

PRESS RELEASE

October 24, 2005

Family Weeps For Guantanamo Hunger Striker

By KANWAL HAMEED

A 16-year-old Bahraini girl weeps in secret as her father lies wasting away in the US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay.

Hunger striker Essa Al Murbati's wife and five children are also imprisoned, by their misery and the fear that they will never see him again.

"It's as if he is dead," says his 40-year-old wife Elham Ebrahim Khalil.

She has received no correspondence from him in over six months and was sickened to find out he has been on hunger strike since July and is so weak he is being tube-fed by his captors.

"We haven't heard from Essa in over six months," Ms Khalil told the GDN.

"He used to write us letters, but even then he never said much about himself.

"They (the US) also removed lots of words that he wrote.

"In the beginning he used to tell us 'I hope to see you soon', but now all he says is 'I am okay' and he asks about the children.

"It's as if he has died."

The last time she saw her husband was four years ago, before his brother gave him a lift to Bahrain International Airport.

He travelled to Pakistan and later said under questioning that he went for treatment on a medical visa, but was arrested by Pakistani police on arrival.

Mr Al Murbati told interrogators he was abused by the police and signed a statement without reading it.

US authorities claim he travelled to Afghanistan on November 2, 2001 via Pakistan, after being told he would become a better person and have a BD15,000 debt forgiven.

It is alleged that he first went to Kandahar and then Kabul, for weapons training.

Mr Al Murbati is accused of being associated with the separatist group Abu Sayyaf, whose members he allegedly met in the Philippines to discuss channelling money to Arabs in Afghanistan.

He has denied all the allegations.

The US claims he was injured by a grenade while travelling to Khost, Afghanistan.

At one point he allegedly said he was injured in a bus accident, but later said a bomb exploded near him.

Mr Al Murbati allegedly told interrogators he lied because he was afraid.

Ms Khalil learnt about the hunger strike through the GDN last Wednesday and was so upset she could not eat.

"I really feel sad without Essa," she said.

"He's my husband, he's the father of my children and I don't know if I'll ever see him again.

"When I first found out, I felt like I couldn't eat.

"We found out about Essa because my son saw the newspaper in school and told me.

"I bought the paper and my 16-year-old daughter read it at home. She didn't say a word, but the next day I heard her crying in her room."

"The biggest problem is for my kids. There are some children who know their father has died, but for my kids it is as if he has died, but they are still waiting to see him again."

"I write to him, but I don't know if he ever gets the letters," she added.

Ms Khalil said that the family had no information about Essa's condition until the GDN report, in which lawyer Joshua Colangelo-Bryan revealed that Mr Al Murbati was on hunger strike and being tube-fed by his captors.

Mr Colangelo-Bryan heads a team of US lawyers representing the six Bahraini detainees, who have been held at Guantanamo Bay for more than three years without trial. He met Mr Al Murbati and the others in a visit to the maximum-security prison camp on October 15.

Mr Al Murbati, who begun his hunger strike in July, had lost a lot of weight and looked "exhausted", said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

Ms Khalil and her children, three sons and two daughters, have suffered emotionally and financially since Mr Al Murbati's arrest.

"Nowadays I give all my time to my children - I don't work," said Ms Khalil.

"I have to be their mother and their father. Essa used to provide for us, but since he has gone we are being looked after by his family and my family."

Some societies in Bahrain also provide the family with aid, she said.

"We have five children here, the eldest is 16 and the youngest is nine," said Ms Khalil.

"The little ones don't really know what has happened, but I know the elder two do. But they will never talk about it.

"Especially my eldest girl, she was 12 when she last saw her father. I know it upsets her, but she doesn't like to talk about it. She's just so quiet."

This month completes four years since Ms Al Khalil last saw her husband.

"It's hard to even remember the last time I saw him," she said.

"I remember I didn't take him to the airport, his brother did. Now I regret that, I wish I had taken him, but I couldn't drive then.

"I only learned to drive after he was captured, because I had to."

Their parting words are burned into Ms Al Khalil's memory.

"The last thing he said to me was: "Take care of the children and I'll see you soon.'

"But he has not come back still."

Life for all these years has been misery for Ms Khalil, who is kept going by her love for her children.

"I don't even like to leave the house these days," she said.

"I don't really feel like doing anything anymore. I just try to be strong for my children."

Ms Khalil has never been formally told what her husband is accused of, but is convinced he is innocent.

"He is my husband and I know him," she said.

"I am sure he is innocent. I know he wouldn't hurt anyone."

The other five Bahraini detainees are Juma Mohammed Al Dossary, Salah Abdul Rasool Al Blooshi, Adel Kamel Hajee, Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa and Majid Al Naimi.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10167>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News

October 25, 2005

Guantanamo Tube Feeding is 'Medicalised Torture', Doctors To Do Full Demonstration of Tube Feeding Outside US Embassy

When: Tuesday 25th October, 5pm

Where: Outside the US Embassy, London
Details 0207 353 4640 (Reprieve, www.reprieve.org.uk)

What: Dr David Nicholl and Dr Jenny Vaughan will be demonstrating how the US forces in Guantanamo Bay are force feeding the detainees currently hunger striking, before delivering a letter to both the US embassy and the Prime Minister, signed by members of the medical profession, urging the government to intervene in the light of recently unclassified material, which illustrates the true nature of the situation.

The demonstration will see Dr David Nicholl restrained, before Dr Jenny Vaughan inserts a nasogastric tube into his stomach through his nose.

