

PRESS RELEASE

December 19, 2005

Why Am I Being Punished? (On The Petty Brutality of the American Army)



In his own words

by

Sami Muhyideen al-Hajj

Written from his Guantanamo Bay prison cell

This question has continued to grind in my head like a millstone and stab at my heart. I still search every corner of my mind hoping that perhaps I will find a light or a memory that will make me forget the situation I am in.

There is so much that prisoners live through, particularly those who are innocent, in the dark, horrid gloominess of prisons. It strips them of any ideas of humanity they may have harboured within themselves, due to the severe punishment meted out for no reason at all. Punishment follows punishment. It is almost as if the prisoner is in a sea whose waves crash against each other: he is ripped apart time and again and he holds his breath as he chokes in the bitter, salty water of that sea. The programme of punishment for this prisoner continues with years of subjection and oppression. This question rings so often in the ear of the prisoner and he hears its annoying drone: why am I being punished?

I start my story with the punishment in Bagram prison where we were only allowed to go and relieve ourselves twice a day – once before sunrise and once before sunset – and you would only be allowed to go when it was your turn. I remember once that I had to go urgently, so I whispered to the person before me to allow me to go before him. Then a soldier shouted angrily in my face, 'no talking! Come here'. He pointed to the door and he hung me there from my hands on the wire and I stayed there standing throughout the day shivering from the extreme cold which caused me to urinate on my clothes. The soldiers just laughed at me!

One week after we arrived at Guantanamo Bay, early one morning, all the detainees were ordered to stick their hands out of the small window from which they are given food so that they could be vaccinated for what they claimed was tetanus. When it was my turn, I told them that before I left Doha, I had been vaccinated against tetanus, yellow fever, and cholera, and that the doctor had told me then that these vaccines would be effective for five years, so I didn't need to be vaccinated again. The officer yelled in my face, 'don't talk, stick your hand out so you can be vaccinated. If you don't, I'll force it out'. Finally, they punished me by removing all of my possessions from my cell, including my blanket and even my toothbrush and left me to sleep on the hard, metal floor for three days.

So I asked myself, why am I being punished? Is this treatment compulsory? Have we become like a flock of sheep that we are herded, fettered and obey without arguing or speaking or even asking questions?

Indeed, the strange thing is that once, one night I was stressed after spending many long hours in the investigation room. I went to sleep early because I was extremely tired. I put my hands and my head under the cover. When I was

asleep, I suddenly heard a scream and a soldier yelled at me, 'take your hands and your head out from under the cover'; I got up startled and quickly obeyed the soldier's orders, because we are not allowed to sleep with our heads and our hands under the cover. Then I slept again. Soon the soldier was kicking the door of my cell as hard as he could and spoke in a stern voice. He shouted, why do you put the toothpaste where your toothbrush should be and he accused me of breaking the military laws and regulations. He took all my things and I was punished like this for a whole week.

Fate once brought me together with Jamal [Kiyemba] from Uganda, Muhammad [el Gharani] from Chad and Jamal Belmar from Britain in the same camp. We were next to each other and agreed that it was the horrid orange clothing and black skin: having black skin was reason enough for the white soldiers to harass us, provoke us and punish us sometimes with reason and sometimes for no reason at all. They would always wake us up under the pretext of needing to inspect our cells. I remember that one night they asked me to wake up for an inspection, then when they entered and found nothing, they punished me for seven days because they found three grains of rice on the floor that ants had gathered around. I said to myself, why am I being punished?

One night, two soldiers stood outside my cell with chains and shackles. They shouted and kicked the door violently. I woke up startled. They shackled me and then led me from my camp to Camp Romeo where they put me in a cage after they had stripped me of my clothes except for my shirt and my shorts, without shoes, soap, toothbrush, etc. When I asked why I was being punished, I received no reply until the next day when the official came to me after I begged for an answer and told me that this punishment would last two weeks because a soldier had found an iron nail in the window outside my cell. I said to the official, 'I've got an iron nail?! Where could I have brought it from and how could I have put it on my window from the outside? And why?' However, he went away quickly without saying so much as two words to me. I spent two weeks sitting because I couldn't kneel in my shorts without revealing my private parts. I slept on the metal on fourteen nights in the cold winter.

