

Afghanistan: Ex-Bagram Inmates Recount Stories of Abuse, Torture

Former prisoners return to the now abandoned US-run Bagram jail, which was notorious for enhanced interrogations.

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Global Research, September 23, 2021
[Al Jazeera](#) 22 September 2021

Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)
Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [US NATO War](#)
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Hajjumin Hamza walks through a long, dark corridor and carefully inspects the area as if he has never seen it before. Today, the 36-year old bearded man in a black turban and a traditional two-piece garment is a guide to fellow Taliban fighters in the place whose name he would rather forget. His eyes stop at a solitary chair standing on the pathway.

“They used to tie us to this chair, our hands and feet, and then applied electric shocks. Sometimes they used it for beatings, too,” Hamza says, recounting the torture he underwent during his captivity in Bagram prison between 2017 and the onset of the fall of Kabul last month, when he managed to escape.

The United States set up the Parwan Detention Facility, known as Bagram, or Afghanistan’s Guantanamo, in late 2001 to house armed fighters after the Taliban launched a rebellion following its removal from power in a military invasion.

The facility located within the Bagram airbase in the Parwan province was meant to be temporary. But it turned out otherwise. It housed more than 5,000 prisoners until its doors were forced open, days before the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan on August 15.

Sultan, who was jailed at Bagram between 2014 and August 2021, says he lost his teeth during what came to be known as enhanced interrogation techniques that rights groups say amounted to torture and violated international law. The 42 year old, who does not share his surname, opens his mouth to demonstrate the damage.

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Featured image: Hamza recounts the torture he endured during his imprisonment at Bagram [Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska/Al Jazeera]

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