Dr. Nicholl has written the letter, stating that it is fundamental to a doctor's responsibilities in dealing with a hunger strike that the detainee has the right, as any other patient would, to refuse treatment. However, the 'assisted feeding' that the US military is currently undertaking defies this clear ethical obligation. The detainees are restrained with shackles on their arms, legs, waist, chest, knees and head; are not anaesthetised or sedated; and, are subject to this practice as a further means of torture.

Asked why the doctors were planning their protest, consultant neurologist Dr. Nicholl replied: "Recent media reports have failed to demonstrate the true awfulness of force-feeding. We, as clinicians, feel the British public has a right to know what is involved. The Americans euphemistically describe this as 'tube feeding', which to me means having a sandwich on the Northern Line and not what it actually is, medicalised torture."

There have been up to 200 detainees on hunger strike, including at least 6 British Residents. The hunger strike, which is now entering its 11th week has seen at least 21 detainees hospitalised, with others being force fed in their cells. The plight of the British residents is desperate. Their simple demand is that they be charged with a crime or set free. Omar Deghayes is a British refugee from Libya who was given asylum in the UK in 1986 after his father was assassinated on the orders of Colonel Gaddafi. He trained to be a solicitor in Huddersfield, and has a four year old child. No charges have ever been brought against him, and following an assault by a US soldier, he has been left blind in one eye. A BBC Newsnight programme provided evidence suggesting that he is a victim of mistaken identity. However, the UK government has refused to intervene on his behalf, even though the Libyan security services have threatened to kill him if the US authorities ever 'render' him to Libya.

The stories of the other British residents are equally horrifying. Binyam Mohammed was rendered to Morocco by the CIA where his torturers took a razor blade to his penis. Shaker Aamer has a British wife and four young British children who have waited for his return for three years, all hope diminishing. Bisher Al Rawi and Jamil El Banna, far from being seized on the Afghan battlefield, were grabbed in the Gambia where they were setting up a peanut processing plant, and taken to Guantanamo. Ahmed Errachidi, 18 years a British resident, was working as a chef in London at the time the Americans allege he was training as a terrorist on the other side of the world.

Press conference at the location:

Dr David Nicholl

Media contact:

For further information please contact Reprieve Tel 0207 353 4640; Fax: 0207 353 4641; info@reprieve.org.uk

For local West Midlands media, contact David Nicholl 07831 877 622 or david.nicholl@blueyonder.co.uk

For photographs of the event, please contact Reprieve

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10172>

SOURCE: Reprieve

October 26, 2005

Doctors Urge UK To Intervene Against Guantanamo Force-Feeding

A group of leading physicians urged the British government Tuesday to speak out against the force-feeding of detainees, including at least six UK residents, on hunger strike, at the US concentration camp at its naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"We would urge the UK government, which so far has remained silent, to intervene to ensure that those British residents being held in Guantanamo are being properly assessed medically by independent physicians," they said.

The government should "ensure that techniques such as force-feeding are abandoned forthwith in accordance with internationally agreed legal and ethical standards," said 18 doctors, including Professor Elwyn Elias, president of the British Society for Gastroenterology.

The hunger strikers include Libyan law student, Omar Deghayes, from Brighton, southern England, whose case was presented to authorities in Washington last weekend.

He has been imprisoned at the US base without charge since being arrested Pakistan in 2002.

In a letter to the Guardian newspaper Tuesday, the doctors said that the World Medical Association specifically prohibits the force-feeding of hunger strikers.

"Fundamental to doctors' responsibilities in attending a hunger striker is the recognition that prisoners have the same right as any other patient to refuse medical treatment," they said.

Their letter reminded the British government that this right was respected even under very difficult political circumstances when hunger strikers were allowed to die in Northern Ireland during the early 1980s.

"Doctors (and politicians) do not have to agree with the aims of the prisoner or the steps the prisoner is taking but they must respect the prisoner's informed decision," the physicians said.

They warned that American doctors breaching such guidelines should be held to account to their professional bodies.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10205>

SOURCE: IRNA.ir

Guantanamo Inmate Says Guards Forced Feeding Tubes Up His Nose

BY CAROL ROSENBERG

Knight Ridder Newspapers

MIAMI - In his on-again, off-again hunger strike at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Saudi captive Yousef al-Shehri says U.S. troops forced feeding tubes up his nose and into his stomach to keep him from starving himself.

But, his lawyer asserts, indignities suffered by her 21-year-old client did not end there.

Shehri told attorney Julia Tarver this month that U.S. forces - not doctors or nurses - have brutally inserted and removed feeding tubes, and on one occasion yanked a bloody tube out of one prisoner and put it up the nose and into the stomach of another, in the U.S. military effort to keep captives from starving themselves.

The Bush administration flatly denies the assertions and says the 505 or so suspected terrorists housed at Guantanamo get top-notch medical care.

But the Saudi's assertions are by far the most graphic allegations of abuse to emerge from the detention center as the U.S. military struggles to control protests that have bedeviled the prison since summertime: hunger strikes.

``These are baseless allegations," said Army Lt. Col. Bill Costello, spokesman at the Southern Command in Miami, on Friday, adding that no independent investigation of the alleged mistreatment is planned.

Also Tuesday, the attorney for Kuwaiti captive Fawzi al-Odeh, 28, told the Associated Press that his client wants a court to order the military to remove his feeding tube and let him die. Lawyer Thomas Wilner described his client as in despair after nearly three years in U.S. custody, but said he had not filed for the court order because al-Odeh's parents disagree with the request.

Wilner describes his client's condition as deteriorating; prison camp spokesmen say all of the two dozen or so hunger-strikers are stable.

Medical staff at the camp have described the tube-feedings as a medical necessity. Doctors and nurses have said they ethically cannot stand by and permit a patient to commit suicide.