Was my going to Afghanistan for less than four weeks and carrying a camera for the Aljazeera news channel straight after the terrorist war against the unarmed Afghan people a crime I am being punished for with incarceration for more than four years, the upshot of which is that I am accused of terrorism?! There are many questions that are going around and around in my head like a millstone, poking at the reality behind the glossy slogans boasted by the flags of freedom, peace and democracy all over the world.

SOURCE: Dossier - Sami Al Hajj: Case in the War on Terror, 'Justice' - Ahmad Ibrahim, Al Jazeera

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11337>

December 21, 2005

Bahraini on Suicide Watch

By kanwal tariq hameed

A BAHRAINI detainee at Guantanamo Bay has been transferred from his "isolated" confinement cell to a psychiatric block.

Juma Al Dossary is receiving treatment after tearing open an existing wound and slashing his right bicep on December 12, according to US Department of Justice lawyer Edward White.

Mr Al Dossary, 31, attempted for the second time to open a wound on his right arm, sustained in an earlier alleged suicide attempt on October 15, Mr White revealed in a letter sent to Mr Al Dossary's lawyers.

US Government representatives said in court last week that Mr Al Dossary had been moved to a "psychiatric block" in Delta Camp One, his lawyer Joshua Colangelo-Bryan told the GDN.

He warned, however, the move did not guarantee Mr Al Dossary's living conditions had actually improved.

Mr Al Dossary's lawyers at New York-based Dorsey and Whitney firm received the news in a letter last Thursday, a day before a court hearing for their plea that "modest relief" and "minimally humane conditions" be granted to Mr Al Dossary.

"In spite of classifying the exact same behaviour as a suicide attempt last month, the US military chose not to class it (the latest attempt) as that for reasons only they know," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

The letter stated Mr Al Dossary has been transferred to Camp One, "where he continues to receive appropriate medical and psychological treatment".

"On December 12, 2005 Mr Al Dossari again attempted to open the existing wound on his right arm and lacerated his right bicep," the letter said.

"The Guantanamo staff immediately intervened and Mr Al Dossary was taken to the naval hospital.

"He has been treated and is currently in stable condition residing in Camp One."

Lawyers have been pushing for an improvement in Mr Al Dossary's confinement conditions, saying he has repeatedly attempted suicide.

He reportedly slashed his arm and was also found hanging from the mesh wall of his cell, with a pool of blood on the floor, by Mr Colangelo-Bryan during a visit in October.

Mr Colangelo-Bryan has said Mr Al Dossary's repeated suicide attempts are a direct result of the conditions of his confinement.

At the hearing, Mr Colangelo Bryan said he argued that the move did not guarantee better conditions for Mr Al Dossary who, without a legal order, could be taken back to isolated conditions at the "whim" of the US military.

"We know however, in any of the camps in Camp Delta, including Camp One, it is possible to isolate detainees - so the statement simply that he has been moved to Camp One tells us nothing about his actual conditions of confinement," said Mr Colangelo Bryan.

"Also, the military claims complete authority to do anything it wants with detainees so at its whim the military could choose to put Juma back in Camp Five unless there is a court order to the contrary."

The US government argued in court that Mr Al Dossary had been provided with "adequate care" and that he "has no rights at all," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

They also said care at Guantanamo Bay was "excellent" and Mr Al Dossary did not need changes in his confinement conditions, he added.

"Which is a preposterous argument, considering that by their own account he's tried to kill himself 10 times," said Mr Colangelo Bryan.

"If ever there were circumstances where different conditions were needed, this is that circumstance."

Washington District Court Judge Reggie Walton "ordered the government to submit a sworn statement describing Juma's actual conditions in Camp One," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"He did not rule, he said he wanted to work on it over Christmas."

