

By Debra Sweet

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The Fast for Justice began today, on the 8th anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo, with 50 people here in Washington, and another 75 around the U.S. Fasters marched in orange jumpsuits in front of the White House, and then performed guerrilla theater. “Bush Justice” turned into “Obama Justice.” Guantanamo became Bagram, and Guantanamo, Illinois.

Attorney Pardiss Kebriaei from the Center for Constitutional Rights, told of visiting her clients several times with good news. In June 2008, she told them U.S. courts were allowing them to file suit. In November 2008, a new president who campaigned on closing Guantanamo was elected. In January 2009, he made an Executive Order closing Guantanamo. Some of her clients have been cleared for release, meaning that the U.S. government has no intention finds they do not need to be held further.

Yet her clients are still sitting in Guantanamo. What is good news worth?

A reporter asked if the Guantanamo lawyers are angry at the delays. “We are increasingly disillusioned, and angry too” she said.

Attorney Steve Truitt stood holding a sign with his client’s name, Hani Abdullah, a Yemeni. He can complete corporate deals, but not get this client sprung.

It’s a messed up situation, as a high school student visiting the scene from Maryland told me. Last night, together with the people about to fast, we watched Andy Worthington’s film about the lives of the detainees. The room was silent for awhile after it ended, as the weight of the injustice and years of detention settled. But then we got to talking. A friend and playwright, along to participate in all this, remarked on two things I noticed about Omar Deghayes’ comments in the film. At one point he described that the guards, after four or five months would

mostly come to understand the injustice of the prison. But then, they would get rotated out, and they would get another round of them who had to be once again educated.

The other thing Omar said that hits everyone who watches is that it's not the loss of his eye, his broken ribs, the sexual humiliation and degradation that is the worst. It was losing the years of his son's young life, the joy of seeing him as so innocent, that he will never get back.

Omar was at the press conference this afternoon, via live video conference.

Last night Claire from Ithaca raised the point that even if Guantanamo is moved to Illinois, there already is torture in US prisons, in the Special Housing Units, where total isolation and sensory deprivation is practiced on people who live in America.

I was glad to say that the guerilla posters which appeared today on bus shelters in the San Francisco area made the connection, saying "Shut Down Guantanamo...Bagram...Pelican Bay. Torture is a War Crime!"