

## **Guantanamo: Detainee Accounts**

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## Introduction

The following is a compilation by Human Rights Watch of accounts by thirty-three former detainees at Guantanamo of their experiences there. Human Rights Watch interviewed sixteen of the detainees, reviewed press reports containing statements by former detainees interviewed by journalists, and used as well statements published by the detainees themselves. Where accounts provided us in interviews are consistent with published accounts, we have quoted from the published accounts, so that the reader of this compilation has access to the complete statements. We include only what detainees said they had experienced personally or had witnessed.

All of the detainees whose accounts are compiled below appear to have all been “low value” detainees. We are not aware of any “high value” detainees who have been released. Accounts by low value detainees may not shed much light on how high-value detainees are being treated.

### I. Transfer to Guantanamo

Former detainees describe their transfer to Guantanamo as taking place in conditions of significant physical discomfort and sensory deprivation through the use of painted-out goggles and earmuffs. Some also report that the transfer process involved being subjected to physical procedures that—however reasonable from a security perspective—were nonetheless humiliating for them, such as strip and cavity searches; shaving of head, facial and body hair; and being photographed naked.

Several former prisoners have described being stripped and searched prior to and immediately after transfer to Guantanamo. Tarek Dergoul from the UK alleges that he was photographed naked in the detention facility at Kandahar airport immediately prior to being put on a plane taking him on the first leg of his journey to Guantanamo.<sup>1</sup> An Afghan former detainee told Human Rights Watch:

Before we were taken to Guantanamo, they took samples of our beard hair and measured our height and recorded our voice. Then they made us change our clothes and made us put on red clothes. They shaved my head and beard and moustache.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

Briton Shafiq Rasul described having his hair and beard shaved off, his clothes cut off, being covered in delousing powder, and having a full body (including cavity) search before being given the orange overalls to wear and being cuffed and chained for the flight to Guantanamo.<sup>3</sup> Tarek Dergoul was transferred to Guantanamo on 1 May 2002, describing the flight itself, he stated:

I was given an orange jumpsuit to wear and I was tied by my arm<sup>4</sup> with a rope in a line of other detainees. I was also chained with the three-piece suit [a belt with hand shackles attached to it and with a metal bar leading down to leg-irons] around my arms, legs and waist. I had goggles on my eyes and earmuffs but no gloves or hood. I couldn't see or hear anything. The elastic on the goggles and the earmuffs was cutting into my ears and eyes. On the plane we were sat on the floor and couldn't talk. The air was blowing on my head and my head was aching.<sup>5</sup>

Pakistani former detainee Abdul Razak was transferred to Guantanamo in June 2002. He told Human Rights Watch: "There were rumors we were being taken to Cuba but the Americans never said anything. Once 25-30 of us were on the plane, our hands and feet were tied. They told us to shut up and be silent. It seemed we were on the plane for 18 hours."<sup>6</sup> Sayed Abbasin, from Afghanistan, told a BBC interviewer that he was also not told why he was being transferred, or where he was being taken. He said: "I arrived tied and gagged; it was the act of an animal to treat a human being like that. It was the worst day of my life."<sup>7</sup>

Britons Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, who were in the second batch of prisoners transferred to Guantanamo, on January 13, 2002, also described being dressed in earmuffs, painted-out goggles and surgical masks before being placed on the plane. They were chained to the floor for the duration of the 22-hour flight, with no access to a

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rihel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 46-52, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004; David Rose, "How we survived jail hell," *The Observer*, London, March 14, 2004, available online at: [http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html), accessed on May 18, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Tarek Dergoul has only one arm. The other arm (his left) was amputated above the elbow after he sustained shrapnel wounds in an air-raid on the house in which he had been staying in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. One of his big toes was also amputated because of an infection following frostbite.

<sup>5</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Razak, June 4, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> BBC TV, *Newsnight*, June 5, 2003 (translation), quoted in Amnesty International, "United States of America: The threat of a bad example," AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

toilet.<sup>8</sup> According to Shafiq Rasul, “during the plane journey the shackles had been on so tight that they really cut into me. I still have scarring on my left arm from them and I lost the feeling in my right hand for a long time because they were on so tight.”<sup>9</sup> Afghan former detainee Muhammad Naim Farooq, interviewed by Amnesty International, described how the tightness of his handcuffs during the transfer injured his wrists, and he said that many of his fellow detainees were crying “because of pain” or because they were “getting mad”.<sup>10</sup>

Tarek Dergoul also describes rough handling by guards during the transfer:

No one told us what was happening . . . At some stage we changed planes, I don't know where. When this happened we were dragged to the airplane one by one by our cuffs. I could not walk due to the frostbite in my feet. I tried to complain but they just dragged me even harder. They were pulling me by my hand so the handcuffs cut into my hand. When I was not walking fast enough they were just dragging me.<sup>11</sup>

The flights to Guantanamo included a stopover during which the detainees changed planes; many of the detainees did not know where the stopover took place. Ruhel Ahmed, a British detainee who was on the fifth flight to Guantanamo on 10 February 2002, described his experience during the stopover:

On the way to the other plane we were moved, bent double quite quickly. A soldier at some point, stamped on the chain between my ankles which brought the cuffs around my ankles down very hard. It was extremely painful. I was not offered the opportunity to use the toilet at any stage.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, Open Letter to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, 13 May 2004; on file at Human Rights Watch. See also, Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 46-52, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Amnesty International, “United States of America: The threat of a bad example,” AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 50, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004. See also David Rose, “How we survived jail hell,” *The Observer*, London, March 14, 2004, available online at: [http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html), accessed on May 18, 2004.

