

Amnesty.org feature

Guantánamo: Freedom for UK resident Bisher al-Rawi

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Amnesty International welcomes the release from Guantánamo of Bisher al-Rawi. The UK resident was reunited with his family in the UK on 1 April after more than four years in military custody at the Guantánamo detention camp.

Bisher al-Rawi -- along with his friend Jamil el-Banna -- had been in detention since November 2002, when the pair were arrested in Gambia on suspicion of alleged links with *al-Qa'ida*.

In a statement Bisher al-Rawi called for the release of all other UK residents held at Guantánamo, among them Jamil el-Banna.

“Jamil was arrested on exactly the same unfounded allegations, yet he is still a prisoner. He is the father of five young children -- the eldest of whom is 10 – and he has never seen his youngest daughter. He too should be released and reunited with his family,” he urged.

“I also feel great sorrow for the other nine British residents who remain prisoners. Some are now on hunger strike protesting against their extended solitary confinement. The extreme isolation they are going through is one of the most profoundly difficult things to endure... I know that all too well.”

Amnesty International is hopeful the release of Bisher al-Rawi will lead to further UK residents being brought to fair trial in independent and impartial tribunals – not military commissions – or released. The UK government has previously tried to wash its hands of UK residents at Guantánamo, but Bisher al-Rawi's belated release must prove the catalyst for a change of policy. Amnesty International urges the UK government to make strong representations on behalf of other UK residents still held at the camp.

Bisher al-Rawi expressed his gratitude to Amnesty International, saying: **“Amnesty International and its good work throughout the world is a blooming flower of hope.** I sincerely believe that without Amnesty's immediate intervention in our case during those extremely difficult first days after our arrest in the Gambia, we probably would have been goners.”

Further information:

For information about Amnesty International's campaign against use of torture and other ill-treatment in the "war on terror", please go to:
www.amnesty.org/stoptorture

For information about Amnesty International's campaign to close Guantanamo, please go to: <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/guantanamobay-index-eng>