

Center For Constitutional Rights

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/blog/2017/06/01/are-we-going-pretend-they-re-less-men-and-walk-away>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The CCR blog

Are we going to pretend they're less than men and walk away? This beautiful line from Peace Poet Luke Nephews piece, [There is a Man Under the Hood](#), anchors Witness Against Tortures new campaign [#foreverhumanbeings A Campaign to Close Guantanamo](#), which launched last Friday, the first day of Ramadan. Over 41 days, the campaign will bring awareness to each remaining prisoner, coordinate public action aimed at closing Guantanamo, and draw links between Guantanamo, institutionalized Islamophobia, all forms of racism, and abuses in the US criminal justice and prison systems. Day 1 of the campaign was dedicated to CCR client Sufyan Barhoumi, and CCR Senior Managing attorney Shayana Kadidal [shared some of his story](#).

Forty-one men remain detained at Guantanamo, the smallest number of prisoners at the prison since the first planes of detainees landed in January 2002. *Forty-one men*. That's about the number of people who fill up a NYC subway car. Seventy-five percent of those men have not been charged with a crime and likely won't ever be. Five of them men have even been cleared for release. Many were held in secret CIA detention; they were disappeared, rendered, tortured, and, now, are languishing in Guantanamo.

Indeed, they are more than numbers or statistics. They are human beings—brothers, sons, husbands, and fathers. Luke's poem resonates with me because it speaks directly to the work that we do at CCR: reminding the world that our clients are people who have rights, and helping bridge the distance between them and the outside world.

Just a few weeks ago, I travelled down to Guantanamo with several CCR lawyers to visit our clients [Sufyan](#), [Guled Hassan Duran](#), and [Majid Khan](#). It was a fairly routine trip—one of over a hundred that CCR staff have made since the prison opened—planned specifically so we could visit our clients before Ramadan began.

In the days before flying out of NYC, I visited my go-to spots in Manhattan and Brooklyn to pick up some treats to bring down with us for our clients. I even called my mother for her expertise: *What's a good desi sweet for Ramadan that can travel well and won't spoil? Remember: it has to be sealed and pre-packaged or else they won't let it in.* Our clients are all Muslim, as are all the other prisoners, of course. Guantanamo has always been a prison exclusively for Muslim men and boys.

I filled my suitcase with items to submit for our clients: Kashmiri snack mix, candied ginger, all kinds of masala, and melt-in-your-mouth soan papdi, a flaky dessert with milk, cardamom, and gram flour, per my mom's suggestion. I hoped that these treats would be something special with which they would break their fasts, and the monotony of everyday life in Guantanamo. Perhaps the aroma of fresh cardamom or rose would remind the men of home—the families and friends they haven't seen in over a decade—and make them feel less isolated at a time where Muslims all over the world were celebrating with their loved ones.

Guantanamo may not currently be making headlines, but make no mistake, the injustice continues: indefinite detention spanning more than a decade, a lack of accountability for torture, no due process or a trial in federal court. The list goes on.

The Trump administration has yet to deliver any real policy on Gitmo. The status quo, which is essentially halting transfers, may seem like the lesser of evils given the reckless and racist anti-Muslim policies Trump has already enacted domestically and abroad. But for men like [Sufyan](#), it means even more uncertainty about when or if he can be reunited with his mother and brothers in Algeria. This month, Sufyan enters his sixteenth year of imprisonment, even though he was cleared for release by the government and continues to confine him. And for CCR and our allies who have opposed Guantanamo since the very beginning, it means we have to fight even harder to make sure the public does not forget about the men at Guantanamo, that one of the greatest symbols of physical and psychological torture and America's post-9/11 embrace of lawlessness and injustice remains intact and open for business and potentially new prisoners.

That's exactly why the [#foreverhumanbeings](#) campaign is so critical. We don't know what Donald Trump will do with Guantanamo but, whatever it is, we're heartened to know there are people by our side who will never forget about Guantanamo or stop resisting until it is closed. Our clients are too.

In the final lines of Luke Nephews poem:

And to the people in my country, please,

do not pretend to be seeking freedom

or justice, or any common good

until we are ready to recognize the human rights

of every

single

man under that hood.

[View the discussion thread.](#)

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