

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

Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees demand justice

Al-Jazeera
January 8, 2005

Ms. Huskey said that the detainees were shackled to the floor while she was interviewing them.

Lawyers representing the families of 12 Kuwaiti nationals detained at the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, demanded the Congress to aggressively question a policy that breaches the U.S. law and violates the U.S. Supreme Court rulings.

The five-member defense team is headed by Attorney Ms. Kristin Huskey, who arranged for Khaled Al-Odah, the father of one of the prisoners, Fawzi Khaled Fahad Al-Odah, to engage in a live phone call with reporters attending a press conference at the National Press Club.

The Kuwaiti Family Committee - which was established in Kuwait - said in an opening statement that the U.S. President George W. Bush should issue an order that denounces the repeated abuses at the U.S. military base in Guantanamo.

The statement also mentioned a recently released FBI memorandum that indicated abuse of detainees by the American military personnel in Iraq.

Khaled Al-Odah, a former air force pilot, who leads the Committee, said from Kuwait, that "This has gone on too long and has become too much for us to bear. Each day brings yet another report of mishandling and torture of prisoners in Guantanamo, yet no formal charges have been brought against those victims after more than three years of captivity. It is time for President Bush to order humane treatment of these individuals and to push forward with legal proceedings."

His wife, Souad Al-Odah also spoke to reporters and repeatedly broke down while trying to express what she said was "the grief of a mother who cannot bear the thought of her son being beaten and tortured."

The 12 Kuwaiti citizens haven't been charged with any crime but have been kept in detention for more than three years which is a violation of the Geneva Conventions and a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June 2004.

Al-Odah said, "My son is not a terrorist. My son admires America and its tradition of fairplay and full legal rights for all, or at least he used to before he was abducted by bounty hunters and sold to the United States."

The Kuwaiti detainees were arrested in Pakistan by local tribesmen or by government agents, and their lawyers say that they were sold to the Americans for a reported price of \$10,000 each.

"Endless nightmare"

Ms. Huskey said that the 12 detainees were not related to Al Qaeda network or any other group. Asked whether the prisoners were guilty, she said that the question of guilt or innocence should be answered by a court in a fair trial.

Ms. Huskey recently visited the Kuwaiti detainees in Guantanamo. She said that they were kept shackled to the floor while she was interviewing them, adding that they were thin and that it was hard to determine the state of their mental condition. It was a kind of "endless nightmare", she said.

She noted that she met the detainees at Camp Echo but wasn't allowed much time with them. This was the first time in three years that a lawyer meets them, she said.

Khaled Al Odah said that although he had a visa to the United States, he wasn't sure if the authorities at the airport would honor that visa. He added that the Arab media and press supported the Kuwaiti prisoners but the official media in Kuwait was "careful" with coverage.

He noted that Kuwait had a "lot of tools" to pressure the U.S. to release the detainees but refrained to do so for some reason.

Al-Odah also said that he received a postcard from his son last November and all what he could read was "Hello, how are you?", because the rest was blacked out by the camp censors.