

Extraordinary Rendition Case Study IV

Omar Deghayes' story

Jackie Chase

Jackie Chase of the Save Omar Deghayes Campaign briefed the European Network on Peace and Human Rights at its meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels in October 2005 about Omar's continuing detention in Guantánamo Bay. Here she tells his story of abduction from Pakistan, and recounts the cases of some other British residents held at Guantánamo Bay.

Omar Deghayes is 35 years old. He is a Libyan citizen who has had refugee status in the United Kingdom since 1987. He has been detained in Guantánamo Bay for more than three years. He was arrested in Pakistan in April 2002, apparently for a bounty of \$5,000, and transferred to Guantánamo Bay five months later.

Since arriving in Guantánamo, Mr Deghayes has been blinded in one eye. There are credible reports that he has been tortured. He has not been charged with any crime. He is one of nine British residents still held in Guantánamo.

The Save Omar Deghayes Campaign calls for the immediate return to the United Kingdom of all nine British non-nationals detained in Guantánamo Bay. They are Omar Deghayes, Bisher al-Rawi, Jamal el Banna, Benyam Mohammed, Shaker Aamer, Jamal Kiyemba, Ahmed Errachiddi, Ahmed Ben Bacha and Abdelnour Sameur.

In 1997, Britain recognised Jamal el Banna as a refugee from Jordan. His wife and five children are all British citizens. Bisher al-Rawi's family has lived in the United Kingdom for 20 years. They are all British citizens excepting Bisher himself, who has long been recognised as a refugee. His family fled Iraq after Bisher's father had been detained and tortured by Saddam Hussein's regime. The allegations that Britain is co-operating with the 'rendition' system are bolstered by the story behind Bisher and Jamal's arrests in Gambia. The two men were seized at Banjul airport after a tip-off from the British, having travelled there on business to do with a mobile peanut processing plant. They were immediately handed over to US authorities. Bisher and Jamal had already been interviewed in London by MI5, Britain's domestic security service, but they had not been detained. In Gambia, when Bisher al Rawi asked to see the British High Commissioner, he said he was told: 'Who do you think ordered your arrest?'

The situation of these men is made all the more urgent in light of recent reports of the escalation of the hunger strike at Guantánamo Bay. The United Nations reports that the hunger-strikers may have been forced fed.

Abubaker Deghayes, brother of Omar Deghayes, said:

‘30 years ago Amnesty International issued an urgent action in relation to my father, and now has had to do the same thing for Omar. We were granted asylum in Britain when my father was assassinated by the Libyan police. Omar needs a place of safety now more than ever. I am now a British citizen, as my brother would be, if he had not been illegally detained by the United States. Our home is Brighton, whose people have so kindly supported the campaign for Omar’s release.’

Mrs S. El-Banna, wife of Guantánamo detainee Jamal El Banna, said:

‘My third son got a prize at school for being a super citizen. The first person he thought of was his dad. He said, how can I tell him I’m a super citizen?’



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