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Family's Tears for Guantanamo Detainee

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The father-in-law of a British resident detained at Guantanamo Bay wept today as he spoke of his fears for his family.

Shaker Aamer, 38, – who is married to a British woman and has four young British children – has been held at the United States base on Cuba for three years.

Today his father-in-law Saeed Ahmed Siddique said his daughter Zinnira, 30, had suffered severe mental problems as a result of his imprisonment.

“Three months ago my daughter Zinnira fell seriously ill, especially mentally, and she was admitted to Springfield Mental Hospital for two months,” said Mr Saddique.

“She could not sleep day or night at all and was walking everywhere in the hospital knocking on every room.

“When the person came out asking why she was knocking on their door she said ‘I am looking for my husband’.”

Mr Siddique is a retired imam from an Islamic centre in Battersea and now lives in Wandsworth, south west London.

He wept as he added: “Her children are phoning – just pretending that they are calling their father.”

Mr Aamer’s wife and children now live in London but were in Birmingham at the time of his arrest.

His US counsel Clive Stafford Smith said the Foreign Office had “sunk to a new level of absurdity” when they claimed this morning that his client had lost his right to British residency by being outside the UK for more than two years.

Mr Stafford Smith said: “All we are asking the British Government to do is give a British father the permission to come back to Britain. That’s all we want them to do.

“The Americans don’t want to keep these guys at Guantanamo Bay – they are desperate to get rid of them.

“They know that they have a bunch of guys who are not Osama Bin Laden.”

Mr Aamer has indefinite leave to remain in the UK and was in the process of applying for British citizenship when he was detained in Afghanistan, said his lawyers.

He was staying at a private house in Jelalabad while working for a Saudi Arabian charity when he was captured, said Mr Stafford Smith.

The lawyer said he believed his client had been seized because the US was offering a bounty for each foreigner captured.

Actress Vanessa Redgrave, co-founder of the Guantanamo Human Rights Commission, told a press conference in central London this morning: "I am ashamed of the British Government's actions and ready to oppose every action that this Government is taking, which is both inhuman and has been declared illegal and incompatible with democracy by a number of senior judges and barristers."

Mr Aamer's children are daughter Johina, aged seven; five-year-old son Michel; son Saif aged four and son Faris who will be three on Monday.

"Shaker has never met Faris because he has been in Guantanamo Bay since before he was born," said Mr Stafford Smith.

The lawyer said his client had travelled first to Pakistan and then Afghanistan in August 2001, to find work after encountering difficulty gaining employment in the UK.

As he is subject to American censorship rules, Mr Stafford Smith said he was unable to reveal the date when Mr Aamer was captured.

As a Saudi Arabian national Mr Aamer would face imprisonment and even torture were he to be returned to his homeland, said the lawyer.

Mr Stafford Smith has spent three days visiting his client at Camp Five at the US military base, where he is held in solitary confinement.

"He was wearing handcuffs made by the Hiatt Corporation from Birmingham and it was my impression that on one of the three days he was floridly psychotic," said the lawyer.

"It's predictable when you are held in solitary confinement that you would suffer from such things.

"There were various physical problems that I observed."