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Bahraini Guantanamo detainees might be repatriated

Al-Jazeera
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A detainee inside his cell in Camp Delta at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba.

Bahrain hopes that six Guantanamo prisoners might be repatriated soon as the talks to finalize the deal with the U.S. are expected to take place during the coming months.

The Bahraini authorities have agreed to have its six prisoners repatriated, Deputy Mohammed Khalid was cited as saying by a local English daily.

"Negotiations with the U.S. regarding this matter are expected to begin in the coming months," Khalid said, adding that the Kingdom has already told the U.S. authorities that it does not reject having the six prisoners repatriated.

He said that he had been told that the "investigations carried out by the U.S. authorities have proved that the detainees were not linked to any terrorist organizations."

He stressed that the most important thing now is that the detainees "return home to be with their families and loved ones even if they continue to be held in Bahrain prisons".

The six Bahraini Guantanamo detainees were identified as Salah Al Balooshi, Abdulla Al Nuaimi, Adel Hajji, Isa Al Murbati, Shaikh Sulman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, and Juma Al Dossari, all aged between 20 and 32. All six have been detained for three years without charges.

Earlier this year, their families have demanded the Bahraini government to interfere to either secure their release or have them back home to face charges in their country.

Also Bahrain's embassy in the U.S. appointed a lawyer earlier this year to handle the case of the six prisoners. Currently, a defense team from the New York-based firm Dorsey and Whitney are representing the six Bahrainis free of charge.

The undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Al Mahmood, said that the Kingdom's embassy in Washington will also handle the work of the panels that was set up to determine the status of the detainees.

Judge rules Guantanamo prisoners can't challenge detention

Meanwhile, U.S. lawyers urged a U.S. District Court Judge to drop the cases of ten Guantanamo detainees who challenge their detention.

The ten prisoners are detained as "enemy combatants", which means that they aren't entitled to the protections normally given to prisoners of war. Their lawyers said that the men have the right to a fair trial and must be given the chance to defend themselves.

They urged judge Joyce Hens Green to dismiss the cases and to rule that the military tribunal process at Guantanamo was not valid because it doesn't provide due process of law. Also, human rights groups said that the tribunals are unfair because they deny the prisoners access to legal counsel and they hide the evidence against them.

"Enemy combatants"

"The government showed its true colors today," said Barbara Olshansky of the Center for Constitutional Rights, one of the attorneys who argued for the prisoners.

"If under this definition of enemy combatant a Swiss granny who gave money to charity can be detained indefinitely at Guantanamo, then anyone who unintentionally acts in a way the government finds suspicious is in danger of losing their freedom," she said.

At least 500 people are being detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, most of which haven't been charged or classified as eligible for trial in a military tribunal.

Thomas Wilner, one of the prisoners' attorneys, referred to a Supreme Court ruling in June that the suspects are allowed to use the U.S. judicial system to challenge their detention, saying that "The world is waiting to see if American justice can work,"

Joe Margulies, another lawyer, said that the current military system was inadequate. "The (tribunals) are the perfect storm of procedural inadequacy," he said, adding that "The evidence against most prisoners consists largely of uncorroborated statements made to their interrogators."