In a declaration filed by Tarver in U.S. District Court in a habeas corpus petition seeking the release of 10 Saudi captives, she portrays a zealous guard force on the eve of the Ramadan holiday in late September or early October mistreating prisoners on feeding tubes.

The commander of medical treatment there disputes the allegations in a U.S. affidavit.

``Doctors and registered nurses carefully and continuously evaluate the health of all detainees being tube-fed," said Navy Capt. John Edmondson, who oversees medical care for captives as well as sailors, soldiers, contractors and their families.

To bolster its case that the detainees are lying, the Justice Department submitted to the court an alleged al-Qaida training manual that says followers are taught to invent abuse allegations.

But Tarver quoted her client as describing detainees vomiting blood after doctors pumped too much liquid nutritional supplement into their stomachs: ``When they vomited up blood, the soldiers mocked and cursed them, and taunted them with statements like, `Look what your religion has brought you.'"

Representatives of the American Medical Association Ethics Committee are expected to tour the base later this month, at the invitation of the Department of Defense, which boasts it provides detainees with model medical treatment.

It is not known if the AMA professionals will comment on what they see.

The court papers offer a sort of he-said, she-said on the forced-feeding policy:

_Shehri told Tarver that, to punish detainees, the military for a time inserted oversized tubes ``the thickness of a finger" to feed him, through his nose, down his throat and into his stomach.

Edmondson said that for two days in September, the military used 4.8-millimeter tubes that met Federal Bureau of Prison standards to try to feed the detainees faster, then for their comfort went back to thinner, 3-millimeter tubes.

_Shehri told Tarver of a specific episode of guards yanking tubes out of the nose of one detainee and then inserting it, unsanitized, into the nose of another.

Edmondson said only military nurses and doctors insert and remove feeding tubes. He said he had done it himself, adding, ``Nasogastric tubes are not and were not ever inserted into one patient then used again in another patient."

Like all but four of the more than 500 detainees at Guantanamo, Shehri has not been charged with a crime and is being held indefinitely as an ``enemy combatant."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10192>

SOURCE: SanLuisObispo.com

Guantanamo Detainee Pleads To Die

A hunger-striking detainee at Guantanamo Bay wants a judge to order the removal of his feeding tube so he can die, one of his lawyers has said.

Fawzi al-Odah of Kuwait asked his lawyers during a meeting last week to file court papers seeking the removal of his feeding tube "out of desperation" over his imprisonment without charges, attorney Tom Wilner said on Tuesday.

"He is willing to take a stand if it will bring justice," Wilner said.

The lawyers have not filed the motion because they first want al-Odah to get the approval of his family and doctors not affiliated with the US government, Wilner said.

Al-Odah's family does not want him to starve himself to death and they are "frantic" about the situation, the attorney said.

Al-Odah, a 28-year-old who was arrested in Pakistan in 2002, weighed 139 pounds three years ago and is now down to 112 pounds, according to government records cited by his attorneys in court papers.

Ethical issues

Al-Odah's request raises a number of ethical and legal issues, including whether his lawyers would be able to continue representing al-Odah and his parents if they disagree on whether to file the motion seeking removal of the feeding tube.

"If it gets to the point where he says 'I want to die' and his parents say no, then we have a conflict," said Wilner, the lead attorney for 11 Kuwaitis held at Guantanamo and a partner in the Washington law firm of Shearman and Sterling. "We could represent one or the other but not both."

Al-Odah's request for an order seeking the removal of his feeding tube was mentioned in a footnote in court papers filed in Washington by Wilner as part of an effort by defence lawyers to gain more frequent access to their clients, copies of their medical records and to allow the prisoners to speak by phone with their relatives.

The US military has said that it considers hunger striking a form of suicide and will take whatever steps are necessary to prevent any detainee deaths at the prison where the government says it holds 500 men on suspicion of links to terrorism.

Guantanamo spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Jeremy Martin said the military would not comment on specific cases, but that it was Department of Defence policy to prevent "the unnecessary loss of life of detainees through standard medical intervention ... to overcome a detainee's desire to harm themselves."

There are 26 detainees participating in the hunger strike, which began on 8 August, including 23 who are being forced through nasal tubes, Martin said.

"The detainees are clinically stable, closely monitored by medical professionals, and will continue to receive appropriate nutrition, fluids, and excellent medical care," he said.

Guantanamo officials have said this latest hunger strike began with 76 detainees protesting against their confinement.

Defence lawyers have cited other reasons as well, including complaints about food and water, alleged abuse by guards and interrogators, and their desire to either face trial or be released.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10190>

SOURCE: AlJazeera

October 27, 2005

Guantanamo Ordeal of AlJazeera Cameraman

By Asim Khan & Mahfoud El Gartit

Sami al-Hajj says he has suffered physical and sexual abuse

Sami Muhy al-Din al-Hajj, a Sudanese national, was arrested by the US military while working for Aljazeera during the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and detained in Guantanamo for four years without trial.

Aljazeera.net spoke to al-Hajj's lawyer, Clive Stafford-Smith, regarding his case and the prospects for his release.

He said al-Hajj had suffered extreme physical and sexual abuse and religious persecution.

Stafford-Smith said despite the US government's denials, Guantanamo detainees were being held in pitiful conditions.

"Guantanamo is a PR disaster. It is one of the most iconic symbols of hypocrisy in the world. It is just incredible how the US has squandered all the goodwill it had after the 11 September attacks," the lawyer said.

He visited clients, including al-Hajj, in Guantanamo recently and told Aljazeera.net about notes that the cameraman had written, which were declassified by the US.

The notes detail how al-Hajj had been beaten and abused by his interrogators; how he was asked to spy for the US in exchange for citizenship and how the interrogators threatened his family, including his five-year-old son, if he did not comply, he said.

