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In quotes - Guantanamo relatives

BBC News
January 25, 2005

The last four Britons held by the US at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba are coming back to the UK. The families of Moazzam Begg, Richard Belmar, Martin Mubanga and Feroz Abbasi have been waiting almost three years for their return.

Mr Begg's father, Azmat, and Mr Belmar's sister, Janette, told BBC News about their hopes and fears.

JANETTE BELMAR

"We've just managed to be very strong because when Richard does come back we need to be strong for him.

"We cannot be weak or locked up away in the nut house. We need to be there for him."

And:

"I'm really worried because if he wanted to start his life again, he's going to have that behind him, you know - 'Richard Belmar, the Guantanamo detainee'.

"It will be very hard but I'm just going to have to be protective of him."

AZMAT BEGG

"We're getting ready and we're making everything comfortable for him to come and join the family.

"The children are excited and we are happy but concerned and travelling from here to London and possibly staying somewhere unknown for a while so as to have privacy for the family.

"I understand that I'll be allowed to see him tomorrow. I'm very much concerned about his mental health because he was kept in solitary confinement for about three years.

"To stay in solitary confinement is not a joke, it's a big thing... So, I don't know what condition he is in. The whole story will come to light later on but at the moment, it's just confusing.

"We'll take everything step by step, as they come.... We have got to understand him, to see if he has got the same mental abilities and capabilities and work accordingly.

'A hero'

"Life is difficult for everybody. Moazzam is to me... a very humble and a very great boy. He has got every chance that any other human being has got to stay and do whatever he wants to do.

"I've got mixed feelings actually. I'm not very excited, because of the simple reason of his mental torture for three years - I don't know what it has made him.

"Also I'm happy that my son is coming back at the same time. So one part is a very sad part and the other part is a very happy part.

"When I think about his condition, I feel sad, and when I think about his survival, I feel happy."

And:

"I will say to him, 'You are welcome, my son, back to home and you have gone through a lot of trouble, you don't have to tell me. You are great, you are a hero and to me you are a strong man.'"