Describing what happened after the plane landed at Guantanamo, Mohammed Sangir from Pakistan recounted: “While we still had our hands tied behind our backs and our eyes blindfolded, I was thrown outside and beaten by some soldiers.”<sup>13</sup> Shah Mohammed Alikhil, another Pakistani, told Human Rights Watch:

Some soldiers came and took us from the flight: they held me on both sides in such a way that both my feet were up and they were dragging me forward. [Afterwards] I was put inside the cell with iron bars, which was as big as two beds put next to each other.... There, my eyes were opened [uncovered] and my clothes were changed and my beard and hair were shaved.<sup>14</sup>

Tarek Dergoul also reported being stripped again, after arrival at Guantanamo, and undergoing a full body (including cavity) search. Afghan former detainee N.H. told Human Rights Watch that he was stripped naked at the Guantanamo hospital on arrival.<sup>15</sup> Abdul Razak, on the other hand, told Human Rights Watch that his initial medical check on arrival at Guantanamo consisted only of a blood test and weight check and that he was photographed fully clothed.<sup>16</sup>

Briton Asif Iqbal described how after the detainees were taken off the plane, they were then put in a bus, driven a while in the bus, and then the bus was put on a ferry, which took the detainees across the bay from the landing strip to the detention facility. “On the bus we sat cross legged on the floor (the seats had been removed) and were thrown about because of the movement of the bus, but soldiers would still punch or kick us if we moved.”<sup>17</sup> The final stage of the transfer was made inside a school bus on board a ferry across the bay from the landing strip to the detention facility. Ruhel Ahmed alleges he was repeatedly kicked in the leg by a guard during the ferry crossing, and he believes this was because he had earlier revealed that he spoke English. “I had a large bruise on

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<sup>13</sup> Françoise Chipaux, “The Guantánamo Archipelago – Escape from Camp Delta,” *Le Monde*, March 11, 2004, available online (in translation) at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=1242>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with N.H (name withheld), June 2, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Razak, June 4, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 56, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

my leg and couldn't walk for nearly one month. There was never anyone to complain to about these sorts of attacks and I think they are still going on."<sup>18</sup>

For many, the trip to Guantanamo followed weeks of brutalizing treatment in detention in Afghanistan, including at US-run facilities at Bagram and Kandahar. All of the former Guantanamo detainees who gave statements directly to Human Rights Watch, and many of the others whose accounts are cited in this briefing, have also described having been held, prior to their transfer to Guantanamo, either at the Bagram Airbase or at the now-closed facility at Kandahar airport, or at both. Some of their experiences there have been described already by Human Rights Watch in its March 2004 report "Enduring Freedom: Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan."<sup>19</sup>

## II. Living conditions

The first incarnation of the detention facility at Guantanamo was the makeshift Camp X-Ray, consisting of small cages with chain-link sides, concrete floors and metal roofs, offering scant shelter from the elements, and with very basic sanitary facilities. Not only the living conditions, but some of the practices applied to prisoners appear to have been harsher than in the facility that later replaced it, Camp Delta. Two of the detainees interviewed by Human Rights Watch described how initially they were not allowed to pray. One, Mohammad Sangir, claimed that he witnessed Arab detainees being beaten for having prayed (for more on allegations of beatings, see below).<sup>20</sup>

Shah Mohammed Alikhil, a Pakistani who was interviewed by Human Rights Watch, described his introduction to life in Camp X-Ray:

A person came to my cell and explained the rules and regulations to me. I was told not to talk with any other persons or shout or make noise or get close to the iron bars of my cell or the door of my cell... My cell was one of ten cells that were located on both sides of a narrow corridor

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<sup>18</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 57, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004; David Rose, "How we survived jail hell," *The Observer*, London, March 14, 2004, available online at: [http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1168937,00.html), accessed on May 18, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Enduring Freedom: Abuses by U.S. Forces in Afghanistan," March 8, 2004, available online at <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/afghanistan0304/>. See also the description of treatment by U.S. personnel prior to in Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Sangir, January 17, 2004.

with five rooms on each side. We could see each other, but we were prohibited to talk.<sup>21</sup>

Asif Iqbal, a British detainee, described Camp X-Ray:

In my cage there were two towels, one blanket, one small toothbrush, shampoo, soap, flip flops, and an insulation mat to sleep on as well as two buckets, one of water and one to use as a toilet (urinal). [The restrictions on the detainees initially] were probably the worst things we had to endure... in the first few weeks, we were not allowed any exercise at all; this meant that all day every day we were stuck in a cage of two meters by two meters. We were allowed out for two minutes a week to have a shower and then returned to the cage. ... During the day we were forced to sit in the cell (we couldn't lie down) in total silence. We couldn't lean on the wire fence or stand up and walk around the cage.<sup>22</sup>

After some time, the restrictions on conversations were slightly relaxed and the detainees were even permitted to speak briefly to some of the military police. Asif Iqbal, a British detainee, says that the military police told them that they had been told by their superiors that "we would kill them with our toothbrushes at the first opportunity, that we were all members of Al-Qaeda and that we had killed women and children indiscriminately."<sup>23</sup>

Detainees were shackled when outside their cells. Pakistani detainee Shah Mohammed Alikhil described one aspect of the camp living conditions:

I was told to call on guards if I wanted to go to the latrine or wash. There was no problem with going to the latrines as many times as I wanted ... Four guards were regularly keeping guard on our block and we were signaling at them to go to the latrine... [O]ne of them would keep guard and the other would enter the cell and shackle my hands, and then they would take me to the latrines. On entering the latrine our hands were let loose, and on getting out of the latrine our hands were re-

