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## 12 Kuwaiti families sue US over Guantanamo detainees

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NEW YORK, 30 June - The families of 12 Kuwaiti citizens arrested and detained at US Naval base at Guantanamo Bay, have sued the United States government in a US federal Court in Washington. The 12 were arrested during the US campaign in Afghanistan last year following the Sept 11 attacks.

According to a report in the New York Times the families are seeking the right to meet with the prisoners and to know the charges "if any" against them. They want the detainees to have the right to lawyers and access to some form of court. Kuwaiti officials told the Times that the government is paying the legal costs, which the families say may reach \$500,000 and which their law firm, Shearman & Sterling, says it will donate to charity.

The first hearing in the families' case, filed in May, is scheduled for June 26 before Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly. It is a joint hearing with another case filed earlier this wrote in early January saying he was in American detention in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

"We want to know the condition of our sons," Mr. Odah told the paper adding. "Are they prisoners of war? Criminals? What are the accusations against them? We want to see them. How long are they going to be held? We want (to know what are) their legal rights."

The detainees, the paper said, seem to generate little attention and apparently little sympathy from among the general public, though, for their claims that they devoted their vacation time last summer or fall to building mosques or helping orphans and refugees. Thomas B. Wilner of Shearman & Sterling's Washington office, the lead attorney for the Kuwaiti plaintiffs, contends that the government is seeking far more sweeping powers than it should the paper said. "The position the defendants are asking the court to adopt in this case 'an absolute bar to judicial review whenever aliens are detained outside the borders of a country' would set a dangerous standard."

Sheik Muhammad told the paper, comparing the men to Peace Corps volunteers. "We are waiting to hear what sort of evidence the US has on these people. He told the paper that notes arrive sporadically from the Kuwaiti prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They contain brief messages, mostly asking whether a wife has given birth or how the children are doing in school.

One included a despondent threat of suicide by hunger strike, while a few have snippets of ironic humor. "As for me, I am in the best of states, and I swear I am not a prisoner, but rather, in a five-star hotel, thank God," wrote Abdullah Kamel, 28, an assistant engineer at the Ministry of Electricity who, like most Kuwaitis captured in Afghanistan or Pakistan, insists that he was there only to do charity work.