"The Americans have tried to make him an informant with the goal of getting him to say that Aljazeera is linked to al-Qaida.

"He is completely innocent. He is about as much of a terrorist as my granddad. The only reason he has been treated like he has is because he is an Aljazeera journalist," Stafford-Smith said.

"The US needs to wake up to the fact that the most effective counter-terrorism measure is the enforcement of human rights such as the freedom of the press, rather than attempting to muzzle such freedoms by persecuting members of media networks that it disagrees with," he told Aljazeera.net.

Aljazeera.net: What are the latest legal developments regarding al-Hajj's case?

Clive Stafford-Smith: There has been no change in any meaningful terms.



The Guantanamo cases are once again before the Court of Appeals in Washington DC with the Bush Administration once again arguing that the prisoners have no enforceable legal rights.

Unfortunately, the US legal system allows parties to delay proceedings for years and years.

A client of mine who had been on death row for 31 years recently died of old age, with his appeals still unexhausted.

Just as the Bush administration has complained about delay in capital cases, so the Bush administration is now using the same methods to delay a resolution of the prisoners' rights.

When was the last time you met Sami al-Hajj and how would you describe his situation, specifically his health and morale?

Al-Hajj says interrogators threatened his five-year-old son

Sami was most positive about his family, glad to know that Aljazeera was looking after his wife and son and for bringing them to Doha.

He was also very happy that the station was helping him to tell the world about the plight of the prisoners in Guantanamo.

However, I last saw him just as he was about to re-enter the hunger strike, and he was sombre at the idea that the US was forcing him into a situation where – just to assert basic human rights – he and many others were being forced to place themselves in harm's way.

I am worried about what has happened to Sami since I last saw him two months ago.

Do the charges brought against him have any legal basis?

There are technically no charges against Sami.

He has not been charged with any crime.

He has simply been accused of being an "enemy combatant" – a ridiculously vague term that can include anyone the Americans want to include.

There is absolutely no factual basis to this allegation, and the way that the US makes it is simply dishonest.

For example, he is accused of being seized when he was trying to go to Afghanistan. Of course that is true.

But what the US does not say in its charges is that he was on assignment for Aljazeera, he had a legitimate visa to go, and he was not doing anything wrong.

We heard a lot about torture and abuse in Guantanamo. Has al-Hajj been affected in any way by this and if so, to what extent?

Sami has endured horrendous abuse - sexual abuse and religious persecution.

He suffered his worst abuse when he was seized and detained in Afghanistan. He was beaten on various occasions, and sexually assaulted.

He has definitely been beaten. He had a huge scar on his face when I saw him.

He has suffered in Guantanamo as well, mostly because he was punished when he objected to the desecration of the Quran.

Did he face any US pressure with regards to his position as a journalist?

Sami has been interrogated roughly 130 times.

For a long time, this was exclusively aimed at trying to get him to become an informant against Aljazeera.

The US military wants Sami to say that Aljazeera is a front for al-Qaida, and is funded by al-Qaida.

He refuses to say this because it is not true.

The US military has revealed to him that the US taps the telephones of Aljazeera journalists (they were tapping Sami's personal calls to his wife while he was on assignment).

In particular, the US wants Sami to be an informant against some of his colleagues at Aljazeera, whom they claim are members of al-Qaida.

Sami resolutely refuses to do this, as he says it is simply not true.

Only when he demanded that he be interrogated about the supposed "charges" against him did the US ever ask him questions about the vague allegations, and even then there are some that the US has never even bothered to question him about.

On a personal level, I have immense respect for Sami's courage.

He refuses to make up stories against his employers and colleagues to buy his freedom, even though he is under immense pressure to do so, and even though he is promised the world by the US if he will turn informant.

Do you think that this is in fact another fiasco or show-trial in an attempt to have Aljazeera cornered and to tarnish its reputation?

There is no show-trial here, because there is no trial.

I wish there were a trial, because at least then we would have the opportunity to contest real allegations.

As an American, I am ashamed to say this, but this is just the Bush administration's effort to force Sami to make up lies against Aljazeera for political purposes.

Do you think his case is being used to send a message to journalists around the globe?

Sami is being used to send a message to Aljazeera – that the US, though it purports to encourage free speech, wants to close Aljazeera down or force the station to censor itself consistent with the Bush administration's message.

I have been frustrated by the difficulty in getting Western news organisations to take up Sami's cause.

One reason that Sami has not obtained the support he should have from journalists around the world is that the US has waged a campaign against Aljazeera and has made many Western journalists think that Aljazeera is not a legitimate news organisation.

Of course, this is made possible by the fact that most journalists do not speak Arabic, and therefore cannot judge for themselves.

This will, I hope, be changed with the creation of the English language Aljazeera channel which will allow these journalists to make their own judgements.

Are you optimistic about al-Hajj's case and how much longer do you think the case will drag on?

I am optimistic that as long as Sami gets consistent help from Aljazeera he will be released in the next six months.

But it is crucial to recognise that his release will not come from any US court – of the 248 prisoners released to date, 0 have been released due to a court order and 248 have been released due to political pressures.

There are thus various conditions that will cause his release:

1. That the Sudanese government strongly asserts to the US that Sami should be released. I am glad to say that I met the Sudanese ambassador in London and he was very supportive, but Aljazeera must help secure this assistance.

2. That Aljazeera publicise everything that it can about Sami, including organising a spot once a week where his reports can go out to the world.

3. That Sami's friends and colleagues around the world help secure other support for him, to press for his release.

Anyone who wishes to help Sami should contact me either at the charity where I work (info@reprieve.org.uk) or on my personal e-mail (clivess@mac.com).

