

Center for Constitutional Rights

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

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/blog/2017/09/08/making-sure-our-guant-namo-client-can-survive-and-fight-his-unlawful-detention>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The CCR blog

This week, CCR made an emergency request in the district court in Washington, DC, for an independent medical evaluation of [Sharqawi Al Hajji](#), a 43-year-old citizen of Yemen who remains detained at Guantnamo, where men have been tortured, attempted suicide, attempted starvation, become numb, become sick, aged, and died, and where 41 men of that legacy are still left the majority in their 16th year of detention.

We filed the motion because, despite that we have gotten used to Guantnamo, it remains an aberration that has had extreme effects on human beings, and Mr. Al Hajjis health today is potentially in crisis. He has long-standing issues acute pain, exhaustion, jaundice, weakness that physicians we've consulted believe are symptoms of severe liver disease or another potentially life-threatening underlying illness, or associated with his torture in secret prisons for two years before Guantnamo. But he is also on a hunger strike, because he is tired of being sick and desperate about his detention, and that is exacerbating his condition and left him unconscious and hospitalized a few weeks ago. Our experts believe he may be at risk of total bodily collapse.

[My colleagues and I have been at this](#) Guantnamo for a long time. We could write the script of how the governments response will go. They will say hes fasting, not on hunger strike, as if it doesnt matter that he is 104 pounds and refusing food. They will say he has world-class medical care and no outside examination is necessary, as if trust in ones doctor has no bearing on the matter, and trust were not impossible in a place where physicians once participated in torture. They will say even if he is on hunger strike, the harm is self-inflicted, as if indefinite, potentially permanent banishment at Guantnamo would not make anyone resort to desperate acts. They will deny there is any emergency, as if we are not approaching a human and legal breaking point with the perpetual detention of the remaining Guantnamo detainees.

Mr. Al Hajjis request for medical help comes at a crucial time, when in recent months, he had been working with us to reopen his original habeas case and renew his challenge to his unlawful detention. Six years ago, he withdrew his petition at a time when virtually every habeas win was being overturned on appeal in the D.C. Circuit Court, and even dissenting judges were calling the proceedings rigged in the governments favor. As his indefinite detention under Trump drags on, he is now trying to summon the energy to go back to court, and he needs to be physically and mentally able to do so. The motion we filed this week is a step in that direction.

[View the discussion thread.](#)

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