

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 51/197/2005

02 December 2005

Further Information on UA 191/05 (AMR 51/114/2005, 21 July 2005) and follow-ups (AMR 51/131/2005, 16 August 2005; AMR 51/136/2005, 31 August 2005; AMR 51/171/2005, 27 October 2005) - Legal concern/health concern/torture

USA **Fawzi al-Odah (m), Kuwaiti national**
Juma al-Dossari (m), Bahraini national
Shaker Aamer (m), UK resident
Abu-Bakr al-Shammari (m), Yemeni national
An unknown number of Guantánamo detainees

A number of detainees who have joined the hunger strike at the Guantánamo detention centre are now known to be seriously ill as a result of the hunger strike and the force-feeding methods being used.

Kuwaiti detainee Fawzi al-Odah joined the hunger strike on 8 August. His lawyer last visited him in mid-November, and found that his weight had continued to drop dramatically, despite the fact that the authorities had been force-feeding him since early September. The lawyer obtained the relevant medical records and consulted doctors, who advised that Fawzi al-Odah was in imminent danger of death or at least permanent organ damage. He has described the method by which he was force-fed: "The nurse shoved a tube up my nose so quickly that I began choking, bleeding from the nose and spitting blood. They used no anaesthetic."

Fawzi al-Odah had previously asked his lawyer to file court papers to seek the removal of his feeding tube "out of desperation" over his imprisonment without charge. His lawyers said they would not file the papers without his family's consent and without further consultation with independent doctors, including psychiatrists. His father refused to give his consent, reportedly stating: "We utterly refuse...Fawzi would not have taken such a decision unless he has lost all hope and some of his ability to reason."

Lawyers for Bahraini national Juma al-Dossari have described their most recent meeting with him on 12 November: "Mr Dossari appeared very frail, most likely as a result of his multiple suicide attempts and the fact that he is currently participating in the hunger strike. In fact, Mr Al Dossari's physical health was so impaired that, for the first time since I have known him, he remained in a wheelchair throughout the visit...Mr Al Dossari also, at times, appeared to suffer from facial paralysis."

Two days after this meeting Juma al-Dossari attempted to commit suicide. Throughout his detention in Guantánamo he has attempted suicide on a number of occasions: on 15 October, he attempted to hang himself after going into the toilet during an interview with his lawyer. Medical experts have warned that if Juma al-Dossari's conditions of confinement remain as they are, his mental state "will likely continue to deteriorate and there will remain a great likelihood that he will again attempt to harm himself physically."

In a written statement to his lawyer, recently declassified by the US authorities, Saudi Arabian national Shaker Aamer, who had been resident in the UK since 1996, explained how he had suspended his hunger strike during Ramadan, but resumed it on 4 November. He wrote that "I want to make it easy on everyone, I want no feeding, no forced tubes, no 'help', no 'intensive assisted feeding.' This is my legal right." He also wrote of his health problems: "I am dying here every day, mentally and physically...I have got many problems from the filthy yellow water...I have lung problems from the chemicals they spread all over the floor...I am already arthritic at 40 because I sleep on a steel bed, and they use freezing air conditioning as part of the interrogation process. I have ruined eyes from the permanent, 24-hour fluorescent lights. I have tinnitus in my ears from the perpetual noise...I have ulcers and almost permanent constipation from the food."

I have been made paranoid, so I can trust nobody...I was over 250 lbs. I dropped to 130lbs in the hunger strike.”

Sami al-Hajj, an al-Jazeera employee detained at Guantánamo who is held in Camp IV with a full view of the hospital where some of the hunger strikers are being treated, has told his lawyer that he is particularly concerned for the health of Yemeni national Abu-Bakr al-Shammari, who he says now weighs under 70lbs and is in a critical condition.

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

- expressing serious concern for the physical and mental health of Fawzi al-Odah, Juma al-Dossari, Shaker Aamer, Abu-Bakr al-Shammari and other Guantánamo detainees participating in the hunger strike;
- expressing concern that they may be being force-fed in a manner which is deliberately intended to cause harm and inflict suffering;
- calling for all the detainees who have participated in the hunger strike to be given immediate access to independent medical care and treatment;
- calling for all Guantánamo detainees to be released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried in full accordance with international standards for fair trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cruel. Inhuman. Degrades us all. Stop torture and ill-treatment in the "war on terror". For more information on AI's campaign see <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/stoptorture-index-eng>

APPEALS TO:

Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington DC 20301, USA

Fax: + 1 703 697 8339

Salutation: Dear Secretary of Defense

Matthew Waxman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs
2500 Defense Pentagon 5E420, Washington, DC 2031, USA

Fax: +1 703 697 6166

Salutation: Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

COPIES 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 13 January 2006.