

“I Found Out that My Father Was Imprisoned in Guantánamo on Google”

By [Zafar Syed Zaffsyed](#)

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*The article below was written by **Zafar Syed Zaffsyed** for the Pakistan Independent and published on November 2, 2020. The original is available [here](#). The text below was translated by Reprive staff.*

Our thanks to Reprive for bringing this important article to our attention

“I learned about my father’s case on Google when I was twelve or thirteen years old, using Wikipedia. My name is Jawad. I am the son of Ahmed Rabbani who is in Guantánamo Bay. I am 17 years old and I have never met my father.”

Jawad Rabbani, the son of Guantánamo Bay detainee **Ahmed Rabbani**, spoke to an Independent Urdu correspondent in Karachi about his life. Here is his story.

“I was born five or six months after Abu went to prison,” he said. “When I was little, I didn’t tell my friends who my father was and where he was. I used to say he is not in the world. When we first spoke, he said he was in prison. I asked him, ‘Why are you in jail? Are there bad people in jail?’”

Ahmed Rabbani is on hunger strike and says he is prepared to die. He has written a letter to Independent Urdu, stating:

“it is not possible to be released from this prison in life, so I want to die and get rid of this prison. Americans are afraid to starve me to death, so they force-feed me every day, but this is no less than torture.”

Five thousand dollar deal in Musharraf era

According to official US Department of Defense documents published in the New York Times, Rabbani has admitted to being an al-Qaeda facilitator and working directly for al-Qaeda’s senior planner **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed**. The US considers him “high risk” and claims he should be kept in custody.

Clive Stafford Smith, co-founder of the UK-based human rights organisation Reprive which is fighting for Ahmed Rabbani’s rights, told The Independent Urdu that Rabbani had no links to al-Qaeda or any other terrorist organisation. There is no connection and these

confessions were obtained from him through torture.

Stafford Smith says Pakistani authorities sold Rabbani to the United States in exchange for \$5,000 saying he was a terrorist called **Hassan Gul**. Oddly enough, the real Hassan Gul was arrested in 2004, held with Rabbani in the same prison, but released by the Americans after only three years. According to Stafford Smith, Hassan Gul rejoined the terrorists and was killed in a drone strike in Waziristan in 2012.

According to a report by the US Senate Intelligence Committee, Ahmed Rabbani was subjected to “Enhanced Interrogation,” which means torture. [The report notes that he was held in the ‘Dark Prison’ in Afghanistan for 540 days, where he was hung from the ceiling until his shoulders dislocated, beaten, threatened and kept in total isolation and darkness, among other tortures.]

“My volunteer American lawyers documented 60 methods of torture, from ordinary beatings to fake executions,” Rabbani told Independent Urdu.

Ahmed’s hunger strike

Ahmed Rabbani has been imprisoned all this time, and is still being held at Guantánamo Bay. He has started a hunger strike to protest against this.

“Due to the continuous hunger strike, Rabbani has lost 37 kg, and is forced to be given liquid food daily through a tube,” said Stafford Smith.

Mahvish Ahmed Hayat Khan, a human rights lawyer working with Reprieve and author of *My Guantánamo Diary*, told The Independent Urdu:

“Ahmed Rabbani was arrested due to a misidentification. The United States has acknowledged that they do not have wanted people, but some are still being held captive. This is a violation of the Geneva Conventions, international law and the US Constitution. 740 out of 780 prisoners have been released before Ahmed, which has made him very depressed.”

In a letter to Independent Urdu, Rabbani writes that he has no choice but to go on a life-threatening hunger strike. *“They have kept me locked up for more than 18 years and in my eyes there is no end to this suffering.”*

Behaviour of the Dark Ages

Rabbani is force-fed daily to prevent him dying of starvation.

“They are trying to keep me alive, not because they care about me, but because if I die, it will make them look bad. They ruined my life, destroyed my family and subjected me to the Dark Ages,” Rabbani wrote in the letter.

“One day I was wearing a long T-shirt that came down to my knees. I called the supervisor and asked him to take a photo of me so that he could use it in his medical class. Students should learn what a person looks like shortly before their death.”

“I am nothing but skin and bones and I move around with a cane. I’m only 51 but I look like a 95-year-old. I saw my shadow through the window and thought I might be in the movie Unbroken which showed American pilots who died of starvation as prisoners of war in World War II.”

Why are they tortured?

“My American captors also want me to say goodbye to my conscience and my caste for a little food, to betray my religion and morals. It’s not possible for me to do that,” Rabbani wrote.

“Maybe I will finally go to my family in a coffin and escape from Guantánamo completely. I hope that doesn’t happen. But they think that after all these years, they can weaken my peaceful protest with more violence. It’s not going to happen, so I just have to follow the path that has been chosen until the government of Pakistan takes me to my family.”

Reprieve has created a website about Ahmed Rabbani’s hunger strike which can be [viewed here](#).

Ahmed Rabbani’s son Jawad Rabbani, who is studying in Karachi, has written to President Trump about his father’s case, but received no response *“If someone commits a crime and it is proven, then it is a different matter, but we do not know why Abu is in jail, nor does Abu know,”* Jawad said. *“Why is he in jail?”*

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