

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/news-events/press-releases/center-victims-torture-welcomes-mohammed-al-qahtani%E2%80%99s-transfer-urges>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

ST. PAUL, Minn. and WASHINGTON The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) today responds to Mohammed al-Qahtanis transfer out of the Guantanamo Bay Prison, noting the extreme impacts he has endured at the hands of the U.S. government and urging additional swift action towards closure.

The United States extensively tortured a schizophrenic man with a traumatic brain injury, held him for two decades and effectively denied him the medical care he desperately needs, said CVT Washington Director Scott Roehm. While Mr. al-Qahtanis transfer is of course welcome, it underscores Guantnamos profound, ongoing human costs, and it emphasizes the urgency with which the Biden administration needs to be acting to close Guantanamo.

Below are important facts and background related to today's transfer:

Mr. al-Qahtani was cleared for transfer out of Guantanamo by unanimous agreement of Cabinet-level officials from every national security agency.

The Periodic Review Board (PRB), which determined Mr. al-Qahtani could be transferred, is an administrative review process established by [executive order](#). The PRB is composed of senior officials from the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice and State; the Joint Staff; and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). It is tasked with [determining](#) whether law of war detention remains necessary to protect against a continuing significant threat to the security of the United States. In making that determination, the PRB reviews information about the detainee prepared by ODNI. It also considers other factors, including the detainee's mental and physical health and his record in confinement. The PRB operates by consensus ultimately, a detainee can only be cleared for transfer if Cabinet-level officials from each of the above departments and agencies unanimously agree.

Mr. al-Qahtanis medical condition is debilitating, permanent and untreatable at Guantanamo.

Mr. al-Qahtani suffered from severe mental illness even before he was sent to Guantanamo. He experienced a traumatic brain injury in a car accident as a child and was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. An independent psychiatrist who examined him at Guantanamo [confirmed](#) the diagnosis, with which the military's own doctors agree, and concluded that Guantanamo staff are not capable of treating him.

The systematic program of physical, sexual and psychological torture to which he was subjected at Guantanamo comprehensively [documented](#) by the Senate Armed Services Committee exacerbated Mr. al-Qahtanis mental illness. He has repeatedly attempted to harm himself, including by cutting and swallowing broken glass.

Mr. al-Qahtanis medical condition would have required him to be repatriated regardless of any decision by the PRB.

Several years ago, Mr. al-Qahtani obtained a federal court order to grant him a Mixed Medical Commission, which is an independent medical evaluation provided for in [Army regulations](#) that implement the Geneva Conventions, to determine whether he is entitled to medical repatriation. Had the government complied with that order, the severity of Mr. al-Qahtanis medical condition would have met the test for required repatriation: when a medical condition become(s) chronic to the extent that prognosis appears to preclude recovery within one year of the conditions inception or date of injury.

Arguments that Mr. al-Qahtani should not be transferred are specious and stale.

Those who oppose Mr. al-Qahtanis transfer point to allegations never tested in court that are two decades old and relate to circumstances (the battlefield in Afghanistan) and/or people (Osama Bin Laden) that no longer exist. They entirely ignore what is most relevant to making transfer determinations: present day circumstances.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization with offices in Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, United States and additional project sites around the world. Visit www.cvt.org

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