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<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rihel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 63,65 available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., para. 76.



shackled. And on entering my cell my hands were let loose. It was a boring routine.<sup>24</sup>

Another Pakistani detainee, Abdul Razak, recounted the following:

We were allowed to bathe twice a week. But we could only use the toilet at the discretion of the guards and often they would not allow us to use the toilet when we needed to.... Some guards treated us OK. Others were bad. The bad ones did not help us or give us the bare necessities such as toilet paper, etc. Also detainees were not allowed to talk to each other. If people talked they were transferred to another block or the water would be turned off if they were in the shower.<sup>25</sup>

Alif Khan, from Afghanistan, told the BBC about life in Camp Delta (the facility which replaced Camp X-Ray):

Everyone was in a cage individually. Every cage had a tap, a toilet and water for washing. There was room to sit but not enough to pray. We were praying with difficulty. My joints were damaged. The light was very bright there as well. They were switched on all the time. Because of that our eyes were damaged and from constantly having to look through the netting [i.e. the tight mesh from which the door and walls of each cell are made].<sup>26</sup>

Detainees also complained about the interference with their ability to pray and the lack of respect given to their religion. For example, the British detainees state that they were never given prayer mats and initially were not provided Korans. They also complained that when the Korans were provided, the guards “would kick the Koran, throw it into the toilet and generally disrespect it.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Razak, June 4, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> BBC Panorama, “Inside Guantanamo,” broadcast October 5, 2003. Transcript available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/0/shared/spl/hi/programmes/panorama/transcripts/insideGuantanamo.txt>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rihel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 72, 74, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004. The disrespect of the Koran by guards at Camp X-Ray was one of the factors prompting a hunger strike. *Ibid.*, para. 111-117.

Apart from interrogations, and limited recreational and shower time out of cell, the detainees' time was passed in boredom—which heightened the fear and anxiety. According to the three British detainees:

After a year, one day they came with boxes of books all in English. They were given out to people including those who couldn't speak English. We each got something to read. ... There were a limited number of books. You soon had read all. In 2003, the books that we were given started to have a large amount of the contents torn out...for instance novels would have large chunks ripped out but we would still read them because we were so desperate for something to distract ourselves. The Red Cross told us that they had brought 2000 books but they had mysteriously disappeared and never got to the detainees.<sup>28</sup>

Camp Four, a less restrictive facility in which the detainees have more privileges, was initiated in April 2003 within Camp Delta. In Camp Four, the detainees live communally, wear white rather than orange overalls, and have more exercise time and other benefits. According to the U.S. military, this facility is for those detainees who are considered less of a security risk to guards and other detainees, and who have been cooperative in the interrogation process. It is also the place where some detainees were held preparatory to their release. The fact that there is significant variation in released detainees' accounts of their living conditions at Guantanamo might be explained by the fact that some are describing only their recent experiences of Camp Four. For example, one of a group of twenty-three Afghans released in March 2004, Haji Osman, told a *New York Times* journalist that he was well-treated, allowed to spend up to six hours a day outside his cell, allowed to play sports, and had eaten well enough to put on weight, albeit he had observed that not all prisoners were detained in the same level of comfort.<sup>29</sup> Afghan detainee N.H., who spent his last five months at Guantanamo in Camp Four, described some serious problems with his previous conditions, but commented of Camp Four that he had “felt at home and it was easy to live there.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 136, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Amy Waldman, “Guantanamo and Jailers: Mixed Review by Detainees,” *New York Times*, March 17, 2004, available online at: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F20A15F63F550C748DDDA0894DC404482>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with N.H. (name withheld), June 2, 2004.

On January 29, 2004, the U.S. released three children believed to be between thirteen and fifteen years of age, having detained them for most of their time at Guantanamo in a separate part of the camp known as “Camp Iguana,” with no contact with other detainees. Following their release they were interviewed by foreign journalists in Afghanistan. They spoke positively of the conditions of their detention, which had involved classes and leisure activities, and of the kindness of their guards.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. continues to hold an unspecified number of older children un-segregated from the population of adult detainees at Guantanamo.<sup>32</sup>

### III. Interrogation

The statements made by those released from Guantanamo are not uniform in their description of the frequency or method of interrogation. For all, interrogation was a stressful experience. Some detainees described physical mistreatment. Some commented on the endless repetition of questions, and the “low” quality of the questioning.<sup>33</sup>

For Afghan detainee Shah Mohammed Alikhil, who does not allege actual or threatened ill-treatment during interrogation, it was the repetition of the interrogations, and the absence of any prospect of resolution thereby, that was stressful:

My first interrogation started at the end of my first month of imprisonment in Cuba. Three Americans with a translator interrogated me. They asked me the same thing [as before, during incarceration in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar prior to transfer to Guantanamo] and did not tell me anything else. There was no torture or mistreatment. The second interrogation started a month after the first interrogation. No new questions were asked this time again. And some months later I was interrogated again, without any sign of progress in my case, and again no

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<sup>31</sup> James Anstill, “Cuba? It Was Great, Say Boys Freed from US Prison Camp,” *The Guardian*, London, March 6, 2004, available online at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,1163312,00.html>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the special risks to children held at Guantanamo, see Human Rights Watch, “Despite Releases, Children Still Held at Guantánamo,” January 29, 2004, online at: <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/01/29/usint7117.htm>, and Human Rights Watch, “Letter to Secretary Rumsfeld on Child Detainees at Guantanamo,” April 24, 2003, available online at: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/us042403ltr.htm>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> e.g. Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 144, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

new questions were asked. I was exhausted and tired of living like that. I was hearing noises and seeing ghosts [hallucinating].<sup>34</sup>

