

Witness Against Torture

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

<https://witnessagainsttorture.com/2016/08/08/wat-responds-to-fate-of-jihad-ahmed-mustafa-dhiab-ex-gtmo-detaineehunger-striker/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Witness Against Torture, a US-based human rights organization, pleads for continuing assurances from all relevant authorities of the safety of Jihad Ahmed Mustafa Dhiab (aka Jihad Ahmed Deyab). Dhiab poses no threat to any nation, society, or people. He should immediately be set free so that he can continue to rebuild his life after years of detention at Guantanamo.

We also call on all governments and the United States government in particular not to impede Dhiab's wish to travel to reunite with his family. Dhiab spent 12 years in US detention at Guantanamo, though he was never charged with a crime. As with so many of the detained men, no credible evidence links him at any time to anti-US hostilities.

At Guantanamo, Dhiab suffered unimaginable abuse, including years of brutal forced-feedings to break his protest of his indefinite detention by hunger strike. A pending case in US federal court seeks the public release of hours of videotape of the forced-feedings. An attorney for Dhiab, who privately screened the tapes, describes them as Abu Ghraib redux.

Released by the US government to Uruguay in 2014, Dhiab has experienced continued hardship. This includes physical and emotional distress, financial difficulties, and the pain of separation from his family and broader culture. While still at Guantanamo, he was promised that his family would meet him in Montevideo upon his release. Until now he has not been reunited with his family. Born in Lebanon and raised in Syria, Dhiab seeks to live within the Arabic-speaking world, reconnected with his loved ones.

The United States owes Dhiab, like other men it has held at Guantanamo, an official apology, substantial financial compensation, and other resources to aid in their resettlement. They are victims, in the vast majority, of wrongful detention. All have suffered torture, physical or psychological, at US hands.

And yet, the United States assumes little to no responsibility for the well-being of men it has kidnapped, tortured, and spat out of its island prison often years after clearing them for release. It imposes onerous restrictions on their travel. It burdens countries like Uruguay, generous in taking in men from Guantanamo, with financial costs and other challenges associated with resettlement. Finally, some in the media and US government use grossly exaggerated concerns of former detainees engaging in anti-US hostilities to falsely paint innocent men like Dhiab as villains and to thwart further transfers from the prison.

Dhiab deserves the world's sympathy, assurances of safety, reunion with his family, and just compensation from the US government. The videotapes of his forced-feedings should be released so that that people may see as Dhiab himself wants the detail of his abuse at Guantanamo. The prison must close, with the United States contributing to the long-term well-being of the men it has detained and tortured.

Witness Against Torture (WAT) formed in 2005 with the goals of closing the prison camp at Guantanamo and ending US torture. It has held marches and solidarity fasts, lobbied Congress and other US officials, sponsored petitions, held numerous educational events, and engaged in non-violent direct action. WAT members have twice been to Cuba to protest the prison, first in 2005 and again in 2015.