

Despite US Efforts at Concealment, More Torture Stories Leaking Out

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

“A guard held a shotgun to my head. ‘You are a terrorist!’ he screamed. ‘What kind of dumb stuff did you write about your treatment here?’ My hands and feet were bound, and someone kicked me from behind.”

That’s just a sliver of the testimony of Murat Kurnaz, a 19-year-old Muslim from Bremen, Germany, abducted while traveling in Pakistan in the company of missionaries a few months after 9/11. Kurnaz was sold as a terror suspect to the U.S. military for \$3,000, imprisoned and tortured over a five-year period.

While jailed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, a Red Cross official wrote a letter home for Kurnaz and it was the “dumb stuff” in the letter that infuriated the Americans, according to the cover story in the Spring issue of “Amnesty International” (AI) magazine. The guards’ response illustrates the pains the Bush regime is taking to conceal from the world its horrific crimes against Muslim prisoners in dungeons around the world. There have been numerous other cases now where the Red Cross has not been informed of the existence of “ghost prisoners”, such as in the CIA prison in Kabul, or even told of the existence of a prison itself. Not surprisingly, the Red Cross has found U.S. methods are, at the least, “tantamount to torture.”

In another example, on March 14th, attorney Gitanjali Gutierrez of the non-profit Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), an advocacy organization of New York City, testified before a Congressional committee that she could not reveal what her client, CIA prisoner Majid Khan, told her about his treatment because “the government has declared prisoners’ statements to be classified,” The New York Times reported. As in the Kurnaz case, there is no such thing as free speech for prisoners of the Pentagon. Prisoners who talk to the Red Cross get roughed up. And the CCR is being muzzled as effectively as if they were dealing with Stalinist or Nazi jailers.

Still, stories leak out. At Kandahar, Kurnaz told Germany’s “Stern” magazine, (as reprinted by AI), he was made to pour cold water over his head every day. Then, “They prepared me for interrogations by putting electric shocks through my feet. For hours on end they would hang me up by my hands, which were bound behind my back in different positions—and then a break, and then you would be hung up again. A doctor looked in to see if you were still alive. The interrogator came at midday every day, and then you would be taken down for a short while.” (Yet another example of medical doctors cooperating in torture?)

Kurnaz was then flown to Guantanamo where he and other prisoners were beaten en route to the infamous Camp X-Ray, which he described as follows: “You were exposed to

everything: sun, rain, snakes, scorpions. I once saw with my own eyes one of the prisoners being stung on the finger by a scorpion. Fat rats walked all over your arms and legs.” (Shades of Winston Smith in Room 101 in George Orwell’s novel 1984.)

“We were beaten a lot, tormented,” Kurnaz continued. “And then came the incident with the Quran. A military policeman who was searching a cell threw the book on the floor. The prisoners screamed. When I looked he was also kicking the Quran with his foot. Everybody began kicking against the doors and spitting at the guards. Then the Rapid Reaction Force came in.” After that, most prisoners refused to eat for four days. (Later, there was a second incident of Quran desecration, Kurnaz said.)

In Spring, 2002, Kurnaz was moved to Camp Delta, where he said conditions were “even worse” than at X-Ray. The camp consisted of container blocks, each with 48 cells “and the cages were made of chicken wire with a bed, toilet and washbasin at knee height. We had even less room to move around. The air was stifling. In the heat, it stank of paint and of 48 people being housed in the tiniest of rooms in great humidity. The neon light was always on, even at night, and the generators droned.”

Later that year, Kurnaz over a seven-week period was relocated every two hours so that he could not sleep, to which the guards gave the cutesy name of “Operation Sandman.” “As soon as they saw that you were asleep, they shook the cell doors,” Kurnaz said. “On top of that came interrogations that lasted for more than 50 hours. I hardly ate anything at this point either and lost about 60 kilos.” He added, “You are close to blacking out and you move around in a semiconscious state.”

About that time, Kurnaz said, guards attempted to hang a young Saudi from a sheet and label it a “suicide” attempt but the man survived in a brain-damaged state after three months in a coma.

At length, Kurnaz came to understand he was arrested as “the Taliban from Bremen” when, in fact, he had no idea what the Taliban was and had been employed in Germany as a nightclub bouncer. It wasn’t until August 24, 2006, that Kurnaz was released after a personal plea by German Chancellor Angela Merkel to President Bush. Kurnaz was flown home to Germany where he was reunited with his family. He said, “My father was very thin and had white hair. I embraced my mother. She was crying, and I embraced her until she stopped. Everybody cried. I did not. I do not know if I can still cry. Perhaps I forgot how to cry in Cuba.”

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