Afghan detainee Muhammad Naim Farooq described his experiences of interrogation in an interview with Amnesty International. He said that he was interrogated immediately after his arrival at Guantanamo but not again for another three months. He was then interrogated monthly, for between thirty minutes and three hours. After several months he was told that his interrogations were over, but he was not released for a further three months.<sup>35</sup> Sayed Abassin, another Afghan interviewed by Amnesty International, said that he was interrogated at least ten times in the first few weeks after his transfer to Guantanamo and then not at all for the further ten months that he was at Camp Delta before being released in April 2003.<sup>36</sup>

Tarek Dergoul, from the UK, described a range of experiences under interrogation, including insulting and offensive behavior from the interrogators:

They brought pictures of naked women and dirty magazines and put them on the floor. One of the interrogators brought a cup holder for four cups with two coffees in the cup holder. He then deliberately placed the Quran on top of the coffee. He put his folder on the desk and then grabbed the Quran with his feet up on the table and read it like he was reading a magazine. He made jokes about the Quran...<sup>37</sup>

Dergoul also said he would be chained in the interrogation room for long periods of time: “Eventually I’d need to urinate and in the end I would try to tilt my chair and go on the floor. They were watching through a one-way mirror. As soon as I wet myself, a woman MP would come in yelling, ‘Look what you’ve done! You’re disgusting.’”<sup>38</sup>

Tarek Dergoul also said that during interrogation he was threatened with being sent to Morocco or Egypt, “where I would be tortured.”

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<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Amnesty International, “United States of America: The threat of a bad example,” AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> See Amnesty International “United States of America: The threat of a bad example,” AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> David Rose, “They tied me up like a beast and began kicking me,” *The Observer*, London, May 16, 2004, available online at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1217969,00.html>, accessed on May 18, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.

Detainee A, an Afghan, alleged that he was threatened with torture:

I was there for eighteen months and was taken for interrogation plenty of times. Questions were the same and there was offering and intimidation during the interrogations. For instance, I was promised I would be released if I told all the truth and shared all my information. Or I was threatened to be given electricity shock if I did not tell the truth. The threats were verbal.<sup>39</sup>

Pakistani former detainee Muhammad Ansar alleged that during interrogation he was “threatened that I would be kept there forever or that I would be hanged.”<sup>40</sup>

Jamal al-Harith, from the UK, alleged that he was warned by interrogators that they would inject him with drugs if he did not answer their questions. He also claimed that interrogators made death threats against him and his family and staged a mock beating in the room next to where he was being questioned: “They started shouting and pulling a chair around, but I knew there wasn’t anyone there because I couldn’t hear any chains clanking on the floor.”<sup>41</sup>

Some of the detainees also described the deliberate infliction of pain and discomfort in the interrogation context. Tarek Dergoul described a period of about one month during 2003 when guards would take him every day to an interrogation room, seat him, chain him to a ring in the floor and leave him alone for up to eight hours. He stated: “The air conditioning would really be blowing—it was freezing, which was incredibly painful on my amputation stumps [Dergoul’s left arm and a big toe are amputated].”<sup>42</sup> He also described a method of restraint during interrogation referred to as the “short shackle”—steel bonds pulled tight to keep the subject bunched up, then chained to the floor: “After a while, it was agony. You could hear the guards behind the mirror, making jokes, eating and drinking, knocking on the walls.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> “Guantanamo Memories, From Outside the Wire,” *www.cageprisoners.com*, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=2105>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, “My Hell In Camp X-Ray,” *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> David Rose, “They tied me up like a beast and began kicking me,” *The Observer*, London, 16 May 2004, available online at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1217969,00.html>, accessed on May 18, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

In a joint statement issued on May 13, 2004, Britons Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal described interrogation practices, including “short shackling”:

Our interrogations in Guantanamo...were conducted with us chained to the floor for hours on end in circumstances so prolonged that it was practice to have plastic chairs... that could be easily hosed off because prisoners would be forced to urinate during the course of them and were not allowed to go to the toilet. One practice...was ‘short shackling’ where we were forced to squat without a chair with our hands chained between our legs and chained to the floor. If we fell over, the chains would cut into our hands. We would be left in this position for hours before an interrogation, during the interrogations (which could last as long as twelve hours), and sometimes for hours while the interrogators left the room. The air conditioning was turned up so high that within minutes we would be freezing. There was strobe lighting and loud music played that was itself a form of torture. Sometimes dogs were brought in to frighten us ... Sometimes detainees would be taken to the interrogation room day after day and kept short-shackled without interrogation ever happening, sometimes for weeks on end.<sup>44</sup>

In a document released to the public, Shafiq Rault, Asif Iqbal and Rhuheh Ahmed describe the combination of months of isolation, coercive interrogation techniques, and endless interrogations in which their stories were not believed that ultimately led each of them to confess to having been with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan at the time a video was taken. The three confessions were false, as British intelligence subsequently established the veracity of their alibis.<sup>45</sup>

Short-shackling has also been described in detail by another of the British former detainees, Jamal al-Harith: “Sometimes you would be chained up on the floor with your

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<sup>44</sup> Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, Open letter to the US Senate Armed Services Committee, May 13, 2004. See also Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuheh Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004. For example, para. 183-190 contain more descriptions of interrogation, which include extensive descriptions of the interrogation process.

