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Dossary's Lawyers Face Bay Clamp

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A BAHRAINI detainee at Guantanamo Bay is under 24-hour surveillance and is not even allowed to pick up paper as a result of 10 suicide attempts since his incarceration, lawyers told the GDN. Prison authorities are now claiming there is a connection between lawyers' visits and Juma Al Dossary's suicide attempts, said legal team head Joshua Colangelo-Bryan.

As a result, lawyers representing three Bahrainis held at the facility were barred from seeing him more than once during a three-day visit that ended on Sunday.

However, Mr Colangelo-Bryan accused the US government of trying to find excuses to prevent them from meeting their client.

The lawyers are now worried that the US military will place further restrictions upon their already limited access.

"We were only allowed to see Juma on one day - despite the fact that the military had earlier approved a schedule where we would see him every day," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"We were told that certain authorities at Guantanamo did not want us to see him at all because they thought there might be a connection between my visits and his suicide attempts.

"This was ridiculous because according to the military, Juma tried to kill himself seven times before I ever met him.

"I pointed out that of the 10 suicide attempts the government has acknowledged, I was about 2,000 miles from Guantanamo for nine of those attempts.

"Nonetheless, we were only allowed to see Juma on the final day.

Military personnel apparently told Mr Colangelo-Bryan that the surveillance is maintained "out of concern that he (Al Dossary) will try to hurt himself".

However, he thinks it is just a ploy to restrict Al Dossary's access to a lawyer.

"The military has fought against having lawyers at the base from the very beginning," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"In fact Guantanamo was selected as a location because it was thought that no court would ever intervene there.

"The military is very aware of the publicity surrounding Juma and certainly wants to minimise that."

Al Dossary was previously in a wheelchair following a suicide attempt that left him unable to walk unaided.

However, Mr Colangelo-Bryan said he did not require a wheelchair during the lawyers' most recent visit and did not appear to be participating the current hunger strike.

However, he added that he was still "acutely concerned" about Al Dossary, who seemed to be in a "desperate" condition.

Mr Colangelo-Bryan, who works for the New York-based Dorsey and Whitney law firm, was joined by his colleague Christopher Karagheuzoff at Guantanamo Bay from Friday to Sunday.

They also visited their two other Bahraini clients at Guantanamo Bay - Salah Abdul Rasool Al Blooshi and Essa Abdulla Al Murbati.

Most information taken during the visit is still classified by the US government, but the lawyers are still concerned about the well-being of all three.

However, Al Blooshi appeared to be in better physical condition than during their previous visit.

"Salah appears to be in reasonably good physical shape unlike during our last visit - he did not have a cast on his arm," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

But he was concerned about the physical condition of Al Murbati, who was previously hospitalised at the camp as a result of participating in hunger strikes for more than three months.

"I was told that he's not in the hospital anymore and I saw him in Camp Echo," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"He appears still to be very thin and I'm certainly quite concerned about his physical health.

Meanwhile, the legal team is continuing the court battle over a newly passed law, which has frozen the progress of cases filed on behalf of the trio in US Federal Courts.

"We are in the process of submitting papers or arguments to the court in Washington regarding the effect of the new law and then we will just have to continue waiting for the decision," added Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"I told each of our clients about the law recently passed that is designed to restrict their rights, but in order to try and give them some sense of hope I said that the government of Bahrain would continue to fight for them irrespective of the new law."

The lawyers now hope to make a visit to Bahrain within the next two months after postponing a planned trip in the second half of last month so they could visit their clients.