If you were successful with his case, do you think he would be able to bring legal action against the US for having him detained for such a long period?

He absolutely will bring legal action against the United States, and I have already arranged for this to happen.

Whether it will ever result in financial compensation is a different matter. I have exonerated a number of prisoners off America's death row, proving them innocent after years of wrongful incarceration, and - incredibly! - the most any of them has ever received is \$10.

The system is stacked against the prisoner in this respect.

However, we will bring the litigation against the Bush administration on Sami's behalf, and on behalf of every prisoner in Guantanamo who wants us to, because there is an important principle here.

One day, I very much hope to have President George Bush and Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on the witness stand explaining precisely why they thought they could treat prisoners in this way.

At the very least, we must make sure that this does not happen again.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10231>

SOURCE: AlJazeera

Parents of Cuba Kuwaiti Inmate Reject Son's Bid To Pull 'Lifeline'

KUWAIT CITY (AP): Parents of hunger striking Guantanamo Bay detainee say they will not approve their son's request to remove his feeding tube and let him die. "We utterly refuse," said the father of Fawzi Al-Odah, Khaled, here on Wednesday. "Fawzi would not have taken such a decision unless he has lost all hope and some of his ability to reason." The 28-year-old detainee wants a judge to order the removal of his tube "out of desperation," according to his American attorney. Parental approval is needed for making the motion. Twenty-six detainees at the US base in Cuba are participating in a hunger strike that started in August. Most are being force-fed through a nasal tube. Al-Odah's father, who heads a private group that lobbies for the release or trial of Kuwait's prisoners at the facility, said he believed "mistreatments" and a feeling of being deprived of his right to defend himself have pushed his son to request to remove the tube.

Wilner, the attorney, said the motion to remove the tube has not been filed because lawyers want the prisoner to seek the family's approval and consult with doctors and psychological specialists not affiliated with the US government. "Of course we will not accept," said his mother Souad Al-Abdul Jalil, in tears. She complained she has not heard her son's voice or seen him for years. "Under what law are they (US military) doing this? This is more than barbaric." Al-Odah's parents says they are finding it difficult to deal with their son's absence during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, when relatives and friends gather for fast-breaking meals known as Iftar, chat and watch television. "It hurts when we sit at the Iftar table and his chair is empty, he used to tell jokes all the time," said Fawzi's father.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10220>

SOURCE: Arab Times Online

US Told To Give Data on Guantanamo Hunger Strikers

By Will Dunham

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A federal judge on Wednesday ordered the U.S. government to provide medical records on Guantanamo prisoners who are being force-fed while on a hunger strike and to notify their lawyers about forced feedings.

U.S. District Court Judge Gladys Kessler acted after lawyers representing about a dozen men held at the prison for foreign terrorism suspects at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, expressed urgent concern over their deteriorating health amid a hunger strike launched in early August.

Kessler stated in her opinion that the detainees' lawyers had presented "deeply troubling" allegations of forced feedings in which U.S. personnel violently shoved tubes as thick as a finger through the men's noses and into their stomachs without anaesthesia or sedatives.

"If the allegations are true -- and they are all explicitly, specifically and vigorously denied by the government -- they describe conduct of which the United States can hardly be proud," the judge wrote.

Julia Tarver, a lawyer for the detainees, had told the court she learnt during a visit to the base several weeks ago of force-feedings that caused prisoners to vomit blood. Tarver wrote, "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 told the court that prison guards took a feeding tube from one detainee, "and with no sanitation whatsoever, reinserted it into the nose of a different detainee."

The judge noted that the prison's commander stated the facility was operated "in a humane manner," and the head of the hospital there said that only doctors and nurses inserted feeding tubes.

LACK OF LEGAL RIGHTS

Their lawyers say the detainees are staging the hunger strike to protest their conditions and lack of legal rights. The lawyers accused the government of keeping them in the dark about their clients' medical condition.

The Pentagon said 26 of the roughly 505 prisoners currently were on hunger strike, with 23 of them hospitalised.

The New York-based Centre for Constitutional Rights has estimated that about 210 were participating in the hunger strike. Detainee lawyers accused the government of deliberately under-stating the strike's scope.

The judge ordered the government to provide notice to the prisoners' lawyers within 24 hours of the beginning of force-feeding. Kessler also ordered the government to provide lawyers medical records for their clients spanning the week before a forced feeding, and provide these records at least weekly until force-feeding ends.

The judge denied the lawyers' request for immediate telephone access to their clients.

"The order is being reviewed," said Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros, a Pentagon spokesman on detainee issues. He declined to comment on whether the government would appeal it.

Kessler's order affected a group of prisoners from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan. Lawyers for detainees expressed hope the government would provide the same notification and data to lawyers for other hunger strikers.

The hunger strike is the latest flash point between the government and human rights groups over the camp, which activists call a blight on the U.S. human rights record.

Many Guantanamo prisoners have been there for more than 3-1/2 years, and just four have been charged with crimes. Rights activists have denounced these indefinite detentions and treatment they say amounts to torture. Most detainees were picked up in Afghanistan after a U.S. invasion in 2001 to oust the Taliban government and dislodge al Qaeda bases.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10217>

SOURCE: Reuters

Guantánamo Detainees on Hunger Strike in Protest Against Illegal Detention

By Elham Asaad Buaras

Human rights groups Amnesty International and Reprieve called on the British Government to intervene in the hunger strike of an estimated 210 detainees at Guantánamo Bay.

At a news conference in London on October 6, the human rights groups said six British residents were among detainees currently refusing food in protest against their illegal detention.