Mr Colangelo-Bryan said he suspected the US Military did not believe Mr Al Dossary, who has been incarcerated without trial since February 2002, had "anything to tell them".

"According to the military, Juma has been interrogated on an average of once a month for the past two years.

"That does not strike me as a particularly active interrogating schedule - which makes me suspect that the military doesn't actually believe that Juma has anything to tell them."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11377>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News

December 23, 2005

Catholic Guantánamo 25 Return Home

Saturday, December 17th - The last group of the Guantánamo 25 returned to the United States, flying into Newark with bags of dirty clothes and a lot of good stories. We were stopped by OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control) and questioned about our activities in Cuba. They went through our bags, made copies of papers and our passports, and had us fill out a questionnaire. We are not sure what will come of this "processing," but we are pretty confident that threatening letters from the U.S. government will soon darken our mail boxes. We will let you know what happens.

But, enough about us! We want to thank all of you for your prayers and support and fasting in solidarity with the prisoners. We walked and vigiled as a group of 25, but we were constantly aware of all of you walking and vigiling with us.

In the few days since we returned, we have been overwhelmed with appreciation for our Witness Against Torture. Pressure against torture and illegal detention grows along with hunger and thirsting for justice.

As we prepare for the holidays, we are especially grateful for everyone in our communities who had double portions of work while we were gone.

The group will be meeting soon to evaluate the action and consider next steps. In the meantime, we will continue to update this website. If you have photos or reports from solidarity actions, please post them here or email them to [press\(at\)witnessstorture.org](mailto:press(at)witnessstorture.org).

Peace and Gratitude,

The Witness Against Torture Team

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11434>

SOURCE: Witness Torture.org

Gates of Guantanamo

By: Jake McNamara

Last week, camped five miles outside of Guantanamo Bay because the Cuban government strictly guarded passage to the U.S. military base, five Ithacans and 20 other Americans protested. They came together against the imprisonment of some 500 suspected al Qaeda and Taliban fighters who have been held in Guantanamo for more than three years without trial. During the day, the protestors could see nothing of the prison. The night was different.

"At night, we could go up to this little hillside ledge, where we could see the lights of the base, the searchlights going through the sky," said Clare Grady, one of Ithaca's St. Patrick's Four protestors. "There was this ominous feeling watching that. It was this huge contrast between these really beautiful surroundings and the awful, awful things that are happening in the prison."

The "awful things" Grady mentioned are the alleged civil rights violations happening to Guantanamo prisoners. Amnesty International, a human rights watch group, recently called the prison "the gulag of our time," and other groups are likewise outraged at the alleged torture happening there.

The 25 protestors were all from the Catholic Worker Movement, and their demonstration mainly involved prayer vigils at the gates. "Christ was a torture victim," said Daniel Burns, another of the St. Patrick's Four who went to Guantanamo. "And miles away from where we were vigiling they were torturing him again, metaphorically speaking."

Grady seconded that their demonstration had many religious parallels. During the first five days of protest, the group marched 107 kilometers [66.4 miles] to Guantanamo, camping along the way. "Choosing to walk is a real tradition in nonviolent movements," Grady said. "It's a way to focus the community, to purify the community and to build the community."

When they arrived at the Cuban gates outside of Guantanamo, the group fasted for three days, although most members did get nourishment from juice at times. Grady awoke at 3:30 a.m. each of the mornings near Guantanamo, often to help maintain a 24-hour prayer vigil.

The fast the group undertook was to show communion with the prisoners, 200 of whom, U.S. officials report, have performed hunger strikes over the past months to protest their captivity. According to the same officials, 22 of the prisoners are now receiving internal nutrition through nasal tubes because of their refusal to eat.

"It was a very moving experience, praying there and being near the prisoners," said Grace Ritter, an Ithacan at the protest. Ritter said the group hoped to be allowed access to the prison, a goal drawn from President Bush's call to European countries to come see Guantanamo for themselves, but they were not surprised U.S. officials ignored them. Nonetheless, the press the protest received (including an article last week in *The Village Voice*) heartens Ritter and the rest of the group. They hope their protest will put further pressure on the Bush administration to stop torturous practices and ensure all alleged criminals due process.