<sup>45</sup> Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, Open letter to the US Senate Armed Services Committee, May 13, 2004. See also Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuheh Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

hands and feet actually bound together. One of my friends told me he was kept like that for fifteen hours once.”<sup>46</sup>

Other detainees interviewed by Human Rights Watch did not describe any abuse during interrogations. For example, Abdul Razak told Human Rights Watch that:

In the thirteen months I was in Cuba, I was interrogated ten to twelve times. I was interrogated in a separate room and always alone. I would be brought there, and my legs would be shackled to a chair. One or two Americans in plain clothes interviewed me. A typical interrogation consisted of questions about my family, education record, language skills, background ... what I intended to do in the future... purpose of my missionary activity... who funded it ... what I was doing in Afghanistan ... The sessions lasted between one and two hours each and I was asked questions the whole time.<sup>47</sup>

During 2003, an institutionalized rewards and penalties system was introduced, whereby, in exchange for testimony, detainees could improve their conditions, receive “comfort items” including books or board games, and ultimately secure transfer to Camp Four. Failure to cooperate with interrogation could lead to the removal of comfort items (e.g. blankets, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste Styrofoam cups), loss of out of cell recreation time, or placement in solitary confinement.<sup>48</sup>

#### **IV. Humiliation and Degradation**

Tarek Dergoul said that during a period of heavy interrogation, he was denied clean clothes and bedding for up to three weeks (normally, a clear set of orange overalls would be given to each prisoner once a week<sup>49</sup>), and he was sometimes given clothes that were several sizes too small.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, “My Hell In Camp X-Ray,” *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Razak, June 3, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> David Rose, “Operation Take Away My Freedom: Inside Guantanamo Bay On Trial,” *Vanity Fair*, January 2004. See also, Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 128-132, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Razak, June 4, 2004.

<sup>50</sup> David Rose, “They tied me up like a beast and began kicking me,” *The Observer*, London, May 16, 2004, available online at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1217969,00.html>, accessed on May 18, 2004.

The three British detainees said that they witnessed other detainees being stripped of their clothes and being humiliated. “This was done in full view of all those on the block and not only humiliated the prisoner involved but caused deep resentment in the others in sight.”<sup>51</sup>

Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, who were released in early March 2004 and repatriated to the UK, recounted the following:

Shortly before we left, a new practice was started. People would be taken to what was called the “Romeo” block where they would be stripped completely. After three days they would be given underwear. After another three days they would be given a top, and then after another three days given trouser bottoms. Some people only ever got underwear. This was said to be for ‘misbehaving’.... So far as leaving detainees naked is concerned, it is our understanding that the Red Cross complained...about the practice.<sup>52</sup>

Former detainee N.H. told Human Rights Watch that “a lot of verbal abuse continued all the time.”<sup>53</sup> Insulting behavior by guards towards the detainees’ Islamic faith is described by at least five former detainees. In addition to the disrespect shown to the Koran, as mentioned above, Tarek Dergoul also described the following:

There was a microphone in Camp Delta which was supposed to be used for the call to prayer. However, the MPs or guards would mess around with it. They would make it play five times or sometimes they would not play it. They would put scratches over it. They played it at the wrong times. At other times they spoke over the tannoy and mocked it with their own voices saying ‘Allah Akbar’. They would play the morning prayer call at night. Sometimes they would not play it for a week. Then other times it would be turned up full blast or turned down.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, Open letter to the US Senate Armed Services Committee, May 13, 2004. See also Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuheh Ahmed, “Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay,” released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 112, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., para. 299.

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with N.H (name withheld), June 2, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.



## V. Punishment

Former detainee Shah Mohammed Alikhil told Human Rights Watch:

I was [in] the first group of people who were detained there and it was compulsory for a detainee to pass a month in Container Camp [the name of the camp's isolation wing]. This rule was modified later. So I passed a month there. It had a cold environment and cold weather [air conditioning] was blowing. Sometimes I was freezing cold, but we were denied blankets except during the night we were given blankets. The other difference was food. I was deprived of having regular normal food but instead I was given pills to use as food and sometimes packaged food military men take during abnormal condition [i.e. MREs].<sup>55</sup>

Other detainees, such as Mohammad Sangir from Pakistan, also complained of the very cold conditions in the punishment cells, where he was twice held, caused by air conditioning.<sup>56</sup> Former detainee A., from Afghanistan, stated: "The isolation room was for punishment. It was a dark room and cold air was blowing. I had two blankets but still I was feeling cold. I was there for a month each time."<sup>57</sup> Jamal al-Harith told the British *Daily Mirror* newspaper: "I'd wake up at 3a.m. shivering like crazy. Just to keep a little bit warm I'd try to sleep under a metal bed to protect me from the cold air that was blowing in."<sup>58</sup>

Shafiq Rasult describes conditions in an isolation block as follows:

I was placed in a metal cell painted green inside. It was filthy and very rusty. There was a tap, sink, toilet and a metal bunk. It was extremely hot, hotter than the other cells I'd been in previously. Although there was an air conditioning unit, it was turned off so the cells were much hotter ... because they were completely closed off and no air could come into the cell. There was a glass panel at the hatch at the front of the cell so they could keep an eye on us. Whilst it was extremely hot in

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<sup>55</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Sangir, January 17, 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, "My Hell In Camp X-Ray," *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

the daytime, at night when it got cold, anyway, they would turn the air conditioning up so that it became freezing. I didn't have a blanket or a mattress and had only my clothes to keep me warm so I was absolutely freezing at night.<sup>59</sup>

Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, in their May 13, 2004 open letter, commented: "Punishment within Guantanamo Bay was consistently imposed for the breaking of any camp 'rule' including, for instance, having two plastic cups in your cage when you were only allowed to have one or having an extra prayer bead or too much toilet paper or excess salt."<sup>60</sup> Jamal al-Harith stated: "You would be punished for anything—for having six packets of salt in your cell rather than five, for hanging your towel through the cage if it wasn't wet, even for having your spoon and things lined up in the wrong order."<sup>61</sup> Ruhel Ahmed has stated that on one occasion he was put in isolation as punishment for writing "Have a nice day" on a polystyrene cup: this was deemed to be "malicious damage to U.S. government property."<sup>62</sup> Sayed Abbasin, in an interview with the BBC, alleged that he was put in a punishment cell for five days because he had exercised in his cell, something that had been recommended to him by a camp doctor, because he was experiencing problems with his knees. Abbasin also told Amnesty International that while in the punishment cell he had no blankets and was not allowed to wear his prayer cap during prayer.<sup>63</sup>

Tarek Dergoul had his first experience of the punishment regime after five days in the main part of Camp Delta, for breaking the rule against talking to detainees in the next block ("cross block talk"):

They came and took everything out of my cell and left me 'on the metal' with nothing at all. They said they had stripped me of all 'comfort items'. This is how they classified basic sanitary items. I was freezing and it was very cold. I had my clothes and flip-flops but no blanket or

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<sup>59</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 182, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Shafiq Rasul and Asif Iqbal, Open letter to the US Senate Armed Services Committee., May 13, 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, "My Hell In Camp X-Ray" *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>62</sup> David Rose, "How we survived jail hell," *The Observer*, London, March 14, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> BBC Panorama, "Inside Guantanamo", broadcast October 5, 2003, transcript available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/shared/spl/hi/programmes/panorama/transcripts/insideGuantanamo.txt>, accessed on August 19, 2004; Amnesty International, "United States of America: The threat of a bad example," AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

bed mat and only a metal bed... After four or five days without anything I was given back my stuff.<sup>64</sup>

Within days Tarek Dergoul had again broken the rule against “cross block talk” and was this time taken to the isolation block, where his description of the freezing conditions caused by constant air conditioning matches what other detainees have described. He estimates that in total, about fifteen out of the twenty-two months he was at Guantanamo were spent in the isolation block as punishment for various breaches of the rules.

One former detainee, Mohammad Sangir, has described an episode of collective punishment, wherein the occupants of his entire line of twenty-four cells were placed in solitary confinement after one of them spat at a guard.<sup>65</sup>

Another form of punishment, according to British ex-detainee Jamal al-Harith, was to turn off the water supply to detainees’ cells: “They would shut off the water supply before prayers so we couldn’t wash ourselves according to our religion.” Jamal al-Harith added: “They would play tricks on people by denying them things—you might be the only person on your block who didn’t get any bread.”<sup>66</sup>

Three British detainees claimed that many of the more abusive interrogation techniques and enhanced use of isolation increased after General Miller arrived at the camp around the end of 2002:

That is when short-shackling started, loud music playing in interrogation, shaving beards and hair, putting people in cells naked, taking away people’s ‘comfort’ items, the introduction of levels, moving some people every two hours depriving them of sleep, the use of A/C air. Isolation was always there. ‘Intel’ blocks came in with General Miller. Before when people were put into isolation they would seem to stay for not more than a month. After he came, people would be kept there for months and months and months. We didn’t hear anybody

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<sup>64</sup> On first being assigned to his cell, Tarek Dergoul had been given a blanket, a bottle, a towel, soap, toothpaste, and a finger toothbrush. Statement by Tarek Dergoul provided to Human Rights Watch.

<sup>65</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Sangir, January 17, 2004; James Meek, “People the Law Forgot,” *The Guardian*, London, December 3, 2003, available online at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,1098391,00.html>, accessed on May 17, 2004.

<sup>66</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, “My Hell In Camp X-Ray,” *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

talking about being sexually humiliated or subjected to sexual provocation before General Miller came. After that we did. Although sexual provocation, molestation did not happen to us, we are sure that it happened to others.... It seemed to happen most to people in Camps 2 and 3, the 'intel' people, i.e. the people of most interest to the interrogators.<sup>67</sup>

## **VI. Beatings and other inappropriate use of force**

Several of the detainees report having witnessed or heard about beatings. The Afghan former detainee A. told Human Rights Watch: "I saw some other prisoners who were beaten and blood was running from their heads. Specifically I saw two Arabs who were acting obstinately who were beaten."<sup>68</sup> Mohammad Sangir, from Pakistan, says he witnessed the beating by seven guards of an Arab prisoner for spitting at a guard: "They all went into the cell and were beating him and kicking him."<sup>69</sup>

Three British detainees described the following use of excessive force:

[I]f you said you didn't want to go to interrogation you would be forcibly taken out of the cell by the [Initial Reaction Force] team. You would be pepper-sprayed in the face which would knock you to the floor as you couldn't breathe or see and your eyes would be subject to burning pain. Five of them would come in with a shield and smack you and knock you down and jump on you, hold you down and put the chains on you. And then you would be taken outside where there would already be a person with clippers who would forcibly shave your hair and beard. Interrogators gave the order for that to be done; the only way in which this would be triggered would be if you were in some way resisting interrogation, in some way showing that you didn't want to be interrogated. Or if during interrogation you were non-cooperative then it could happen as well.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 161, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Sangir, January 17, 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 290, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

Asif Iqbal, a British detainee, reported the following incident:

In our block, one of the detainees who had wrapped around his waist to pray (our jump suits would open at the side when we prayed which is contrary to Islam, in that we are required to be covered when we pray) and an MP told the detainee, who's [sic] name was Qureshi from Saudia Arabia ... to remove the towel. Qureshi was in the middle of his prayer and ignored them. The MP then opened his cage, which was a breach of the rules, and when Qureshi still wouldn't stop his prayers, the MP punched him violently to the face, knocking him to the ground and then kicked him.

