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CLOSE GUANTÁNAMO

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USA

Guantánamo's detainees

“Thank you so much for your email, your sympathy, support and your efforts of sending letters to both US and Kuwaiti authorities, this indeed enhances our hopes, keeps our morale up high and lets us feel that we are not alone and abandoned in this troubled world.”

Fawzi al-Odha's father writing to an Amnesty International member in Denmark

Since January 2002, detainees from around 45 different countries have been imprisoned at Guantánamo. Currently, detainees from around 35 countries, the largest groups from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, remain held. Below are a few examples of those still detained as of early December 2006.

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“After the first strike, they gave us promises. They said we will respect you and your religion and we will give you your rights. They promised me I would be freed... We waited but they did not deliver.”

Yousef al-Shehri to his lawyer

Yousef al-Shehri is from Saudi Arabia. He was 16 when he was detained in Afghanistan in November 2001. Two months later he was one of the first detainees to be transferred to Guantánamo. He says that during a hunger strike in 2005, he was verbally abused, placed in shackles and painfully force fed with no anaesthesia or sedative. Little is known about his current conditions of detention.

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“Thank you to everyone who has sacrificed time and effort in supporting me. I can't thank you enough... Hope to see you back in Australia.”

David Hicks writing to supporters in Australia

David Hicks, who is Australian, was captured in Afghanistan and has been held in Guantánamo since January 2002. He alleges that he was repeatedly beaten and subject to sleep deprivation while in US custody. He was one of 10 Guantánamo detainees charged in preparation for trial by the military commissions that were subsequently ruled unlawful by the US Supreme Court in June 2006. His lawyer has expressed concern for his physical and psychological health owing to his prolonged solitary confinement for up to 24 hours a day.

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“My health is very poor, and so is my psychological state. I do not think that I will carry on much further. I feel very unwell.”

Jumah al-Dossari in a letter to his lawyer

Jumah al-Dossari is a Bahraini national who was seized in Pakistan in late 2001, transferred to Kandahar in Afghanistan before being sent to Guantánamo in January 2002. He says he has been tortured in US custody including by beatings, death threats, prolonged isolation, and exposure to extreme cold. Jumah al-Dossari is believed to have attempted suicide at least 12 times since his detention. In November 2005 he told his lawyer that he had wanted to kill himself so that he could send a message to the world that the conditions at Guantánamo are intolerable.

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“Soldiers took me and placed me on the ground... My hands and my feet were bound... another soldier came and put his knee on my face. The soldier hit me.”

Mustafa Ait Idir describing ill-treatment in Guantánamo

Mustafa Ait Idir is a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He and five other men, all originally from Algeria, were arrested in October 2001 by police in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The men were released in January 2002 but were immediately rearrested and handed over to US authorities. A lawsuit filed in a US court in April 2005 alleges that, among other things, guards pushed his face into the toilet and repeatedly pressed the flush button. He also alleges that he was forced to lie on the floor while men jumped on his back.

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“Contact with him suddenly stopped... When we called him, his mobile phone rang but there was no answer.”

Abdulsalam al-Hela’s brother, talking of his brother’s enforced disappearance

Abdulsalam al-Hela is a victim of the US practice of rendition. A businessman from Yemen, he disappeared during a business trip to Egypt. Relatives were told by officials that he had left Egypt on a special plane bound for Azerbaijan. They heard nothing for a year, then received a letter he had written from a prison in Afghanistan. He is also believed to have been held for over three months in the “prison of darkness” in Afghanistan where he says he was tortured, including by being stripped naked during interrogation and suspended from a ceiling. He was transferred to Guantánamo in September 2004.

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“The dedication and kindness that people have shown us is something that restores one's belief in humanity and we will be forever grateful for it.”

Sister of Omar Deghayes

Omar Deghayes is a Libyan national and a resident of the United Kingdom where he was granted political asylum. He was arrested in Pakistan in April 2002 and transferred to Guantánamo via Afghanistan. In Guantánamo he says he was kept in solitary confinement for over eight months. Contact with his family is limited and letters are usually heavily censored. Omar Deghayes has not seen his son, who is now four, since he was a baby.

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“I wish to return to Sudan to resume my normal life with my precious family.”

Sami al Hajj

Sami al-Hajj is from Sudan. He is a journalist who worked for the TV station al-Jazeera. He is believed to have been arrested while covering the international conflict in Afghanistan. He was held for 16 days in Bagram where he says he was tortured, including by having dogs set on him. He was then held in Kandahar before being transferred to Guantánamo on 13 June 2002. Sami al-Hajj is believed to suffer from a number of medical complaints that his lawyer says have not been adequately treated in Guantánamo.

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“I have become an old man here. I'm only 29, but I have been here four years in isolation and have got old and much weaker.”

Fawzi al-Odah

Fawzi al-Odah is a Kuwaiti national who was captured in Pakistan in January 2002. He was initially held in a prison in Kohat, Pakistan, and later handed over to US authorities who held him in Kandahar, where he says he was tortured. He was transferred to Guantánamo in May 2002 and is one of four Kuwaitis who remain there. Fawzi al-Odah participated in the 2005 hunger strike during which he says he was force fed while shackled and subjected to frequent loud noises and harsh physical handling by guards and nurses.

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"[I]n undertaking to try Hamdan and subject him to criminal punishment, the Executive is bound to comply with the Rule of Law that prevails in this jurisdiction" US Supreme Court judge, ruling in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld

Salim Ahmed Hamdan is a Yemeni national who was captured in Afghanistan in November 2001. While in US custody there, he was allegedly beaten, held in a bound position for three days, dragged, kicked and punched. In Guantánamo, after he was made eligible for trial by military commission in 2003, he was put in solitary confinement for almost a year. He was charged with conspiracy to commit acts “triable by military commission”, for example “attacking civilians” and “terrorism”.

However in June 2006 the US Supreme Court ruled the military commissions unlawful.

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“Your life is in my hands.”

Interrogator to Omar Khadr in Guantánamo

Omar Khadr is a Canadian national. He was taken into US custody when he was 15. He was captured by US soldiers in July 2002 after being wounded during a battle near Khost, Afghanistan. During the capture he was shot three times and is believed to be nearly blind in one eye as a result. He was transferred to Guantánamo in October 2002. In addition to beatings, isolation and frequent interrogations, Omar Khadr says that he has been threatened with transfer to other countries for torture.

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For more information on these cases and other Guantánamo detainees, please visit web.amnesty.org/pages/guantanamobay-index-eng

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