

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/04/08/what-happens-when-gloves-come>

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"Why Jordan?" The question puzzled Abu Hamza al-Tabuki, a Saudi citizen who claims that US agents arrested him in Afghanistan in December 2001 and, after interrogating him in Pakistan, flew him in a private jet to Jordan. Al-Tabuki is one of more than a dozen terrorism suspects delivered to Jordan from US custody as part of the Central Intelligence Agency's secret rendition program. In Jordan, nearly all were subject to interrogation using torture.

"Why wasn't I sent to America since I was arrested by Americans?" al-Tabuki asked, in a narrative he sent to contacts in Jordan after he was released.

The best answer to al-Tabuki's question can probably be found in the directives, memoranda, and internal cables that relate to the CIA's rendition program, many of which remain classified. The documents of this sort that have been released publicly not only assert that normal human rights rules do not apply in the "war on terrorism," they purport to authorize torture.

The statements of current and former US officials are another good, albeit conflicting source of information. While Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has insisted that the United States "does not transport, and has not transported, detainees from one country to another for the purpose of interrogation using torture," other officials have told a very different story.

Cofer Black, who served as the Director of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center from 1999 until May 2002, did not mince words in giving his perspective. Describing the detention of "terrorists and their supporters," he said that "there was a before 9/11 and there was an after 9/11. After 9/11 the gloves come off."

Why were detainees like al-Tabuki sent to Jordan? Human Rights Watch has just released a [report](#) on CIA renditions to Jordan that details more than a dozen rendition cases. The report concludes that nearly all of the detainees whom the CIA transferred to Jordanian custody were subject to interrogation using torture. The Jordanians, the report explains, served as proxy jailers and interrogators for the CIA.

Abusive Methods

"Just about everyone [in the custody of the Jordanian intelligence service] was beaten with sticks," a Jordanian former prisoner told Human Rights Watch. "People were beaten on their feet. They did it in the basement."

As torture expert Darius Rejali has explained, this torture method, known as *falaqa*, is extremely painful. "Depending on the weight of the rod and the intensity and frequency of the blows," he has written, "this practice can yield mildly swollen feet to broken bones that damage a person permanently."

In the written account that al-Tabuki gave of his time in Jordanian custody, he describes his experience with the *falaqa* technique and other forms of abuse:

According to al-Tabuki, the torture was so severe that he lied to please his interrogators:

After spending approximately a year in detention in Jordan without charge, Al-Tabuki was reportedly sent to Saudi Arabia, where he was released.

Denials

Al-Tabuki's story was one of more than a dozen that Human Rights Watch collected. We interviewed several Jordanian former detainees who gave independent and consistent accounts of having communicated with prisoners who had been delivered to Jordan from US

custody. Their accounts were corroborated by information provided by lawyers representing detainees at Guantanamo (several of whom were previously held in Jordan), flight logs of CIA-linked aircraft, and other secondary source materials.

Yet no matter how compelling the evidence, the Jordanian government continues to deny its involvement in the CIA program. In a meeting with Human Rights Watch last year, senior Jordanian government officials stated categorically that Jordanian intelligence had never held prisoners rendered by the United States.

Even more unbelievably, given the weight of credible evidence that contradicts their position, they also denied that torture was practiced in intelligence detention.

If only this were so. Still, the Jordanians' evident embarrassment at being confronted with these accusations serves a purpose. By shining a spotlight on abuses, we may not be able convince governments to admit them, much less to publicly repudiate them -- but we do make it less likely that they will happen again.

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