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

<https://ccrjustice.org/abdul-razak-ali>

Campaign and Advocacy

Abdul Razak Ali* (also known as Saeed Bakhouch) is an Algerian citizen who has been detained at Guantanamo without charge since 2002. Before Guantanamo, he was detained for months in Pakistan and at Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan. It was in Pakistan where he was confused with another detainee named Abdul Razak Ali and he told authorities that he was Libyan, because he believed Libyan citizenship would increase his likelihood of release. This is why his habeas case is captioned in federal court as *Abdul Razak Ali v. Trump* (10-cv-1020). He is one of 11 prisoners who [filed the first major legal challenge](#) against Trump's Guantanamo policies in January 2018.

Ali, an ethnic Berber, was born in Algeria in July 1970. In the fall of 2001, he took advantage of the opportunity to travel outside of Algeria for only the second time in his life. He traveled to Pakistan where he planned to study the Quran and experience life in a new place. During his first months there, however, the political climate in Pakistan grew violent as Pakistani authorities were arresting Arabs and turning them over to the United States for bounties. Ali moved from one guest house to another in Pakistan, looking for safety. He was afraid of being kidnapped and given to the U.S. for money. Despite what the government alleges, Ali maintains that he did not know anyone else staying at the guest house (including another detainee Abu Zubaydah) and during his time there he never saw anything illegal take place, and that he never had military training.

When the U.S. authorities raided the guest house he was in, he did not flee or resist. What followed was a series of interrogations at various locations in Pakistan, and serious abuse. Ali describes having his feet and hands bound together; being kicked and beaten repeatedly; and not having food or water for extended periods of time.

Sometimes they would bring me to a room and shackle me in extremely painful positions. They would leave me like that for many hours and then come in and scream and hit me and ask questions that I did not know the answer to...[t]he interrogators wanted me to admit that I had been fighting in Afghanistan and that I was part of al-Qaeda. Neither was true.

Ali was transferred to Bagram, which he describes as the worst of all. He said that the guards would put heavy wet socks on his feet that were soaked in some kind of chemical because they caused pain and a burning sensation. The pain was so bad, he said, that he wished they would cut off his feet. Those chemicals turned his feet black, and, to this day, his feet remain discolored. **I was threatened with rape, I was threatened with death, Ali wrote. I had a gun held to my head by a guard who told me to talk now or I will kill you.**

He was eventually brought to Guantanamo and was very afraid because the U.S. government had his wrong name and citizenship, but he feared even more abuse if he corrected the information. Eventually, when lawyers were finally allowed to represent the men at the prison, he explained the truth about his identity. Ali has been detained for over 17 years. One of the main government justifications for his continued detention is that he was staying in a guest house where Abu Zubaydah arrived a few days before the house was raided and all of the Arabs were arrested. Ali did not know anyone that was staying in the guesthouse prior to his arrival.

In 2018, Ali and ten other prisoners filed a motion challenging the Trump administration's Guantanamo policies, arguing that their perpetual detentions violate the Constitution and the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), and asking the court to intervene on their behalf. In August 2018, Judge Leon was the first judge to rule in these sets of cases, issuing a decision denying Ali's motion. An appeal in *Ali v. Trump* is currently pending in the Court of Appeals and raises the question as to whether the Due Process Clause of the Constitution applies at Guantanamo.

**This profile was compiled from a declassified affidavit that was produced in his habeas case. Ali's lead attorney is H. Candace Gorman, who is based in Chicago.*

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