Now that the five Ithacans are back on U.S. soil, they could face criminal charges. For years, the U.S. has banned its citizens from traveling to Cuba without approval. The U.S. Treasury Department approved none of the Ithacans' trips, meaning they were all in Cuba illegally, despite the fact they accessed Cuba from the Dominican Republic. Technically, the protestors could face a \$7,500 fine or 10 years in jail, because the crime constitutes a felony.

"We were in violation of the embargo on Cuba," Ritter said, "But we felt so strongly about this torture happening that we had to do something. If this prison were in New Jersey or Wisconsin, we'd be there every day protesting."

Burns added the U.S. government has not thrown the book at an illegal traveler to Cuba for decades. He suggested that the government probably wouldn't want to deal with all the negative that publicity prosecuting his group would create.

"We live in the land of the free," Burns said, "but you can't go to Cuba... We promise justice for all, but these prisoners are not getting justice."

Burns sees some hope in U.S. Sen. John McCain's (R-Ariz.) push for a ban on torture in a recent \$453 billion dollar military spending bill. But, Burns said, "keeping people in prison for life without a judge is torture... I'm not saying these people are guilty, I'm not saying these people are innocent. I'm saying we need to have trials to find out if they are."

Teresa Grady and Dana Brown were the other Ithacans involved in the Guantanamo protest. The group plans to spend the next month speaking of its experience at Guantanamo and holding other protests and vigils. Burns and the Grady sisters, along with Peter DeMott, will be sentenced for misdemeanor convictions in late January, for spilling their blood in a Lansing military recruitment center during a 2004 protest against the Iraq War. They could face up to a year in prison.

Jake McNamara

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11415>

SOURCE: Ithaca Times

December 24, 2005

New Legal Blow For Bahraini 'Bay Trio'

By KANWAL TARIQ HAMEED

MANAMA

THE legal cases of three Bahrainis being held at Guantanamo Bay suffered a severe setback yesterday after the US Congress passed a bill denying Camp X-Ray detainees the right to a court hearing.

The cases now face being dismissed by the US government, lawyers warned.

The US government may also argue that the Washington District Court has "no authority" to hear a motion filed for an improvement in confinement conditions for Bahraini detainee Juma Al Dossary, said legal team head Joshua Colangelo-Bryan.

He urged the Bahraini government to "make every effort" to secure the release of the Bahrainis, adding that two of them are in "very poor physical and mental health".

The three still incarcerated are Salah Al Blooshi, Essa Al Murbati - who is believed to be still in the hospital as the result of a hunger strike he is said to have begun more than three months ago - and Juma who has tried to kill himself 10 times, according to the US military.

The historic decision, described by lawyers as "shameful", denies detainees the right to a fair hearing and allows the US to hold individuals for the rest of their lives based on evidence obtained through "coercion".

"The US Senate and House of Representatives have passed the proposed law containing provisions that address the rights of those detained at Guantanamo. The President is expected to sign the law very soon, at which point it will become effective as US law," Mr Colangelo-Bryan said.

"The proposed law says that federal courts in the US do not have the authority to hear 'habeas' cases such as those that we have brought on behalf of our clients in which we have asked for a fair hearing."

Although the proposal makes it clear that the law will only affect cases filed after it is passed the US government may yet ask for cases previously filed to be dismissed, including that of Mr Al Dossary, added Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"It remains to be seen whether the government will nevertheless argue that the courts are required to dismiss our cases or that the court has no authority to hear the motion we have brought on Mr Al Dossary's behalf requesting changes to his living conditions.

"While the government has no good legal basis for making these arguments, it has chosen to take the most extreme positions with respect to our clients time after time, and may well take these positions again simply to delay the proper handling of our clients' cases."

Mr Colangelo-Bryan accused the US government of creating "every obstacle to prevent our clients from having a fair hearing.

"It is shocking that for only the second time in US history, the Congress has chosen to deprive individuals of the right to have a fair hearing," he said.

