

America's "War on Terrorism" Victim Omar Khadr: Free at Last?

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Khadr is a Canadian citizen – one of America's youngest wrongfully charged war on terror victims at the time of his illegal arrest and detention.

On July 27, 2002, US forces abducted him in Ayub Kheyl, Afghanistan. He was caught in a gun fight, shot twice in the chest and blinded in one eye.

At age 15, he was lawlessly detained, interrogated and brutally tortured at US Bagram and Guantanamo torture gulags.

He was tried before a US military commission the Supreme Court ruled lacks "the power to proceed because (its) structures and procedures violate both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the four Geneva Conventions (Hamdan v. Rumsfeld June 2006).

Congress circumvented the High Court ruling by passing the Military Commissions Act (October 2006). It grants extraordinary unconstitutional rights.

It violates core international humanitarian laws. Guantanamo and other US torture prison detainees have no rights whatever.

Khadr was charged with being an unlawful enemy combatant (now called an unprivileged enemy belligerent). Either term is a long-defunct WWII designation superseded by the four Geneva Conventions.

Khadr was coerced to admit crimes he never committed. At the time, former Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) President Michael Ratner called his admission:

"...a 'show plea.' He pleaded guilty to crimes he was never charged with and crimes about which there was almost no evidence, except a confession made under torture including threats of gang rape."

"So why did he do it?" He faced life in prison "even without a trial. He was being tried in a military commission, not a real court."

He had no right of appeal. He was denied judicial fairness. "Under these circumstances his conviction was almost guaranteed."

"The Obama administration is trying to" do the impossible. It wants to "save face. (Khadr) was the first trial of a child soldier by a Western power since World War II."

“Charges and trials of juveniles are utterly illegal. Top that off with torture” coerced confessions. Obama operates as ruthlessly as Bush.

Imagine making a young child look like “a really bad guy and guilty.”

“The Khadr case is one of the most disgusting chapters in a post-9/11 detention system that should have long ago been relegated to a trash bin.”

He was charged with “material support for terrorism.” At the time of his arrest, no such crime existed.

CCR said “civilians like Omar Khadr who engage in hostilities (whether in self-defense or otherwise) do not violate the laws of war merely because they lack the combat immunity of a soldier.”

Khadr was Obama’s first military commission trial – a kangaroo court by any standard, deeply flawed with no legitimacy.

Military commissions deny due process and judicial fairness. They’re tribunals established to convict.

Khadr was born in Toronto. He was an innocent boy when abducted. He was living with his family in Afghanistan.

He was wrongfully accused of killing a US soldier. A later leaked Defense Department Criminal Investigation Task Force report revealed his innocence.

The soldier’s death was by friendly fire. Khadr had nothing to do with it.

It didn’t matter. He was horrifically mistreated – 13 years in gulag confinement, often in solitary confinement.

On September 26, 2012, he was repatriated to Canada – placed in maximum security confinement.

Instead of freeing him at the time, the fascist Harper regime continued his brutalizing treatment – complicit with Washington in gross violation of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms and fundamental international law.

Despite all he endured, he somehow retained his dignity and positive outlook. He yearned only for a normal, productive life. In a December 2012 letter to a friend he wrote:

“The light of goodness outshines shadows that might be. There are too many good things in this life (as hard as it might be) to worry or even care about the bad things.”

“Things are what we make out of them. Prison can be a deprivation of freedom, or a time to enlighten ourselves. For me it is the latter.”

On May 7, Canadian Court of Appeal Judge Myra Belby said “Mr. Khadr, you’re free to go” – despite Ottawa’s emergency request to keep him imprisoned.

In April, a lower Alberta court granted him release on bail while his appeals process continues – under strict conditions.

His lawyer Dennis Edney and wife offered him residence in their home. A required ankle monitor tracks his movements. A 10PM – 7AM curfew was imposed. He has limited Internet access only.

He has restricted communication with his family in Ontario – supervised and only in English.

Ottawa continues contesting his release on bail. He faces more court proceedings in September, as well as a US review of his case.

He’s suing Harper’s government for \$50 million – claiming violation of his fundamental rights, including complicity with US torture and denying him rights of a child under international law.

He wants a “fresh start,” he said. “There are too many good things in life that I want to experience.”

He wants to finish his education and work in healthcare. “I have a lot of basic skills I need to learn,” he said.

He’s now aged 28. “This is (his) first time out in society since the age of 15,” Edney explained.

“I’m delighted. It’s taken too many years to get to this point. We were the only Western country that didn’t request one of its detainees come home. We left a Canadian child in Guantanamo Bay to suffer torture.”

For now he’s released on bail. It remains for Canada’s judicial system and America’s to decide if he’ll remain free.

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