

USA

Who are the Guantánamo detainees? **CASE SHEET 25**

1 May 2008

AI Index: AMR 51/033/2008

Yemeni national: Sanad Ali Yislam al-Kazimi

ISN#: 1453

Age: 38

Marital Status: Married with four children

Alleged torture in United Arab Emirates

Sanad al-Kazimi is a Yemeni national who has been held without charge or trial in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba for the past three and a half years. In total, he has been detained without charge or trial for nearly five and a half years. He was originally seized in January 2003 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and held for more than eight months in secret incommunicado detention in Dubai by UAE officials before being transferred to US custody.

Sanad al-Kazimi has said that he was initially held for approximately two months at an unknown location in or near Dubai. He was subsequently taken to a second place of detention about two hours drive away. He was held in this second location for six months and then told he would be returned to Yemen. During this time he was allowed one telephone call to his wife from his own mobile telephone, but was told to act as if everything was normal and not to mention his detention. He has not seen or spoken to any of his family since.

Sanad al-Kazimi has described to his US lawyers the torture and other ill-treatment to which he was subjected while detained in the UAE, including:

- Blindfolding, hooding;
- Being held in a dark room with no indication of whether it was day or night;
- Beatings with fists;
- Temperature manipulation, including extreme cold and excessive air conditioning;
- Being kept naked, sometimes shackled, for 22 consecutive days;
- Simulated drowning: His eyes were covered with black goggles, his arms and legs shackled and he was lifted by a machine and submerged into a pool of cold water;
- Threatened with rape; having his genitals and buttocks fondled by his captors.

In October 2005, Amnesty International wrote to the UAE authorities seeking information about the disappearance and transfer of Sanad al-Kazimi. No response was ever received.

Transfer to US custody in Afghanistan: the “dark prison” and Bagram

“It’s so traumatic, he can barely speak of it . . . He breaks down in tears.” ~ Lawyer for Sanad al-Kazimi

Instead of being returned to Yemen, as he had been told, Sanad al-Kazimi was transferred to US custody in Kabul, Afghanistan, in August 2003 and held in the US-run “Prison of Darkness” for nine months. He was then transferred to the US airbase at Bagram in May 2004 and held there for a further four months. During his detention in Afghanistan, he has alleged that he was subjected to severe physical and psychological torture, including by being suspended with his arms above his head for extended periods of time and beaten with electrical cables. He has said that in both locations, he was interrogated by individuals he believed were from Jordan, and that they were supervised by US personnel.

His lawyers have said that he has been unable to talk in detail about his treatment in Afghanistan, as he finds it too distressing. He has said that because of the torture in the “dark prison”, he attempted suicide there three times by ramming his head into the wall. His lawyer told reporters, “He did it until he lost consciousness . . . then they stitched him back up. So he did it again. The next time he woke up he was chained and they’d given him tranquilizers. He asked to go to the bathroom and then he did it again.”

Guantánamo – Isolation, beatings and sensory deprivation

Sanad al-Kazimi was transferred to Guantánamo in September 2004. Today he is held in Camp 6, one of the harshest of the detention facilities where detainees are held in conditions of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation.

In Camp 6, detainees are confined for between 22 to 23 hours a day to individual, enclosed, steel cells where they are almost completely cut off from human contact. The cells have no windows to the outside or access to natural light or fresh air. No activities are provided, and detainees are subjected to 24-hour lighting and constant observation by guards through the narrow windows in the cell doors. They exercise alone in a high-walled yard with very little sunlight. Detainees are often only offered exercise at night and may not see daylight for days at a time.

The US authorities have described Camp 6 as a “state of the art modern facility” which is safer for guards and “more comfortable” for the detainees. However, Amnesty International believes that the conditions, as shown in photographs and described by detainees and their lawyers, contravene international standards for humane treatment. In some respects, they appear more severe than the most restrictive levels of “super-maximum” custody on the US mainland, which have been criticized by international bodies as incompatible with human rights treaties and standards. Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns about conditions in Guantánamo and specifically about the impact of extreme isolation on the mental and physical health of detainees already distressed by the indefinite and prolonged nature of their detention.