They also said the US is keeping 21 alive by forcing food into their stomachs via tubes pushed up their noses. This procedure is carried out while they are shackled to their beds for 24 hours a day to stop them removing the tubes.

Both groups wrote to Prime Minister, Tony Blair, asking him to "make immediate representation to the US Government to urge them to meet the hunger strikers' goals."

Doctors condemned the policy, claiming it violated medical ethics. St Bartholomew Hospital, Clinical Director, Trevor Turner, said, "The notion that a qualified medical practitioner would be prepared to supervise such a procedure goes against all medical ethics, certainly in this country."

Amnesty's Director, Kate Allen, said, "Reports emerging from the camp concerning the treatment of hunger strikers are disturbing and underline the need for an immediate resolution."

"We need to see the UK Government intervening to prevent deaths and injuries and to see that all detainees - including at least six UK residents on hunger strike - are either properly tried or immediately released in accordance with international human rights law."

Reprieve's Legal Director and lawyer for 40 Guantánamo Bay detainees, Clive Stafford Smith, told The Muslim News, "Conditions there at the best of times are disturbing. But to imagine my clients being held in four point restraints with a tube forced down their noses, after all that they have been through, just makes me sick."

"All the prisoners were asking for was that the US military abide by the Geneva Conventions", added Smith. "This is the 56th day of the hunger strike," said Smith who compared it to the Irish Republican campaign of 1981, when 10 prisoners starved themselves to death in protest at British policy in Northern Ireland.

"We know from experience that the first person to die in those hunger strikes was after 46 days," he said.

The detainees include former Brighton law student, Omar Deghayes, 36. In 2001, Deghayes decided to travel with a friend and look for work. He went to Malaysia, Pakistan and eventually Afghanistan, where he married and had a son.

When the international conflict in Afghanistan started after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, Deghayes fled to Pakistan with his wife and baby. They were planning to return to the UK when they were arrested in Lahore in April 2002, reportedly for a bounty of US\$5,000.

Deghayes was caught up as an 'enemy combatant' and eventually transferred to Guantánamo Bay via Afghanistan.

Deghayes and his family fled Libya in the 1980s after their father was murdered by Colonel Gaddafi's regime. Deghayes' situation is worsened by his citizenship status. He has had refugee status in the UK since 1987, and his family are all British citizens. Deghayes had applied for citizenship, but missed an interview because he was abroad. The UK has argued that under international law it can only intervene on behalf of British citizens. Deghayes still has a Libyan passport, which means it is left to the Libyan Government, the same Government that executed his father to make diplomatic representations on his behalf.

His sister Amani, who was present at the press conference, told The Muslim News, "Under the UN Convention on Refugees, the UK should be his surrogate state, protecting him as if he were one of their own citizens."

"It's quite outrageous how the Government treat people they are suppose to be protecting." She said her family in the UK are feeling "really desperate" and fear for his life as the hunger strikes approach a third month.

In Pakistan, Deghayes says he was repeatedly tortured and faced threats against his wife and children, and violent assaults by the Pakistani interrogators who told him they were holding him at U S request. "I underwent systematic beatings every night for three days. Each time, when I was nearly unconscious, I would be thrown back into the cell to await more."

In recently declassified notes written in March to Smith, Deghayes writes, "We are in the throes of slow death here...I don't understand what the US is doing...this is the fourth year in prison although no charges have been filed, and we lack medicine, products or conditions to wash, and are without sun." Deghayes described how a soldier punched him in the eye, and said that many prisoners "are falling down and showing symptoms of diseases."

If authorities here fail to do something quickly to improve conditions, "the number of prisoners on hunger strike will get out of hand," he predicted.

At Guantánamo Bay, Deghayes said the guards came to his cell spraying his face with mace and digging their fingers into his eyes while an officer shouted, "More! More."

Deghayes' right eye has been blind ever since.

Deghayes said in 2003, troops pushed their fingers in his eyes because he refused the controversial rectal search. He also said his head was flushed in a toilet, human excrement smeared on his face and water forced up his nose with a pressure hose.

Smith asserted that Deghayes' testimony is "totally credible". "He has been treated worse in Guantánamo than any other person I have come across. He is legally trained and tries to help other people there, so the Americans think he's a troublemaker. Consequently, he's suffered for it," he said.

Amani is adamant her brother is innocent of any wrongdoing. "It's been three-and-a-half years and nothing seems to have changed. We still haven't been told that evidence there is against him."

According to Smith, Deghayes was the victim of mistaken identity. His name appeared on the FBI's Most Wanted list, and the accompanying picture was taken from a training video of a Chechen separatist group.

According to the family, Deghayes has never been to Chechnya and the person in the video looks nothing like Deghayes, a view supported by facial recognition experts.

A tearful Amani said, "From what I know of my brother's personality, this is so unlike him because he loves life, he's very curious. To go on this long is not what I know of my brother."

A report released by Newsday magazine stated, "Thinned-down prisoners are coughing up blood or falling unconscious on the floor," as the facility's military hospital "is inundated with hunger strikers, who are being force-fed through nasal catheters."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10216>

SOURCE: The Muslim News

October 28, 2005

Guantanamo SOS 'Was Written in Blood'

By ABDULRAHMAN FAKHRI

AN SOS written in blood on a prison cell wall spelled out the desperation of Bahraini Guantanamo detainee Juma Al Dossary.

It was his last resort after being continuously denied medical treatment as he grew increasingly ill in appalling conditions, he says in his handwritten diary of despair.

He claims he has been savagely beaten, tortured, sexually humiliated, fed bug-infested, rotten food and denied medical treatment, in a systematic campaign of abuse meted out for over three years.

