

USA



Who are the Guantánamo detainees? CASE SHEET 22

October 2007

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Pakistani national: Saifullah Paracha

ISN#: 1094

Family status: Married with four children

Occupation: Businessman and TV producer

Age: 60

"I felt that whoever had done this might be hurting or torturing him. There were times when my heart sank, thinking he might not be alive." Saifullah Paracha's eldest daughter, Muneeza

Background

Saifullah Paracha is a Pakistani national. He travelled to the US to study when he was 26 years old and remained there with his family for approximately 10 years before returning to Pakistan to set up an export business.

Saifullah Paracha was scheduled to fly to Thailand for a business meeting on 5 July 2003. He rang one of his daughters just before boarding his flight but he never arrived at the meeting. He later told the Combatant Status Review Tribunal at Guantánamo that when he arrived at Bangkok airport on 6 July, he was seized, hooded and cuffed, thrown into the back of a vehicle and taken to an unknown location where he was held for a few days, blindfolded, with his ears covered and his hands and legs cuffed. He was later transferred by US authorities to Bagram, Afghanistan where he was held for over a year before being transferred to Guantánamo in September 2004.

It was only via the television news a month after his initial abduction that Saifullah Paracha's family learnt that he had been taken into US custody. Shortly afterwards they received a letter via the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) explaining that he was being held at Bagram.

Allegations

US authorities have asserted that Saifullah Paracha is affiliated with *al-Qaida*, that he has associated with senior members of *al-Qaida*, including Osama bin Laden, has held large amounts of *al-Qaida* money and that he had also proposed the use of nuclear weapons against US troops. Saifullah Paracha has maintained that he saw Osama bin Laden twice, at public meetings only, and that he spoke to him only to ask if he would do a television interview.

Saifullah Paracha has also said that he did provide assistance to Pakistani nationals who may have been from *al-Qaida*, but that he was not aware of these links at the time.

Health and conditions of detention

Saifullah Paracha has a history of health problems, including having suffered a heart attack in 1995, prior to his detention. He is believed to have suffered a second heart attack whilst in US detention at Bagram, Afghanistan in 2003. In November 2006 he was moved to the Guantánamo hospital after suffering serious chest pains and was diagnosed with needing cardiac catheterization – a diagnostic procedure used to detect blockages or other heart problems. During the week he spent in hospital he was reportedly held in four-point restraints with both his hands and both feet chained to the bed at all times, except for one hand at meal times.

Saifullah Paracha has refused to have the catheterization procedure at Guantánamo on the grounds that he considers it is too risky to be performed anywhere but in a cardiac unit and that after the operation he would not receive appropriate monitoring. He asked instead to be transferred to a hospital in the US or Pakistan but on 20 November 2006 a US District Court rejected this request. A Pentagon spokesman stated at the time that Guantánamo was adequately equipped for the treatment. A cardiac specialist working in the US has stated that cardiac catheterization should never be carried out outside a fully equipped catheterization laboratory and without doctors experienced in performing that procedure.

Saifullah Paracha continues to experience chest pain, fainting spells and breathing difficulties. He is also believed to suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure and prostate problems, all of which he believes have been exacerbated by his conditions of detention. He is held in solitary confinement in Camp 5 at Guantánamo, a maximum security facility where detainees are held for up to 24 hours a day in conditions which constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Family

“Every single day when people see the look on my face, they assume there’s nothing wrong in my life, when in fact I’m crying inside” Zahra Paracha, 14-year-old daughter of Saifullah Paracha

Saifullah Paracha is married and has two sons and two daughters. In November 2005, his eldest son, Uzair Paracha was convicted in the United States of providing support to *al-Qa’ida*. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Saifullah Paracha has not been able to talk to any members of his family since his detention and the only communication has been through heavily censored letters. His wife has described how her family has been shattered, financially, psychologically and physically through his absence.

TAKE ACTION FOR Saifullah Paracha

Write to the US authorities:

- Calling for Saifullah Paracha to be released from Guantánamo unless charged and tried in accordance with international standards of fairness in an ordinary court – not a military commission;
- Seeking assurances that he is being given appropriate medical care and urging that independent medical experts be allowed to visit him in Guantánamo to assess his health;
- Calling for them to keep Saifullah Paracha's family fully informed of his status, health and well-being, and to ensure that he has adequate communication with his family;
- Calling for them to close the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay and either release the detainees held there or charge and try them in ordinary civilian courts in full accordance with international standards, without recourse to the death penalty.

Write to the Pakistani authorities:

- Noting that Saifullah Paracha, and approximately 11 other Pakistani nationals remain detained in Guantánamo and that none has had the opportunity to challenge the lawfulness of his detention;
- Calling on the Pakistani authorities to make representations to US authorities on behalf of all Pakistani nationals still detained at Guantánamo;
- Seeking assurances that the relatives of the detainees are being fully informed of developments in their cases and provided with full information on their welfare;
- Seeking information about the situation of the Pakistani nationals believed to have already been returned to Pakistan;
- Seeking assurances that anyone returned to Pakistan from Guantánamo will either be released or, if charged with a recognizably criminal offence, given a fair trial in accordance with international standards and without recourse to the death penalty;

APPEALS TO USA:

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Salutation: Dear Rear Admiral

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Email via: <http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment.html>
Salutation: Dear Director

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defence
1000 Defense Pentagon
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Fax: + 1 703 697 8339
Email via: <http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment.asp>
Salutation: Dear Secretary of Defense

COPIES TO:

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APPEALS TO PAKISTAN

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