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## **Saudi Arabia: 121 Guantanamo Detainees to be Released to Saudi Authorities**

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Asharq Alawsat  
September 24, 2005

Riyadh - Saudi citizens detained at the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay will soon be released and handed over to the Saudi authorities, as talks between US officials and their counterparts in the Kingdom reach the final stages, Asharq al Awsat has learned.

Ahmad Mazhar, head of a team of lawyers hoping to return the detainees to Riyadh told Asharq al Awsat his country had taken large steps towards ensuring its 121 detainees are handed back. He hoped US/Saudi discussions would conclude after the last details are agreed on and indicated that the Saudi government had been in constant contact with Washington since learning Saudi men were being held at the military base in Cuba.

Meanwhile, the US government and the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) discussed how to end the hunger strike started by a number of detainees, mostly from countries of the Persian Gulf , on the 8 th August, in protest at their continued incarceration without trial.

Dr. Amer al Zamaly, advisor to the ICRC on Muslim affairs, told Asharq al Awsat the international organization was closely following the hunger strike and greatly concerned about their health condition. He called upon Washington to ensure the prisoners' health did not deteriorate further and insisted the reasons behind the hunger strikes needed to be addressed. Al Zamaly also said the US government needed to understand the harsh psychological and physical conditions the detainees were suffering from which cause depression, hopelessness, a range of illnesses and epidemics.

With conflicting reports on the number of prisoners on hunger strike, al Zamaly indicated that discussions between the ICRC and the US military authorities were under way to determine how many men were refusing food. Guantanamo's second in command also responsible for the health care of the detainees, had revealed 87 men were on hunger strike, in what is the largest strike since the detention center opened in 2002.

Currently, 520 men are detained in Guantanamo Bay, some for over three years, following the US war on terror. Several men have refused food and water in the past to protest against their continued incarceration without access to legal counsel and trial in US federal courts.