

Human Rights Lawyers on Hunger Strike to Show Solidarity with Guantánamo Detainees

By [Clive Stafford Smith](#)

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I've just finished my hunger-strike, done to show solidarity with the detainees in Guantánamo Bay. I had no idea how long I could go for, but I managed about six days. I think I could have gone on longer, but figured I would pass the baton on.

[Frankie Boyle](#) has now taken over. I had a tweet from him – he's in the Netherlands, and is quite upset, sitting on the beach apparently, being forced to listen to loud ABBA music, not being able to eat or drink. Julie Christie is due to take over on July 22, and then Massive Attack's Robert del Naja will possibly follow her.

Of course, a week or so is nothing compared to what almost two-thirds of the 166 prisoners have done; one of my clients, [Shaker Aamer](#), the last British resident there, has been on hunger strike for over 150 days. The aim of their protest is for those who have been cleared for release (86 individuals) to be finally set free, and that the other 80 should receive due process of law.

Not eating for a number of days constantly reminded me of how much easier our lives are compared to those of the prisoners. One of the few physical complications I had was getting cramps from a lack of salt, but I could just go out and get some salt if I wanted to.

I was drinking water, tea and decaffeinated coffee. The people in my office threatened me with jelly beans. It was hardest at home, where I was doing a lot of cooking. Making a chocolate cake for my little boy's birthday was quite a challenge, but I never licked my fingers.

The idea has been to get people recognising the horrendous truth of Guantánamo. It follows on from [the video we made with rapper Mos Def drawing attention to the force-feeding](#) that is going on there. He let us film him having the tube stuck up his nose. Over six million have watched that video, and it's chilling – it gets the message out there about what the US is doing.

I'm glad we've got celebrities going on hunger strike – having someone like Frankie Boyle on board has a vastly greater impact than me doing it. On our website, [Stand Fast For Justice](#), people from around the world have promised around 1200 days hunger striking on the prisoners' behalf. My clients are thrilled that people are caring enough to do this, and that's been the most important thing for me.

I hope there is an endgame in sight for Guantánamo – there's a move afoot to start repatriating prisoners again – but in some ways, the situation is worse than it was five years ago. The US government has just announced that it plans to appeal to preserve its right to

search prisoners' genitals simply when they want to go and make a legal telephone call. It's pathetic that Barack Obama, the most powerful man on Earth, can't close that place down.

***Clive Stafford Smith** is the founder and director of Reprieve, a not-for-profit organisation that supports the human rights of prisoners, particularly those on death row and in Guantánamo Bay*

standfastforjustice.org

www.reprieve.org.uk

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