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Kuwaiti Urges U.S. Not to Torture Captives

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KUWAIT CITY -- A Kuwaiti heading a group lobbying for the release of his countrymen being held as suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, urged their U.S. captors on Sunday not to torture prisoners.

Khaled al-Odah's comments followed the return earlier Sunday to this Gulf state of the first of 11 Kuwaitis held at the U.S. Navy detention facility in Cuba since their arrest in Afghanistan during the U.S. operations there.

Nasser al-Mutairi, 27, was briefly reunited with his younger brother at an undisclosed Kuwaiti airport before officials took him into custody for questioning about his detention and arrest in Afghanistan. It was unclear when he would be returned to his family.

Kuwait is one of the United States' closest Middle Eastern allies, but al-Odah's group has been lobbying fiercely for the release of its citizens.

The group's campaign to secure the release of detained Kuwaitis has been fueled by claims that prisoners are being mistreated by U.S. military personnel while in custody.

"Stop torturing our sons," al-Odah said during a press conference after al-Mutairi's release. "(How can) a country that considers itself a beacon for human rights, freedoms and human dignities do this."

Al-Odah, whose son Fawzi is among the remaining 10 Kuwaitis in U.S. custody, cited recently released FBI documents that include prisoner abuse allegations at Guantanamo. U.S. officials in Kuwait were not immediately available for comment.

The U.S. Army says it will investigate the abuse allegations, but the military maintains that most incidents occurred in 2002 when the prison was just opening, and that some of the interrogation techniques labeled as "aggressive" are no longer in use.

Al-Mutairi's family insists he was teaching in Afghanistan's mosques and schools as a member of the apolitical Tableegh missionary group when he was detained after the U.S. -led war there began.

Some 550 detainees from more than 40 countries are held in the naval base as "enemy combatants." Some 200 have been released, many come from countries friendly to the United States, such as Kuwait, and some were ill.