal on the bombing allegation," Jamal's lawyer, Anser Farooq, told reporters.

Jamal is still charged with participating in a terrorist group and receiving/providing terrorist training.

Outside court, he praised God and hugged his wife and four young children in front of a throng of news cameras.

Jamal has been held in a maximum-security jail since his arrest 17 months ago, with most of his detention spent in solitary confinement. He said the ordeal was trying.

"It was very ,very, very, very bad. It was a lot to hold ... if I didn't have my faith, I couldn't hold it," he said, before getting behind the wheel of a minivan and driving away.

Jamal was released on \$100,000 bond, nearly three quarters of which was donated by members of the Muslim community, the Toronto Star reports.

He must remain under the supervision of six sureties, not use the Internet, and stay inside his home unless attending court, his lawyer's office and Friday prayer, the newspaper reports.

Reasons for the release cannot be reported due to a publication ban.

Farooq said his client is only looking at the possibility of 10 years in prison, if he's convicted.

"So our position is the quicker we move this forward, the quicker we can exonerate him and clear his name and he can move on with his life."

Jamal is the third adult suspect to be granted bail in the case. He was arrested in June 2006, along with 17 other suspects, four of them youths.

Police allege the accused, mostly Muslim men in their 20s, plotted to blow up buildings and behead the prime minister. Authorities also accuse the men of taking part in training activities in a cottage country town about 150 kilometres north of Toronto.

In September, the Crown filed a direct indictment, halting a preliminary hearing and pushing the case straight to trial.

As a result, the charges were stayed against the men and new charges were laid. The move allowed those in custody to apply for bail a second time.

Last month, Steven Chand, who has been identified as wanting to behead Prime Minister Stephen Harper, was denied bail for the second time.

Three youths charged in the case have had their charges against them stayed. The trial for the fourth youth, who is free on bail, is expected to begin in March.

Lawyers for the adult suspects say it could be years before their trial gets underway.

With a report from CTV's Chris Eby and files from The Canadian Press