The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

Kuwaiti Gitmo Prisoners To Be Freed Before Eid.

Nawara Fattahova
Kuwait Times
October 11, 2005

KUWAIT: Even as the saga of Guantanamo prisoners, one of the most outrageous human rights breaches of our times, and that too at the hands of the United States, the so-called mother of democracy, continues with no end in sight, Khalid Al-Ouda, the chairman of the committee for Kuwaiti detainees in Guantanamo, remains optimistic. Speaking to Kuwait Times yesterday, Al-Ouda claimed that the committee had achieved significant breakthrough in the release of the prisoners. "We have gone ahead a long way, but the logistics still remain", he said, adding, "the exact date of the extradition of Kuwaiti inmates is not known". Al-Ouda quickly added that in any event the prisoners would be home before the end of Ramadan. "They will be able to spend the Eid with their families here", he mentioned.

The release of Kuwaiti prisoners was announced many times in the past but, unfortunately, they still continue to languish in confinement. "A protocol was signed between the two countries regarding the issue and all related matters were discussed between them. Even the aircraft to transport the men is ready, the technical staff to accompany them are standing by, and the route to fly is also prepared, we are waiting for the permission to land in Guantanamo", Al-Ouda asserted.

The living conditions of the prisoners are miserable and they are treated badly, compelling them to go on a hunger strike recently. "We are concerned about their health. Today their lawyers are supposed to visit them and we hope some good news will follow this visit", Al-Ouda mentioned. There are five Kuwaitis among the striking prisoners who completely abstain from food and drinks. Some other prisoners are on one-meal a day and some are taking part intermittently. Some of the prisoners could not join the strike for health reasons. Al-Ouda mentioned that some positive changes occurred since his last visit on Sept 12 and the prisoners have agreed to stop the hunger strike when the authorities granted some of their demands.

He also informed that the leading Washington-based legal firm Shearman and Sterling was representing the Kuwaiti prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. "They are doing a great job, especially in earning favourable decisions from both the Supreme Court and the Federal court rulings and allowing the prisoners to defend themselves" he said, adding, "We will continue in the legal path and seek support from international organizations till our men are set free." Expressing his deep concern about the well-being of the prisoners, Al-Ouda said: "it is the first time that the Red Cross issues a report about the really dangerous situation of the prisoners and we are worried about them". We want them to stop the hunger strike, he adds, their families have persuaded them through video recordings to call off the protest and we hope they will heed.

"They lost trust in others because of the ill-treatment meted out to them in the detention camp", Al-Ouda said. "We hope the hunger strike will not lead to another tragedy and all our efforts for their freedom so far will turn futile", mentioned a visibly worried Al-Ouda.