

# Center for Constitutional Rights

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

**<https://ccrjustice.org/home/press-center/press-releases/guantnamo-torture-survivor-mohammed-al-qahtani-cleared-transfer>**

## Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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February 4, 2022, New York Today the government made public that Mohammed al-Qahtani has been cleared for transfer from the prison at Guantanamo where he has been detained without fair process for the last 20 years. His counsel issued the following statement:

Today's announcement reflects a reality that our client will always live with: Mohammed al-Qahtani has, for his entire adult life, been schizophrenic. He belongs in a psychiatric facility in his home country of Saudi Arabia, not in a prison.

Mohammed was severely mentally ill long before he was unlawfully rendered to Guantanamo in 2002. After suffering traumatic brain injury in a car accident at age 8, he developed schizophrenic hallucinations as a teenager. Saudi police pulled him naked from a garbage dumpster he had thrown himself into; later, he was arrested after throwing himself in a state of undress into traffic and was involuntarily confined to a psychiatric hospital where he was formally diagnosed with schizophrenia.

A psychiatric expert independent of the U.S. military examined Mohammed at Guantanamo and confirmed the diagnosis of schizophrenia in 2016, and the military's own doctors unanimously agree with that conclusion today. Indeed, as early as his first months at the prison, the FBI observed him talking to non-existent people, hiding from them under a sheet, and hearing voices. Notwithstanding this, he was brutally tortured, at the direction of then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld himself, in a bid to break a man whose connection to reality had already been threadbare for years.

Despite the severity of his illness, Mohammed has never posed a risk to anyone but himself. In recent years the voices in his head have increasingly told him to harm himself by doing things like swallowing broken glass and not disclosing it to his doctors, making his transfer out of Guantanamo an urgent matter.

Schizophrenia is a chronic disorder. It is permanent; the symptoms—visual hallucinations and hearing voices—may eventually be made manageable, but it is not curable. We are hopeful that Mohammed's torment will be lessened when he is in the care of trusted psychiatrists who speak his native language, far from the scene of his torture, and where he can receive vital support from his family.

Mohammed is represented by [Shayana Kadidal](#) and [Luna Martinez](#) at the Center for Constitutional Rights; Professors Ramzi Kassem and Naz Ahmad and their students in the CLEAR Clinic at CUNY School of Law; Professor Sandra Babcock of Cornell Law School; and Larry Lustberg of Gibbons PC.

For more information, [visit the Center for Constitutional Rights case page](#).

*The Center for Constitutional Rights works with communities under threat to fight for justice and liberation through litigation, advocacy, and strategic communications. Since 1966, the Center for Constitutional Rights has taken on oppressive systems of power, including structural racism, gender oppression, economic inequity, and governmental overreach. Learn more at [ccrjustice.org](https://ccrjustice.org).*

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