

Human Rights Watch

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

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/03/28/guantanamo-new-reverse-rendition-case>

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Detainee Captured in Egypt Disappeared in U.S. Custody

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While considerable attention has been paid recently to U.S. renditions of suspects to third countries, the al-Hila case is new evidence of the reverse: foreign authorities picking up suspects in non-combat and non-battlefield situations and handing them over to the United States without basic protections afforded to criminal suspects.

In [a new briefing](#), Human Rights Watch today released details of the previously unreported case of `Abd al-Salam `Ali al-Hila, a Yemeni terror suspect initially detained in Cairo by Egyptian authorities in 2002 and currently held at Guantanamo.

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Al-Hila was essentially kidnapped on the streets of Cairo and then disappeared in U.S. custody, said John Sifton, a researcher at Human Rights Watch. Whatever the allegations against him, Al-Hila should have been charged and given the opportunity to challenge his detention.

The Human Rights Watch briefing, [Cairo to Kabul to Guantanamo: the `Abd al-Salam `Ali al-Hila Case](#), details how al-Hila, a Yemeni intelligence colonel and businessman who had been involved in helping Arab Islamists in the 1990s, was first picked up by Egyptian authorities while on a business trip in Cairo on September 19, 2002. According to authorities in Yemen, and al-Hila's brother, he was taken within ten days to Baku, Azerbaijan, then on to the Bagram air base in Afghanistan, and, finally, sometime in mid-2004, to the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Prior to detention in Cairo, al-Hila, a father of three, had been in daily contact with his family in Yemen. After his disappearance in September 2002, the family did not hear from him again until April 2004. Details of his whereabouts were not known until a letter al-Hila wrote was smuggled out of Afghanistan (a translation is reprinted in full in the attached briefing). The letter was released by Yemeni authorities in April 2004. Al-Hila sent subsequent letters to his family from Afghanistan via the International Committee of the Red Cross and, most recently, from Guantanamo.

The al-Hila case is not unique. Other detainees captured outside of Afghanistan, in non-combat situations, have been brought to Guantanamo without criminal law protections. Human Rights Watch said that six Algerians held in Bosnia, for instance, were transferred to U.S. officials in January 2002 (despite a Bosnian high court order to release them) and were sent to Guantanamo. The administration has detained several other suspects outside of Afghanistan and held them as enemy combatants.

The Bush administration continues to believe that by invoking the word terror it can detain anyone in any corner of the world without any oversight, said Sifton. Yet all these cases do suggest that the United States has no commitment to legal principles. Turning your back on the law is not the way to stop terrorism.

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