

CLOSE GUANTÁNAMO

Amnesty International December 2006

USA

Guantánamo:

Fate of former detainees

Approximately 775 detainees have been held in Guantánamo since January 2002. As of late November 2006, some 345 had been released or transferred to around 26 different countries. The vast majority were never charged and are now at liberty. Some have been detained again. Others have faced harassment by the authorities. Amnesty International campaigned on behalf of some of the men who have been released from Guantánamo; a few of these cases are highlighted below.

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“He is now again in the circle of his family. Their joy at embracing their lost son again is indescribable.”

Murat Kurnaz’ lawyer

Murat Kurnaz is a Turkish national and resident of Germany. He was released from Guantánamo in August 2006 and is now back with his family in his home town of Bremen. German authorities have dropped all investigations into his case, citing lack of firm evidence of any connection to terrorist organizations. Murat Kurnaz was held in Guantánamo for over four and a half years. The German authorities initially refused to take action on his behalf because of his citizenship status. Following intense pressure by Amnesty International members and others, the German authorities changed their stance and he was subsequently released.

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“I saw all five, they look like they came out of a jungle; their hair and nails are long and dirty, they looked miserable.”

A relative of one of five Kuwaitis released in November 2005

Kuwaiti national Abdullah al-Ajmi was transferred to Kuwait in November 2005. He is one of eight Kuwaiti nationals who have been transferred to Kuwait from Guantánamo. Five have since been acquitted of all charges against them and one is currently serving a one-year jail sentence for a crime committed before he was sent to Guantánamo. Two other Kuwaiti nationals transferred in September 2006 are in Kuwaiti custody awaiting trial. Four Kuwaitis are still held in Guantánamo.

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“I believe I was released due to public pressure in Britain against our illegal detention, brought principally by my father and relatives of other detainees as well as Amnesty.”

Ruhal Ahmed

Shafiq Rasul, Ruhal Ahmed and Asif Iqbal (from left to right) are from Tipton in the United Kingdom. Widely known as the “Tipton Three”, they were returned to the UK in March 2004 and released, without charge, the next day. All nine UK nationals held at Guantánamo have been released, but at least eight UK residents are believed to be still held. Since their release, the Tipton Three have actively campaigned for the closure of Guantánamo and have spoken at many Amnesty International events worldwide. A film, “The Road to Guantánamo”, documents their experiences.

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“I can’t express enough thanks to your members. We’re simply in shock, thank you for your understanding of our situation... Very big thank you, thank you for caring and not being indifferent.”

Airat Vakhitov after he was released from Russian detention in September 2005

Airat Vakhitov is from Russia. He and six other Russian nationals were transferred from Guantánamo to Russia in February 2004. On their return, all seven were rearrested and held for four and a half months in detention before being released. All charges were dropped. Since then, they and their families have been subjected to harassment and surveillance, and some of the detainees have been rearrested and allegedly tortured by Russian law enforcement officials. Airat Vakhitov joined other former detainees and families of those still detained at a joint Amnesty International-Reprieve conference in London in November 2005.

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“I know that I was innocent, you don’t need to tell me that.”

Karama Khamisan to Guantánamo guards on hearing that he would be released

Karama Khamis Khamisan was returned to his native Yemen from Guantánamo in August 2005. On arrival he was detained by Yemeni authorities on drugs related charges. In March 2006 he was found not guilty of these charges and two months later he was released. Only one other Yemeni national, Walid al-Qadasi, has been released from Guantánamo. Walid al-Qadasi was detained without charge or trial for nearly two years and was initially held incommunicado. He was finally released without charge in March 2006. At least 100 Yemeni nationals are believed to be in Guantánamo.

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“I was taken away from my family, far away, for no reason and on the basis of false rumours.”

Mamdouh Habib

Mamdouh Habib is an Australian national. He was returned to Australia from

Guantánamo in January 2005 and reunited with his wife and four sons. Mamdouh Habib is a victim of the US practice of rendition. He was arrested in Pakistan, then sent to Egypt where he alleges he was severely tortured. He was later transported to Afghanistan before being sent to Guantánamo. He remained there for approximately two years. Since his return, Mamdouh Habib alleges that he has been harassed and abused by Australian police. One Australian national, David Hicks, remains in Guantánamo.
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“Yusuf and Adbusalam left when they were young boys... they only lived their childhood years with the family...”
A relative of Abdulsalam al-Shehri

Abdulsalam al-Shehri is from Saudi Arabia. He was released from Guantánamo in June 2006. His whereabouts are unknown. He is believed to have been aged 17 when captured in Afghanistan. At least 40 Saudi Arabian nationals have been released from Guantánamo; some remain held but many are now at liberty. Abdulsalam al-Shehri's cousin Yousef is reported to have been 16 when captured and is among the 100 or so Saudi Arabian nationals who are still in Guantánamo.
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“I learned my hardest lesson from the United States. I spent four long years behind the razor wire of its prison in Cuba.”
Abu Bakker Qassim

Abu Bakker Qassim and four other ethnic Uighurs from China were released from Guantánamo and sent to Albania in May 2006. The men had been cleared of suspicion by US authorities over a year earlier, but remained in limbo as they could not be returned to China for fear of further human rights violations, including possible execution. Lawyers for the men are seeking another country of resettlement as there is no Uighur community in Albania and integration is proving extremely difficult. US authorities sent three other Guantánamo detainees to Albania in November 2006.
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“At the end of my time in Guantánamo, I had to sign a paper saying I had been captured in battle, which was not true... But they told me I would have to spend the rest of my life in Guantánamo if I did not sign it, so I did.”
Wazir Mohammad

Wazir Mohammad is an Afghan taxi driver who was arrested in mid-2002 when he inquired about his friend and fellow taxi driver Sayed Abbasin who had been arrested and transferred to Guantánamo. Wazir Mohammad was arrested by Afghan checkpoint guards, handed over to US custody and sent to Guantánamo. Both men have since been released and returned to Afghanistan, where they are believed to be at liberty. Amnesty International launched a worldwide appeal for Wazir Mohammad's release in August 2003. Three months later he was flown back to Afghanistan. Amnesty International delegates met him there in February 2004.

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“Through my poems I would travel the world, visiting different places. Although I was in a cage I was really free.”

Abdur Rahim Muslim Dost on his detention in Guantánamo

Abdur Rahim Muslim Dost is a Pakistani national who was released from Guantánamo in April 2005. After his release he was arrested in Pakistan without a warrant on 29 September 2006. His current whereabouts are unknown and he is at risk of torture. Abdur Rahim Muslim Dost and his brother Badruzzaman Badr, also a former Guantánamo detainee, published a book about their Guantánamo experiences in which they criticized the role of Pakistan in their detention. It is thought that Abdur Rahim Muslim Dost’s arrest may have been connected to this book.

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

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