

US Judge Refuses to Protect Guantánamo Prisoner

By [Global Research](#)

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A federal district court in Washington has today rejected the pleas of former British resident Ahmed Belbacha, refusing to block his forced return to persecution and torture in Algeria.

Ahmed's attorney Tara Murray of Reprive, said: "Ahmed's desperate plight, together with his gentle nature, have attracted many private offers of help from both sides of the Atlantic. Sadly, no government has come to his rescue - and now even the courts are turning their back him. All signs now point towards Ahmed's imminent forced transfer to torture and persecution in Algeria."

Ahmed had sought emergency protection after the district court dissolved an injunction, in place since 2008, prohibiting the US from sending him back to Algeria. US Attorney General Eric Holder's recent visit to Algiers to sign a 'mutual legal assistance treaty' with the Algerian Minister of Justice emphasized the importance of Ahmed's request.

Reprive is deeply concerned about this treaty and will appeal to the DC Circuit Court - and to the Supreme Court if necessary - to seek protection for Ahmed. His legal team is also appealing worldwide - to the governments of Britain, Ireland and Luxembourg - for help.

Ahmed, a 39 year-old accountant, was visibly terrified during his attorney visit earlier this month and remains a tragic figure in Guantánamo. Cleared of all charges by the Bush Administration, he has consistently chosen to stay imprisoned rather than face his fate in Algeria, a country he originally fled after threats on his life by the terrorist group Group Islamique Armé (GIA).

Attorney David Remes of Appeal for Justice, which also represents Ahmed, said: "The court's decision places Mr. Belbacha in grave danger. His very life is at risk. We'll take his case all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary to protect him from the ghastly fate that awaits him in Algeria."

Ahmed Belbacha, now faces forced transfer to torture following US government deal with Algeria.

BACKGROUND:

Ahmed Belbacha lived for years in the seaside town of Bournemouth, UK, where he studied English and worked; during a Labour conference he was responsible for cleaning the hotel room of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, from whom he received a healthy tip and note of appreciation. He is now in his eighth year of imprisonment without charge in Guantánamo Bay.

Ahmed's fears about Algeria were confirmed by an alarming 'conviction' delivered in absentia by an Algerian court last November. In a disgraceful show trial, where no lawyer was appointed to defend Ahmed, the court sentenced him to 20 years in prison for belonging to an 'overseas terrorist group'. Despite repeated requests and extensive investigation, Reprieve's lawyers have been unable to discover what exactly Ahmed is supposed to have done. No evidence has been produced to support his 'conviction', which appears to be retaliation against Ahmed for speaking out about the inhumane treatment he would be subjected to if sent to Algeria.

Ahmed had been protected by an injunction barring the US government from repatriating him against his will, but a US judge dissolved the injunction in February. Reprieve immediately requested the decision be reversed, citing the US Supreme Court's ongoing consideration of a related case, *Kiyemba v Obama* (*Kiyemba II*), in which it was decided that US courts could not prevent the Obama Administration from forcibly repatriating prisoners to countries where they face persecution. Worryingly, on Monday 22nd March, the Supreme Court decided not to review *Kiyemba II*; Reprieve then submitted another plea to DC's federal district court on 24th March, followed by an emergency motion over the Easter weekend following Holder's announcement.

Ahmed's plight, together with his gentle nature, has attracted private offers of help. He has been given a room in a flat by a Bournemouth resident, and the Massachusetts town of Amherst has offered him refuge in defiance of Congress. So far, however, no government has come forward to help.

Reprieve, a legal action charity, uses the law to enforce the human rights of prisoners, from death row to Guantánamo Bay. Reprieve investigates, litigates and educates, working on the frontline, to provide legal support to prisoners unable to pay for it themselves. Reprieve promotes the rule of law around the world, securing each person's right to a fair trial and saving lives. Clive Stafford Smith is the founder of Reprieve and has spent 25 years working on behalf of people facing the death penalty in the USA.

Reprieve's current casework involves representing 33 prisoners in the US prison at Guantánamo Bay, working on behalf of prisoners facing the death penalty, and conducting ongoing investigations into the rendition and the secret detention of 'ghost prisoners' in the so-called 'war on terror.'

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