His weight has dropped 30kg to 55kg and he is so weak he can barely stand, he says in the diary, written in July and just released to his lawyers by US authorities.

Mr Al Dossary says he regularly vomits blood, has heart and blood pressure problems, has fainting fits and suffers pains in his head, stomach and left arm - but has been persistently denied proper medical treatment.

The abuse has gone on since his arrest on the

Afghanistan/Pakistan border in December 2001, but took a new form after he complained about the conditions to his lawyer during a visit in March this year.

"In March this year I met my lawyer to discuss my case and I told him about all the torture and abuse that I went through here, but I didn't know that they were spying on us," he says in the diary.

"After the lawyer had left, a military man came to me and told me to forget about all that had happened to me and not to remember it or mention it again to anyone, otherwise I will not live in peace.

"After he left me, I was given spoiled food three times and when I complained I was told that this was what was provided for me. "Since then I have been sick." Mr Al Dossary says he sent his lawyer several letters to tell him about what happened, "but I don't know if he had received any of them".

At the end of March, two American interrogators and an agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) questioned him.

"They were threatening me and yelling at me in the interrogation room, where they also took from me my belongings and letters from my family," he says.

The interrogators also allegedly spoke to the camp doctor to stop the special diet prescribed for Mr Al Dossary because of his stomach pain.

"They even stopped some of the treatment.

It has been sent by lawyers to the now dissolved Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, which has been co-ordinating a campaign for the release of six Bahrainis detained at Guantanamo.

Extracts detailing the allegations of abuse and Mr Al Dossary's despair were first published in the GDN yesterday. Bug-infested and rotten food became the specials of the day, making his health worse, says the 30-year-old, who has an 11-year-old daughter.

He describes how one evening in June this year he was given a plate of dinner, in which he found a dead scorpion.

"Since then I find bugs and cockroaches in my food," writes Mr Al Dossary.

At the end of June, Mr Al Dossary says he was bitten by a scorpion in his cell.

"I asked one of the soldiers to call the clinic, but no-one came until the morning, hours after I was bitten," he says.

"I had to squeeze out the poison myself and my leg became swollen and turned red.

"When the nurse finally came, I was given a painkiller and a tablet for the itch on my leg. "Now my health condition is worse. I vomit blood.

"Once I even vomited blood in a bucket and spilled it outside the cell and in front of a soldier, to explain to him that I was sick.

"He said he would talk to the clinic but, as usual, without any results.

"When I do complain to the clinic, they give painkillers only called Motrin, which has side effects that cause ulcers and harms the liver, kidney and stomach." Mr Al Dossary says he could hardly stand due to his weakness and dizziness.

In one incident, after vomiting blood, he says he used the blood to write on the wall of his cell: "I am sick and I need treatment."

Mr Al Dossary said his blood pressure fell to 90/50 and his heart beat rate was also low.

Mr Al Dossary tells how his condition worsened after he took part in a hunger strike in June this year, which ended the following month.

The prisoners were protesting conditions in the camp and demanding immediate trials or release.

Some have since launched a second hunger strike, saying nothing was done. Mr Al Dossary is listed by US authorities as an "enemy combatant".

They claim he went to Afghanistan in November 2001 as a member of Al Qaeda and that he was at Tora Bora, where Osama bin Laden was thought to be in hiding.

Mr Al Dossary allegedly crossed the border into Pakistan in December 2001 without any documentation and surrendered to Pakistani authorities.

Lawyers representing the Bahraini six say their best hope for freedom is if Bahrain reaches a deal with the US, as other countries have done.

Bahrain says it is "making progress" in talks aimed at bringing home the detainees.

The other five Bahraini detainees are Essa Al Murbati, Salah Abdul Rasool Al Blooshi, Adel Kamel Hajee, Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa and Abdulla Majid Al Naimi.

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10239>

SOURCE: Gulf Daily News

Hell in Gitmo

Horrid stories of force-feeding at Guantanamo highlight the systematic abuse of prisoners of America's war on terror, writes Sharif Abdel-Kouddous

For nearly three months, prisoners at the notorious US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have staged a hunger strike to protest against inhumane conditions and their indefinite detention. It is a story that has been largely ignored by the US media and tightly controlled by the Pentagon. Newly declassified documents are painting a rare and shocking picture of the US military's retaliation against the detainees.

Lawyers for several Guantanamo prisoners on hunger strike describe torture-style tactics being used against their clients and say they are being involuntarily and violently force-fed by prison guards and medical staff. They allege that military officials have violently pushed large feeding tubes up prisoners' noses, forcing the tubes all the way down their throats and into their stomachs. Moreover, this was done without any anesthesia or sedatives, causing "unbearable" pain.

"Guards took the nasal-gastric tubes from one detainee, and with no sanitisation whatsoever, reinserted it into the nose of a different detainee," said attorney Julia Tarver, who represents 10 Saudi detainees. "When these tubes were reinserted, the detainees could see the blood and stomach bile from other detainees remaining on the tubes." Tarver said this happened in front of Guantanamo physicians, including the head of the detainee hospital, who did nothing to intervene.

Her statements were made in an affidavit after she visited her clients at the base on 2 October 2005. The affidavit was filed as part of a lawsuit in a federal court in Washington, DC seeking greater access to prisoners held at Guantanamo.

"Large tubes -- the thickness of a finger -- were viewed by detainees as objects of torture," Tarver said. The force feedings resulted in prisoners "vomiting up substantial amounts of blood. When they vomited up blood, the soldiers mocked and cursed at them, and taunted them with statements like 'look at what your religion has brought you.'"

Soldiers also used various forms of psychological torture including depriving prisoners of sleep and interrupting their prayers in an effort to get them to stop the hunger strike.