Iqbal did not see the incident but he heard about it from others. But another British detainee, Shafiq Rasul, said: "I saw the incident happen about ten to fifteen meters away from me. I clearly saw the MP punch him, knock him to the ground and beat him violently."<sup>71</sup>

Rasul also recounted the beating of Bahraini prisoner Jummah Al-Dousari, who was mentally ill and used to shout all the time, say silly things, impersonate the soldiers. One day, he impersonated a female soldier. The upshot was that an Initial Reaction Force (IRF) team was called:

When Jumah saw them coming he realized something was wrong and was lying on the floor with his head in his hands. If you're on the floor with your hands on your head, then you would hope that all they would do would be to come in and put the chains on you. That is what they're supposed to do. The first man is meant to go in with a shield. On this occasion the man with the shield threw the shield away, took his helmet off, when the door was unlocked ran in and did a knee drop onto Jumah's back just between his shoulder blades with his full weight. He must have been about 240 pounds in weight. ... Once he had done that the others came in and were punching and kicking Jumah. While they were doing that the female officer then came in and was kicking his stomach. Jumah had had an operation and had metal rods in his stomach clamped together in the operation. ... the MP Sergeant ... was punching him. He grabbed his head with one hand and with the other hand punched him repeatedly in the face. His nose was broken. He

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., para. 114.

pushed his face and he smashed it into the concrete floor. All of this should be on video; there was blood everywhere. When they took him out they hosed the cell down and the water ran red with blood. We all saw it.<sup>72</sup>

Asif Iqbal, a British detainee, claims that a guard punched him in the face numerous times and kned his thigh, leaving a huge bruise, on one occasion.<sup>73</sup>

Shah Mohammed Alikhil told Human Rights Watch that he had witnessed the beating of detainee Abdul Salam Zaeef, who had been the Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, while they were both in the punishment cells:

He along with other prisoners shouted at one of the guards who threw down a holy Koran one day. He and other prisoners had shouted as a way to show their anger and protest. So he was put in this cell. I saw him one day while he was circled by many guards equipped with protection guards [shields] which were like reflecting mirrors. He was resisting getting into the cell, but the guards were pushing him forward. During this time I saw that one guard got angry and hit Abdul Salam Zaeef with a punch and then other guards also beat him with the protecting guards.<sup>74</sup>

Afghan former detainee N.H. told Human Rights Watch:

Sometimes the prison guards would throw water bottles or other things at prisoners to agitate them, and then two or three of them would badly beat the angry prisoner. In many instances, I have seen prisoners badly injured with blood coming out of their mouths, noses and ears.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 167, available online at: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., para. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, 3 January 2004. Other sources have corroborated that Abdul Salam Zaeef is in Guantanamo.

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with N.H. (name withheld), June 2, 2004.

Tarek Dergoul alleged that he was himself assaulted and had a chemical spray administered during cell searches, which he claims were staged repeatedly, sometimes during the times when prisoners would be praying. He stated:

I often refused to cooperate with cell searches during prayer time. One reason was that they would abuse the Koran. Another was that the guards deliberately felt up my private parts under the guise of searching me. If I refused a cell search MPs would call the Extreme Reaction Force [the actual name is the Initial Reaction Force] who came in riot gear with plastic shields and pepper spray. The Extreme Reaction Force entered the cell, ran in and pinned me down after spraying me with pepper spray and attacked me. The pepper spray caused me to vomit on several occasions. They poked their fingers in my eyes, banged my head on the floor and kicked and punched me and tied me up like a beast. They often forced my head into the toilet.<sup>76</sup>

Jamal al-Harith, another Briton released in March 2004, also alleges that he was subjected to two separate beatings by IRF squads (he referred to them as Extreme Reaction Force -ERF) within an hour. During the first, he alleges that he was punched, kicked and struck with batons by a five-person IRF squad for refusing an injection:

I could hear their feet stomping on the ground as they got closer and closer to my cell. They were given a briefing about me refusing the injection, then I heard them readying themselves outside. I was terrified of what they were going to do. I had seen victims of ERF being paraded in front of my cell. They were battered and bruised into submission. It was a horrible sight and a frequent sight. ... They were really gung-ho, hyped up and aggressive. One of them attacked me really hard and left me with a deep red mark from my backbone down to my knee. I thought I was bleeding, but it was just really bad bruising. [Half an hour after this beating, Jamal al-Harith was attacked again]: They accused me of biting a military policeman. I said nothing. I knew it wouldn't help whatever I said. They laid into me again. When they were finished I sat down, picked up the Koran and started reading. Then two guards put me in more chains and said: 'Will you comply?' [He was then taken to a punishment cell].<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Statement by Tarek Dergoul made available to Human Rights Watch, May 24, 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, "My Hell in Camp X-ray," *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