"It is shameful that US law now explicitly allows people potentially to be locked up forever when the only evidence against them was the product of torture," he said.

"This is especially true considering that FBI agents and military personnel have described a wide range of abuses they have witnessed personally at Guantanamo."

Mr Colangelo-Bryan reiterated an urgent request to the Bahraini authorities to push for the release of its citizens, warning that two of the three are in poor condition.

"For this reason, it is crucially that the government of Bahrain makes every effort to secure the release of its citizens who remain in Guantanamo and that it does so soon.

"After all, two of the three Bahrainis are in very poor physical and mental health."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11450>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News

December 28, 2005

British Court Rules Guantánamo Detainee David Hicks Entitled To UK Citizenship

By Richard Phillips

In a politically embarrassing decision for the Australian government, a British High Court has ruled that Australian citizen David Hicks, who has been incarcerated in Guantánamo Bay for almost four years, has the right to a UK passport.

Justice Lawrence Collins told a London court on December 13 that Home Secretary Charles Clarke had "no power in law" to deprive Hicks of a British passport and that he "must be registered" as soon as possible. The decision overrules the Blair government's attempts to prevent the Australian, whose mother was born in England, from obtaining UK citizenship.

Hicks was captured by Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan in December 2001 and handed over to the US military for a \$15,000 bounty. He has been charged with attempted murder, conspiracy and aiding the enemy, and is due to face a Guantánamo trial next year, pending a Supreme Court appeal hearing on the legality of the US military hearings.

Hicks, who has been subjected to ongoing interrogation and physical and psychological abuse, has courageously protested his illegal incarceration and pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The attempt to secure a British passport for 30-year-old Hicks is because he has been totally abandoned by Canberra. From the outset, the Howard government has actively collaborated in the illegal detention of the young Australian as part of its total commitment to the Bush administration's so-called "war on terror".

Canberra has sanctioned the incarceration of Hicks in Guantánamo, most of it in solitary confinement, slandered him as a member of Al Qaeda, a dangerous terrorist and worse, and rejected overwhelming evidence that US interrogators tortured him. These violations of Hicks's basic rights constitute war crimes under the Geneva Conventions.

The Howard government has taken unprecedented legal action to prevent Freedom of Information access to its correspondence with Washington on Hicks's detention. Appeals to the government by his father, as well as military and civilian lawyers and the Australian Law Council, have fallen on deaf ears.

Canberra has also unconditionally endorsed Hicks's prosecution in a US military commission, claiming that the show-trial procedures will be "fair". In fact, with the exception of the Bush administration, it is the only government in the world to have publicly supported these blatantly undemocratic hearings.

New obstacles

Lawyers for Hicks have declared the British court ruling an important legal victory and that the Blair government was now obliged to demand his release from Guantánamo as it had previously done with nine other British prisoners.

Major Mori, Hicks's American military lawyer, said: "Hopefully he is one step closer to ending this nightmare that has existed for him for the past four years...."

"I don't want to speculate on what the [US] administration's decisions are going to be—all I know is the UK says military commissions are not tolerated for their citizens. David Hicks will now be a British citizen and he should be afforded the same benefit," Mori said.

Hicks's Australian lawyer, David MacLeod, told the media that if Hicks could secure entry to Britain "it would be quickly discovered that he was not guilty under UK laws". He could then return to Australia.

Terry Hicks, David's father, however, was more cautious: "I'm not going to jump up and down yet until he walks through the front door. I think we've still got a battle on our hands, although I hope I'm wrong."

The tactic of seeking Hicks's freedom from the Guantánamo Bay hellhole by becoming a British citizen is fraught with problems.

The Blair government has already announced that it will appeal the court decision, effectively delaying further action on Hicks's citizenship until early next year. Even if the government loses this appeal, further obstacles could be placed in his way.

Before he can be considered a UK citizen, Hicks must be visited in Guantánamo and officially sworn in by a British government official. No civilians, however, are allowed into the US military jail or to see any prisoner without Pentagon permission. US officials could therefore prevent British officials from seeing Hicks for months.