On 14 January 2007, Sanad al-Kazimi was allegedly kicked, punched and beaten by a five-person team from Guantánamo’s Immediate Reaction Force (IRF), resulting in multiple bruises on his face, neck, arms and torso, severe swelling on his face and neck, pain in his joints and muscle tissue and recurring headaches. He said that this violent assault happened after he had refused an order to remove a blanket he was using to cover his lower body whilst using the toilet. He refused specifically because he did not want to expose himself to a female guard. The IRF team was called and, dressed in full riot gear, proceeded to hold down his arms, legs and head before punching and kicking him on his face, neck, torso, arms and back. He reportedly did not receive any medical treatment for injuries sustained during the assault.

TAKE ACTION FOR Sanad al-Kazimi

Write to the US authorities:

- Calling for Sanad al-Kazimi to be released from Guantánamo unless charged and tried in accordance with international standards of fairness in an independent, impartial and competent court, not a military commission;
- Urging an immediate and impartial investigation into allegations that Sanad al-Kazimi was subjected to secret detention and possible enforced disappearance in Afghanistan, and to torture and other ill-treatment in US custody in Afghanistan and Guantánamo, and for anyone responsible for such treatment to be brought to justice;
- Calling for an investigation into the circumstances of Sanad al-Kazimi's transfer from the United Arab Emirates to US custody, and for the findings to be made public;
- Calling for Sanad al-Kazimi's family to be kept fully informed of his status, health and well-being, and for him to have adequate communication with his family;
- Calling for the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay to be closed and for the detainees held there to be charged and tried in accordance with international standards, without resort to the death penalty.

Write to authorities in the UAE:

- Calling for an independent investigation into the role of the UAE authorities in Sanad al-Kazimi's detention and transfer into US custody;
- Noting that AI wrote to UAE authorities about the case of Sanad al-Kazimi in October 2005 but did not receive a response. Asking for a response to your letter.
- Calling on the UAE to halt any involvement in the USA's practice of "rendition" and secret detention;
- Calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into all allegations that Sanad al-Kazimi was subjected to secret detention, possible enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment in UAE custody, and for anyone responsible for any such treatment to be brought to justice.
- Requesting information on specific measures implemented by the UAE authorities to ensure that secret detention and torture is no longer permitted in the UAE.

Write to the Yemeni authorities:

- Welcoming efforts made to date on behalf of Yemeni nationals detained in Guantánamo and calling on them to engage in active and sustained diplomatic advocacy on behalf of Sanad al-Kazimi and other Yemeni nationals detained in Guantánamo;
- Acknowledging Yemen's stated commitment to conducting a fair trial for Sanad al-Kazimi and treating him humanely;
- Seeking clarification as to what obstacles there are to the repatriation of Yemeni nationals detained at Guantánamo;
- Urging Yemen to investigate the detention and treatment of their citizen, Sanad al-Kazimi, by the UAE and the US;
- Seeking assurances that the relatives of the detainees are being fully informed of developments in their situations and provided with information on their welfare.

APPEALS TO:

US authorities

Commander Joint Task Force Guantánamo
Department of Defense
Joint Task Force Guantánamo
Guantánamo Bay, Cuba
APO AE 09360

Fax: +1 305 437 1241

Salutation: Dear Sir

Sandra Hodgkinson
Office of Detainee Affairs
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
2900 Defense Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-2900
United States of America

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

Salutation: Dear Assistant Secretary

UAE authorities

Vice-President and Prime Minister
His Highness Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Office of the Prime Minister
POB 73311, Dubai
United Arab Emirates

Fax: +971 4 330 4000

Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency Lt-General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Ministry of the Interior
POB: 398; Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

Fax: +971 4 441 4938

Salutation: Your Excellency

Yemeni authorities

His Excellency General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh
President
Office of The President
Sana'a
Yemen

Fax: +967 127 4147

Salutation: Your Excellency

If you want to take further action on this case, please contact your national AI office
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1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. www.amnesty.org