A., the Afghan interviewed by Human Rights Watch, described how prisoners staged acts of disobedience or open belligerence towards their guards after a guard handled a prisoner's copy of the Koran disrespectfully by throwing it into the prisoner's cell. According to A., over the course of more than three months the protest actions ranged from shouting at guards to throwing excrement at them. On five or six occasions, A. claimed, the guards responded with the use of what may have been a chemical spray:

During that three and half months of the strike we had a difficult time. Guards were using gas on us. They would throw a bottle of gas and we could not take a breath and we felt like we were suffocating. Sometimes they were taking one or two unconscious prisoners to the hospital.<sup>78</sup>

## **VII. Suicide Attempts**

Shah Mohammed Alikhil told Human Rights Watch that he had made three suicide attempts by hanging at Guantanamo.<sup>79</sup> Former detainee Alif Khan, interviewed in Afghanistan, reported: "Two men next to me went crazy. They were trying to kill themselves. All their stuff was taken from the cell except for their underclothes and a shirt so they couldn't try to strangle themselves again."<sup>80</sup> Former detainee Muhammad Naim Farooq recalled in an interview with Amnesty International that he had "personally seen two cases, one Afghan and one Iranian. They tried to hang themselves with clothes. Both survived and were punished with solitary confinement, without clothes. I could not see for how long."<sup>81</sup>

## **VIII. Release**

Pakistani former Guantanamo detainee Shah Mohammed Alikhil showed Human Rights Watch the certificate for his release, dated May 8, 2003, issued by the Combined/Joint Task Force at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. It confirms his detention by the U.S. military from 13 January 2002 to 22 March 2003, and states:

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<sup>78</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, January 3, 2004.

<sup>80</sup> BBC Panorama, "Inside Guantanamo," broadcast October 5, 2003. Transcript available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/shared/spl/hi/programmes/panorama/transcripts/insideGuantanamo.txt>, accessed on August 19, 2004.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Amnesty International, "United States of America: The threat of a bad example," AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.



This individual has been determined to pose no threat to the United States Military or its interests in Afghanistan or Pakistan. There are no charges from the United States pending this individual. This individual has been repatriated into the lawful custody of the Pakistani government. The United States government intends that this person be fully rejoined with his family.<sup>82</sup>

## IX. After-effects

Former detainee A. told Human Rights Watch:

[I]t has left its impression on me: I feel terrified sometimes and see terrible nightmares. I dream I am in prison and then I shout and I wake up, and perspiration is running from my back. Therefore, I visit a psychiatrist and take medicines, which is very expensive and I cannot afford it.<sup>83</sup>

Mohammad Taher, told Amnesty International that he had suffered mentally from this detention and that he was having difficulty remembering things,<sup>84</sup> while another Afghan former detainee, Abdur Rahim, has stated that mental health problems experienced since his release from Guantanamo mean that he “cannot talk to people for a long period of time.”<sup>85</sup> Tarek Dergoul, one of the Britons released from Guantanamo, told the *Observer* newspaper: “I get migraines, I’m depressed and I suffer from memory loss. There’s stuff that happened, embedded in my head, that I can’t remember.”<sup>86</sup>

Sayed Abassin complained of the toll taken by sleep deprivation because of the twenty-four-hour illumination, and because guards would not allow him to cover his head with a

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<sup>82</sup> Certificate, Ref. No. CJTF-180-CJ3-PMO, 8 May 2003, shown during Human Rights Watch interview with Shah Mohammed Alikhil, 3 January 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>84</sup> See Amnesty International, “United States of America: The threat of a bad example,” AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

<sup>85</sup> “Guantanamo Memories, From Outside the Wire”, *www.cageprisoners.com*, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=2105>, accessed on July 1, 2004.

<sup>86</sup> David Rose, “They tied me up like a beast and began kicking me”, *The Observer*, London, 16 May 2004, available online at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1217969,00.html>, accessed on May 18, 2004.

blanket to make sleep easier. He told Amnesty International that he has had problems with his eyesight since his release.<sup>87</sup>

Some of those released, such as A. from Afghanistan, expressed a fear of reprisals:

I have told all of my story to you, although I was warned not to do so by the officer who released me. [An American.] He told me not to host Al-Qaeda or assist them or the Taliban, and then added I had to control my tongue and not say anything against the American attitudes and behavior... They told me not to say anything about what happened in Guantanamo.<sup>88</sup>

Former detainee Yuksel Celikgogus, from Turkey, told the *Hurriyet* newspaper in early December 2003 that a condition of his release was that he did not speak of his experiences in detention: “They [US forces] will come and take me away if I tell what happened in Guantanamo,” he said. Nevertheless, he was reported to be planning legal action against the US government over his detention.<sup>89</sup>

Jamal al-Harith told the British *Daily Mirror* newspaper in an interview shortly after his release from Guantanamo in March 2004:

I woke up last night when I heard the keys of someone returning to their hotel room. I woke up in a fright and thought one of the guards was coming to put on my chains. I then realized that the light in the room was on. When locked up in our cages, the lights were on as well, and I thought to myself: ‘You can sleep in the dark now’—and I switched it off.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See Amnesty International, “United States of America: The threat of a bad example,” AI Index: AMR 51/114/2003, August 19, 2003.

<sup>88</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with A. (name withheld), February 6, 2004.

<sup>89</sup> “US sacks Guantanamo defence lawyers over criticism”, available online at: <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2003-daily/04-12-2003/world/w14.htm>, accessed on December 4, 2003.

<sup>90</sup> “My Hell in Camp X-ray,” Jamal al-Harith interview by Rosa Prince and Gary Jones, *Daily Mirror*, London, March 12, 2004, available online at: <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?aid=890>, accessed on July 1, 2004).