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## **Freed Briton reveals horrors of life inside Guantanamo Bay**

In this exclusive statement, Moazzam Begg talks of adjusting to life 'without cages or constraints'

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THE Guantánamo detainee at the centre of allegations of torture at the hands of American officers broke his silence last night, to tell The Observer of the 'continuing evils faced by captives illegally held' and that he had endured 'conditions far below those of the worst convicted criminals in the developed world'.

In an exclusive statement issued to The Observer last night, 36-year-old father of four Moazzam Begg said he was still struggling to come to terms with 'the sheer magnitude of this whole episode and its profound effect on my life' and that it was the 'utmost pleasure and relief' to be reunited with his family after his three-year ordeal.

He paid tribute to his father Azmat Begg's campaign for justice for the detainees, and thanked his supporters in campaign groups and the media. He also joined the condemnation by lawyers and the detainees' family members of America's decision to release legal documents, diaries and confessions from secret military tribunals, which they dismissed as a crude attempt to smear the men.

He described the allegations against him as 'spurious' and said he would address them in his own time. 'For now, however, it is imperative that I remain in seclusion with my family and begin to readjust to my new reality: one without cages or constraints.'

'I am acutely aware of the spurious allegations [made] against me by the US authorities - and its surrogate agencies - through "leaked sources" and intend to address all that is relevant.'

Begg is known to be finding the adjustment to life outside captivity extremely difficult and said: 'I envisage that the ongoing struggle to achieve some semblance [of] normality shall be a difficult one. Yet I have much to be grateful for, particularly the multitude of people to whom I can offer only my deepest gratitude.' As the Home Office backed the release of the US papers, saying this was consistent with the 'principles of freedom of information', Gareth Peirce, the solicitor representing Begg, said the documents lacked all credibility.

'It is simply too late for anyone to be expected to take this material seriously,' she said. 'Too much is known of the torture inflicted on the detainees, and about these bogus tribunals at which they had no legal representation. And too much is known about how damaged the detainees were by their experiences at the point these allegations were made. No credibility can be attached to anything that comes out of Guantánamo via the Pentagon.'

The papers claim Begg learnt to use weapons in terrorist camps and was 'engaged in hostilities against the United States and its coalition partners'.

But the US authorities are still refusing to release classified interviews in which he detailed the torture he claims he underwent at the hands of interrogators.

Azmat Begg said: 'The Americans held hundreds of interviews and never used the information in court.' He was not surprised the US had tried to smear his son. 'The Americans are a global superpower. They can do exactly what they like.'

Claims that one detainee, Richard Belmar, 25, also trained at terror camps in Afghanistan were passed last week to the Sun, which asked readers to help identify the safe houses where the men are being protected.

Belmar's sister, Janette, told The Observer she felt as if he was being pursued by bounty hunters. 'It's disgusting. They shouldn't be allowed to do this. My brother can't talk about anything now. These are false confessions after they were beaten up,' she said.

The files on Belmar appear to show that he did indeed travel to Afghanistan and stay in a jihadi training camp. But they also reveal that he was pressured by US officials at Bagram to say he had sworn an oath to Osama bin Laden and met him when he had done neither.

Belmar told a military tribunal hearing his case that, far from being a jihadi fighter, he had refused a chance to fight in Afghanistan against the North Alliance.

Despite this the tribunal - whose rules did not allow him to call any defence witnesses or see the evidence against him - found him guilty of being an 'enemy combatant' and a member of al-Qaeda. Tribunal rules also do not allow Belmar to see any evidence used against him.

A Home Office spokesman said that they backed the US actions. 'It is up to the Americans to release whatever documents they see fit.'