The current hunger strike began 8 August 2005. It is unclear how many detainees are currently participating, but as many as 200 men have been involved at various times. Now, prisoners protesting against their mistreatment by refusing to eat are being tortured by soldiers who are forcing them to end their strike. The accounts of the abuse are chilling.

"One navy doctor came and put the tube in his nose and down his throat," Tarver wrote in the suit, referring to one of her clients, Abdul-Rahman Shalabi. "Until finally Abdul-Rahman started violently throwing up blood. [He] tried to resist the 'torture' from this physician, but he could not breathe."

According to another detainee mentioned in the suit, the prison guards would forcibly remove the tubes "by placing a foot on one end of the tube and yanking the detainees' head back by his hair, causing the tube to be painfully ejected

from the detainees' nose." When the detainees saw this happening, they begged to have the tubes remain, but the guards refused and continued to repeat the procedure twice a day.

The United States is holding about 500 detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Some have been imprisoned for four years without formal charges or even a hearing on the legality of their detention, despite a Supreme Court ruling in their favour.

"They have no idea when, if ever, justice will come to them," Tarver said in an interview. "The level of hopelessness in the camp has reached a point where our clients are literally vowing they have no other choice but to die."

The US government denies any wrongdoing and has dismissed the allegations as mere storytelling. Lt Col Jeremy Martin, a military spokesman for the Guantanamo detention centre, said medical personnel closely monitor all detainees in the hunger strike and mistreatment is not tolerated.

"Detainees... are treated humanely," Martin told the Associated Press. "Claims to the contrary are wholly inaccurate and blatantly misrepresent the excellent work being done here by honourable military and civilian professionals." But attorney Tarver says she conducted independent interviews with multiple prisoners who had no way of contacting each other. She says their stories are consistent.

These prisoner accounts have once again raised serious questions about medical ethics and the role of doctors in the interrogation of prisoners. Physicians for Human Rights, and other groups, have argued that it is unethical for a doctor to force-feed a detainee who has chosen not to eat, citing international medical standards that call for respecting a patient's autonomy. The anti-force feeding standard is also endorsed by the American Medical Association.

Defence attorneys have asked US District Judge Gladys Kessler to order the military to turn over their clients' medical records and to allow an outside doctor to examine the detainees. They have yet to receive a response.

"[The government] seems to think that Guantanamo is a jurisdiction unto its own with no laws and no justice," said Tarver. She and other lawyers have also asked Judge Kessler to order the military to allow more frequent attorney visits, as well as phone calls with family members who would urge detainees on the hunger strike to resume eating. Their efforts may be in vain.

Many of the prisoners at Guantanamo have re-affirmed their determination to die for the sake of their basic human rights. Perhaps they came to the same conclusion as prisoner Abdul-Rahman did when he told his attorney: "Now, after four years in captivity, life and death are the same."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10232>

SOURCE: Al Ahram

October 29, 2005

US Invites UN Experts to Visit Guantanamo

WASHINGTON (AP) - The United States is inviting independent experts from the United Nations to visit detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, almost four years after the U.N. first asked permission to inspect the prison.

The prison has become one of the symbols of the ongoing controversy over detainee abuse by the U.S. military. About two dozen prisoners are on hunger strikes to protest what they say is cruel and inhumane treatment.

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros said the invitation ``was extended in an effort to broaden understanding of U.S. detention operations and to demonstrate that detainees at Guantanamo are treated humanely."

There is no set timeline for the visit. The three observers will meet with commanders at the facility as well as medical staff and interrogation staff, but they will have no interaction with the detainees. They will be able to observe the detainees during recreation time, religious observances and other periods.

U.S. officials have allowed only the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit detainees at Guantanamo.

In a statement issued Friday, the Pentagon said, ``The department strives for transparency in our operation to the extent possible in light of security and operational requirements and the need to ensure the safety of our forces."

The three observers are: Dr. Manfred Nowak, an expert on torture and inhumane treatment; Asma Jahangir, an expert on religious rights and freedoms; and Lelia Zerrougui, an expert on detention.

As of last month, 505 prisoners were in the compound, all suspected of links to the al-Qaida terror network or Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime. Many were captured in Afghanistan in the months after the U.S.-led invasion in October 2001, and some have been there since the compound was opened in January 2002.

Four of the prisoners have been charged. The military has said it will soon proceed with a military trial against David M. Hicks, an Australian charged with conspiracy, attempted murder and aiding the enemy.

Members of Congress visited Guantanamo in June as lawmakers grew increasingly concerned that the prison at the Navy base in eastern Cuba is hurting the nation's image because of the abuse claims. The White House and Pentagon have insisted that conditions are humane and detainees well-treated.

Seven of the detainees on the hunger strike are hospitalized and being force-fed, according to the government. Some of the others also are being fed involuntarily.

The strikers allege that feeding tubes are inserted without using anesthesia or sedatives and that tubes are being reused without proper sanitization. Some detainees have been fasting since Aug. 8.

Dr. John Edmondson, commander of the U.S. Navy Hospital at Guantanamo and head of the detainee hospital, has denied all of the detainee allegations, saying tubes are always inserted using a lubricant, an anesthetic is offered ``in all cases," and new tubes are used every time a detainee has to be fed involuntarily.

Tom Malinowski, Washington advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, said Friday that it is unlikely the U.N. rapporteurs would be satisfied with a cursory look at Guantanamo.

"Even in places like China, the rapporteurs on torture and arbitrary detention have been able to speak privately to prisoners in the facilities they've been allowed to visit," Malinowski said, "and even then they haven't been fully satisfied with the access they've gotten."

<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=10252>

SOURCE: The Guardian & The Houston Chronicle