Last month, for example, the Bush administration refused to permit UN representatives to visit Guantánamo simply because they wanted to speak with inmates. Such are the conditions inside the prison that an estimated 200 inmates are involved in a hunger strike over their illegal detention and ongoing isolation. One of the protesting prisoners has become so desperate that he has reportedly attempted suicide on ten different occasions.

The Blair government could also attempt to revoke Hicks's citizenship, using unsubstantiated US allegations to claim that he constitutes a security risk in Britain.

While Hicks's lawyers point to the release of UK prisoners from Guantánamo, this only occurred because the Blair government came under considerable pressure from detainees' families, as well as human rights organisations and a section of the legal establishment.

Moreover, the Blair government has drawn a distinction between British citizens and longstanding British residents. It has ignored appeals to assist residents even if they have lived most of their lives in Britain. There are at least six UK residents involved in the Guantánamo hunger strike.

Howard government urges speedy trial

The Howard government responded to the UK court ruling by declaring the issue "a matter for Britain" but it quickly called for Washington to begin the military trials without delay.

"We would like to see him before the military commission as soon as possible," Prime Minister John Howard told the media on December 14. In other words, the Pentagon should quickly activate its show trials and hand down its pre-determined verdict, thereby circumventing any possibility of Hicks being released as a British citizen.

These sentiments were repeated a day later by Human Services Minister Joe Hockey and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, along with new smears against Hicks.

Hockey declared that Hicks should not be allowed into Australia until or unless he faced a US military trial. Without a shred of evidence, he declared: "This guy trained to blow up Australian citizens and other citizens of the world".

These unsubstantiated allegations are a continuation of the Howard government's concerted efforts to vilify Hicks.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who has regularly denounced Hicks as "dangerous terrorist", told ABC radio that the government would block any attempt by Hicks to reenter Australia if he secured British citizenship. "In so far as he's a British citizen, then he would have to make application to come to Australia if he wished to do so and that's something we would consider if the circumstances ever arose," he said.

Downer's comments are yet another example of the Howard government's contempt for democratic rights. In his determination to persecute Hicks, Downer is now calling into question the status of thousands of Australians who currently hold dual citizenship and come and go from Australia as they please.

These rash declarations indicate that the Howard government is rather nervous about the British court ruling. It faces increasing opposition over its refusal to defend Hicks and other Australian citizens and is still smarting from the Pentagon's sudden release of Australian citizen Mamdouh Habib from Guantánamo Bay on January 28.

Habib was captured by Pakistani police while visiting that country in October 2001 and then illegally transferred or "rendered" by US forces to Egypt, where he was beaten and subjected to electric shock, water torture, drugs and

forced to sign false confessions. He was eventually transferred to Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay in 2002, where he was held for almost three years and again subjected to physical and psychological abuse.

White House officials had assured Australian government officials that Habib would be charged and put before a military commission trial. Having spent three years demonising Habib, Canberra was unexpectedly told by the Pentagon that it could not charge the 50-year-old father of four from southwest Sydney and that he would be freed.

Late last week, a few days after the British court ruling on Hicks, Habib's lawyers launched high court action against the Howard government, Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation Director General Dennis Richardson and Australian Federal Police Commission Mick Keelty alleging the complicity of their officers in his kidnap, false imprisonment and torture.

Habib is suing these officials and seeking compensation for injuries and "psychological shock and distress" caused by his illegal detention. He has also named Alistar Adams, an Australian consular official in Pakistan, who, Habib claims, was a witness to his imprisonment and torture in Pakistan in October 2001.

Habib's statement of claim asserts that because he was an Australian citizen, the government had a legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to stop him being "kidnapped, abducted, wrongfully arrested, assaulted, tortured, unlawfully interrogated or inhumanely treated" during his detention without charge by foreign governments.

