

PUBLIC

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10 March 2005

Further Information on UA 267/04 (AMR 51/137/2004, 17 September 2004) - Prisoner of Conscience and new concern: Health concern

USA **Abdullah William Webster (m)**

Abdullah Webster has spent over nine months in US military custody as a prisoner of conscience. He has been jailed for his conscientious objection to participating in the war in Iraq. He is apparently not receiving appropriate medical care.

Abdullah Webster is on medication for high cholesterol and requires monthly blood tests to check for the side-effects of the drug, which can include liver damage. However, these tests were reportedly not carried out between October and December 2004. In mid-January 2005, Abdullah Webster developed severe stomach cramps and blood tests found abnormal readings related to the liver.

Abdullah Webster was sentenced by a US court martial to 14 months' imprisonment on 3 June 2004, for refusing to participate in the war in Iraq on the basis of his religious beliefs. His application for conscientious objector status had been rejected and his request to be transferred to non-combat duties turned down. When he refused to deploy to Iraq in February 2004, he was charged with failing to obey commands from his superior and missing his brigade's movements.

Originally held at the US military base in Bamberg, Germany where his unit was stationed, Abdullah Webster was transferred to Fort Lewis, Washington State, USA in October 2004. For the first two months of his detention at Fort Lewis, he was not able to contact his family by telephone. Islamic services are also believed to have been banned and during the Islamic fasting period of Ramadan (fasting from dawn until sunset), he spent at least one 24-hour period without any food or water.

Abdullah Webster is a US citizen who has served in the US army since 1985. He had been due to retire this year. At the court martial hearing he also received a bad conduct discharge and loss of pensions and other benefits.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Abdullah Webster is the second conscientious objector imprisoned by the US authorities solely on the basis of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq. Amnesty International adopted both men as prisoners of conscience and called for both to be released immediately and unconditionally. Camilo Mejia had been imprisoned in May 2004 for desertion, after he refused to return to his unit in Iraq, where he had first been deployed in April 2003. He was released from prison on 15 February, three months before the end of his one-year sentence, on grounds of good conduct and is now back at home with his family. (See UA 190/04, AMR 51/092/2004, 3 June 2004, and follow-up, for details)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling for Abdullah Webster to be released immediately and unconditionally, with restoration of his pension and other benefits, and pointing out that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing serious concern at reports that he has not been receiving adequate medical attention;
- seeking assurances that he is now being given proper medical care;
- asking for assurances that he is being granted the right to perform religious duties in detention.

APPEALS TO:

Raymond F. Dubois
Acting Secretary of the Army
102 Army Pentagon
Room 3E588
Washington DC 20310-0102
USA

Fax: +1 703 697 0720

Salutation: Dear Secretary

Lieutenant Commander Anthony Cruz
Commanding Officer
Fort Lewis Corrections Facility
Fort Lewis. Bldg. # 1450
Washington 98433
USA

Fax: + 1 253 967-6579

Email: RCF@Lewis.Army.MIL

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Commander

COPIES TO:

Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington DC 20301
USA

Fax: + 1 703 697 8339

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

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 April 2005.