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Former Guantanamo Detainee Victim of Racial Assault

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Asharq Alawsat
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London, Asharq Al-Awsat- An Islamist of Egyptian origin, previously held at Guantanamo Bay , was the victim of a racist attack on Monday in Australia and suffered cuts and bruises to his face and body.

In a telephone conversation with Asharq al Awsat, Mamdouh Habib spoke of being attacked by three men wearing black clothes and their faces hidden, as he walked with his wife Maha, near their home in Guilford. He was to describe the perpetrators who pushed him to the ground and stabbed in the stomach.

He believes his wife's screams saved his life as the attackers who fled the scene. He remembered the person holding the knife yelling, "something like this should keep you quiet".

Habibi, who is 50 years old and was released by the U.S military from Camp Delta in Cuba and returned to Australia in January believes the incident was connected to an article in the local media claiming he received benefits and a monetary allowance from the government because of his disability.

An Australian paper had published a picture of Habib the previous week apparently getting ready to take part in a 1.4km run and alleged the Egyptian born man was fit and healthy despite claiming state benefits for being disabled. Habib dismissed the article as "outright lies."

Habib had been arrested and later questioned by the Pakistani authorities who suspected him of belonging to al Qaeda in accordance with the country's anti-terror laws, two days after the start of the war on Afghanistan in October 2001. He was later handed over the U.S military and transferred to Guantanamo.

For its part, the U.S believed Habib had received military training at al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. He was the second Australian citizen to be arrested for his connection to Islamist groups. A convert to Islam, David Hicks was also jailed for fighting alongside the Taliban.

While in Guantanamo, he was interrogated about his visit to New Yoork City in 1991 and his meeting with Ramzi Yousef who was behind the the World Trade Center bombing in 1993.