While the case will not be heard until next year, it could well reveal more damning information about the Howard government's complicity in Washington's criminal actions against Australian citizens.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11478>

SOURCE: World Socialist Website

December 30, 2005

U.S. Reports Surge in Guantanamo Hunger Strike

By Will Dunham

WASHINGTON, Dec 29 (Reuters) - The number of Guantanamo Bay prisoners taking part in a hunger strike that began nearly five months ago has surged to 84 since Christmas Day, the U.S. military said on Thursday.

Forty-six detainees at the prison for foreign terrorism suspects at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, joined the protest on the Christian holiday on Sunday, said Army Lt. Col. Jeremy Martin, a military spokesman.

The prisoner population, which the Pentagon says numbers about 500, is believed to be uniformly Muslim. Only nine have been charged with any crime.

"There's been a significant increase in the number that have been added to the hunger strike," Martin said by telephone from Guantanamo.

Lawyers for some of the detainees call the strike a protest of jail conditions and prisoners' lack of legal rights. The military has denied allegations of torturing detainees.

Medical personnel were force-feeding 32 of the hunger strikers with plastic tubes inserted into the stomach through the nose, the military said. Asked the purpose of the force-feeding, Martin said, "Because our policy is to preserve life."

Military officials define a hunger striker as a detainee who has refused nine straight meals, and often refer to the strike as a "voluntary fast" and force-feeding as "enteral feeding."

The detainees began the strike in early August after the military reneged on promises to bring the prison into compliance with the Geneva Conventions, their lawyers said. Detainees are willing to starve to death to demand humane treatment and a fair hearing on whether they must stay, the lawyers said.

Most of the detainees were captured in Afghanistan and have been held for nearly four years.

'ALLOWED TO DIE'

Amnesty International official Jumana Musa said this week's surge illustrates the strike's seriousness.

"You are talking about a prison population of hundreds who have decided that with no conceivable change in their future that they just don't care to live anymore, or they are going to make a statement in dying," Musa said.

Joshua Colangelo-Bryan, a lawyer for three detainees including Bahraini striker Isa Almurabati, said, "Isa told me that he will end the hunger strike when he is sent home. His philosophy is that he should be sent home or allowed to die because the idea of spending the rest of his life at Guantanamo without any due process is simply unbearable."

In a statement, the military said a hunger strike "is consistent with al Qaeda training and reflects detainee attempts to elicit media attention and bring pressure on the United States government to release them."

Martin said the peak participation in the strike was on Sept. 11, the fourth anniversary of the attacks on America orchestrated by the al Qaeda network, with 131 detainees taking part. Human rights lawyers have estimated at least 200 detainees were participating at the peak.

"Enemy combatants on voluntary fast are closely monitored by medical professionals, receive excellent medical care, and when required, the appropriate amount of daily nutrition and hydration through enteral feeding," the statement said.

In an October court filing, Julia Tarver, a lawyer for detainees, said U.S. personnel violently shoved tubes through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anesthesia or sedatives. "When they vomited up blood, the soldiers mocked and cursed at them, and taunted them with statements like 'look what your religion has brought you,'" Tarver wrote.

Martin said called "totally false and baseless" allegations of deliberately inflicting suffering in this feeding process.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11510>

SOURCE: Reuters

December 31, 2005

US Denies Guards Force-Feed Guantanamo Hunger Strikers

The United States is denying allegations that its methods of force-feeding hunger strikers at the Guantanamo Bay military base constitute torture.

The United Nations special rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak, says visiting lawyers have made well-substantiated allegations of cruelty.

It is alleged prison guards, rather than doctors, have been inserting tubes into prisoners' noses and forcing them down into their stomachs, causing vomiting and bleeding.

A spokesman for the Pentagon, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Maka, has denied this is happening.

"They suppose that these people are being left bleeding - I know of no instance of that," he said.

"There's been no reports of that. There's no credible evidence produced by any investigation of that fact.

"So what I'm telling you is that I do not believe his allegation."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11527>

SOURCE: BBC via Abc.net.au

UN Concern at Guantanamo Force Feeding

There are credible allegations that Guantanamo hunger strikers are being force-fed in a cruel manner, the UN special rapporteur on torture has said.

