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## Striking Guantanamo Prisoners Seek Court's Help

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WASHINGTON — Lawyers for detainees at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, asked a federal judge in Washington today to help end a protracted hunger strike, saying they are convinced that many of the prisoners are determined to starve themselves.

"They call it 'Hunger to Death,'" said Thomas B. Wilner, a Washington lawyer who visited some of the 11 Kuwaiti detainees he represents at the island prison.

He said three clients were severely emaciated, with one unable to stand or sit without help, while another was constantly bleeding from his nose, where prison doctors have been force-feeding him.

"It's a very personal thing with them," Wilner said. "They are resolved."

Government lawyers are scheduled to respond Thursday to the legal request.

A spokesman at the prison said the number of inmates refusing food had dropped dramatically.

Sgt. Justin Behrens said that as of today, 36 detainees were engaged in the hunger strike that began Aug. 8, and that 16 others were in the prison hospital. They were receiving intravenous fluids or being force-fed through the nose. All of them, he said, "are in stable condition." Behrens said 128 were refusing food last week, with 18 in the hospital. Behrens said he could not identify who was fasting or explain why some had decided to break their strike.

The protest was launched to air complaints that only four of the 502 detainees have been charged with offenses in the Bush administration's campaign against terrorism, and that the vast majority saw no end to their nearly four-year captivity.

Wilner was asking U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in Washington to issue a temporary restraining order and to hold an emergency hearing to find a reasonable end to the protest and make sure that prisoners were given proper nourishment and medical attention beyond being force-fed.

He and other defense lawyers sharply discounted the military's claim that the number of protesters had dropped, contending in the lawsuit that the Pentagon has repeatedly "concealed and misrepresented the facts about the hunger strike and the detainee's medical condition."

Wilner said three of his clients were dangerously ill.

One of them is Abdullah Kandari, whom Wilner said had been a "superb athlete and former member of the Kuwait national volleyball team," and had tried to keep himself fit in his cramped cell in Cuba.

But now, after 15 days on the hunger strike, Wilner said Kandari "looked terrible. He was pale, bleary-eyed, disoriented, barely audible, and had lost considerable weight."

Another striker is Abdulazziz Shammari. The lawyer said six soldiers had to assist Shammari to his interview chair so Wilner could speak with him.

"He could not maintain his balance without the aid of a walker," the lawyer said. "He is skin and bones and looks like one of the victims of starvation in the Sudan."

The third is Fawzi Odah. Wilner said that when he met with Odah, the detainee described the pain of being force-fed through the nose, and at one point during their conversation he suddenly "bled from the nose."

Wilner added: "He has lost nearly 30 pounds and weighs only 113."

Judge Kollar-Kotelly is expected to hold a hearing Friday or early next week.