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Guantanamo Move Rapped

ABDULRAHMAN FAKHRI
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LAWYERS of the six Bahrainis detained at Guantanamo Bay yesterday hit out at the "random and senseless" release of other detainees.

They are angry that some detainees facing serious charges have been released, while the six Bahrainis are still being detained without charges.

Such decisions demonstrate the "indefensible irrationality" of the detention operation at Guantanamo in general and of the US government's decisions regarding the release of detainees in particular, attorney Joshua Colangelo-Bryan told the GDN.

He was comparing the status of the Bahraini detainees to Australian citizen Mamdouh Habib, who was released in January this year.

"According to the US government, Mr Habib had knowledge of the attacks of September 11, 2001 prior to their occurrence," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"In fact, the government claims that Mr Habib stated that he trained several of the September 11 hijackers in martial arts and had planned to hijack a plane himself."

He said that none of the Bahraini detainees were "charged with anything".

"In fact, we have clients who the US government itself does not claim committed any violent acts against it or its allies," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

He said that according to the US government, these individuals did not even support or know of any specific acts of violence taken against it or its allies.

"If the US found it appropriate to release Mr Habib, there is no question that our clients should be released," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"As a matter of national security and basic fairness, there is no reasonable argument that the Bahraini detainees should be held at Guantanamo indefinitely, considering that the US released Mr Habib."

Mr Habib, a 48-year-old taxi driver and father of four, was born in Egypt but had lived in Australia since 1980.

He was arrested three weeks after the 11 September terror attacks on the US, while in Pakistan.

The US alleged he knew in advance of the attacks on New York and Washington, and had trained some of the hijackers in martial arts.

Mr Habib has claimed he was tortured for six months in Egypt with beatings and electric shocks, before being sent to Cuba in 2002.

"Maybe Mr Habib was released because he is an Australian citizen rather than a citizen of an Arab country and Australia has more political clout with the US," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

"Maybe Mr Habib was released because the US media began to focus on his allegations that all of his admissions regarding terrorist activity were made while he was being physically abused in Egypt."

He said that maybe the US government did not believe that any of the statements that Mr Habib had made in custody in Egypt were true.

"Regardless, the fact that Mr Habib was released while the US continues to hold our clients at Guantanamo Bay - and argues that they have absolutely no rights - underscores the random and senseless nature of the detention operation," said Mr Colangelo-Bryan.

He is among a group of lawyers from the New-York-based firm Dorsey and Whitney who are acting on behalf of the six Bahrainis free of charge.

They have maintained that the allegations do not justify holding them for three years without charge.

They are disputing their classification as "enemy combatants" and say no evidence has been put forward to support the allegations.

The six Bahraini detainees held at the camp as "enemy combatants" are Juma Mohammed Al Dossary, Essa Al Murbati, Salah Abdul Rasool Al Blooshi, Adel Kamel Hajee, Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa and Abdulla Majid Al Naimi.