Manfred Nowak's comments came after it emerged that the number of detainees refusing food at the prison camp had more than doubled since 25 December.

Some 84 inmates are now refusing food, according to the US military.

But a Pentagon official said there was no evidence that they had been treated in an inappropriate way.

'Bleeding'

Mr Nowak has not been to Guantanamo, and turned down an invitation to the camp because the US refused to give him unrestricted access to the detainees.

He told the BBC that he had received reports that some hunger strikers had had thick pipes inserted through the nose and forced down into the stomach.

This was allegedly done roughly, sometimes by prison guards rather than doctors. As a result, some prisoners had reported bleeding and vomiting he said.

"If these allegations are true then this definitely amounts to an additional cruel treatment," Mr Nowak said.

The allegations were rejected by Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Brian Maker.

"To suppose that these people are being left bleeding - I know of no instance of that, there's been no reports of that, there's been no credible evidence produced by any investigation of that fact," he told the BBC.

All those receiving what he called "internal nutrition" were being monitored by trained medical personnel, Lt Col Maker said.

Concern

The US military defines a hunger strike as missing nine consecutive meals.

Lawyers for some of the detainees have said the hunger strikers are protesting against their continued detention without trial and against the conditions in which they are being held, he adds.

About 500 prisoners remain at Guantanamo, many of them captured in Afghanistan. Some have been held for nearly four years without charge.

Human rights campaigners have expressed growing concern about the treatment of inmates at Guantanamo.

The Bush administration has denied allegations of abuse at Guantanamo, insisting it does not torture prisoners.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11526>

SOURCE: BBC News

January 01, 2006

Fears Over Bay Hunger Strikers

By kanwal tariq hameed

LAWYERS are worried for the lives of two Bahraini detainees thought to be on hunger strike in the notorious Guantanamo Bay detention camp.

Isa Al Murbati and Juma Al Dossary have each made it clear they would rather die than live in the camp facility, their lawyer said yesterday.

The men are thought to be among 84 prisoners staging a hunger strike, which initially began in June last year.

More than half the hunger strikers joined the protest on December 25, according to the US military.

The increase in hunger strikers may be in response to a law passed by President George W Bush, denying detainees the right to a hearing in US federal courts, said New York- based lawyer for the Bahraini three, Joshua Colangelo-Bryan.

"We are extremely concerned about the physical conditions of Juma and Isa because both have demonstrated their preference for dying as opposed to remaining alive in Guantanamo Bay and are taking actions to damage their physical health," he said.

"As Isa told me, his position is that he should be sent home or allowed to die, because a life sentence at Guantanamo Bay is unbearable.

"I think that Juma's actions demonstrate that he feels the same."

Mr Al Murbati, 40, who was admitted to hospital and unable to meet his lawyers as a result of his hunger strike during their last visit to the prison on October 15, was likely to be continuing his strike, said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

Mr Al Murbati was said to have begun his hunger strike during the summer of last year and is reportedly being tube-fed since October.

Mr Al Dossary, 31, began a hunger strike in November to protest his continued detention.

This followed the release of three Bahrainis out of the six Bahrainis originally held at the camp, on November 5.

"I have every reason to believe that Isa is continuing his hunger strike," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"I know that Juma has been at times on hunger strike and may well be again."

He said no information was available whether the third Bahraini detainee, Salah Al Blooshi, was taking part in the hunger strike, because the US military did not allow the lawyers to contact their clients.

Mr Colangelo-Bryan said the law in itself did not eliminate the cases for the Bahraini three from being heard at a US court. "The law in its language does not affect our cases, because they were filed before it was passed, he said.

The demands of the hunger strikers are likely to be the same as when the protest was initiated last summer, he said. "Those demands are for fair hearings, respect for religious practices and improvement in living conditions."

Lawyers for the three are currently awaiting a court decision from Washington District Court Judge Reggie Walton, on an appeal for "modest relief" and "minimally humane conditions" for Mr Al Dossary, and are planning their next visit to Guantanamo Bay, he said.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=11531>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News