

By Ahmed Rabbani

From [Independent](#) | Original Article

**If the United States will not allow its own people to be subject to the rule of law in such cases, how can others be held to account?**

I have become rather used to being kicked in the stomach. Suddenly, the kicking has stopped. Yesterday, I learnt that the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) has [agreed to investigate war crimes](#) committed in

Afghanistan, by [United States](#)

[Unit](#)

forces. My American tormentors in the “dark prison” in Kabul, believed they had impunity to do whatever they wanted to me. Now there is a possibility that they may be held to account. Indeed, it is an historic moment: US torturers may face international justice for the first time.

I was one of a hundred people who filed the complaint, though the only one from [Guantánamo Bay](#) willing to be named in public. I understand why others wish to remain anonymous, but I have no fear of reprisals – what could they do to me, that they have not already done?

The Americans paid a bounty to Pakistanis for me, after they were told I was a notorious terrorist, Hassan Ghul. They flew me in shackles from Karachi to the “dark prison” in Kabul, and abused me in unspeakable ways for 540 days and nights. Astoundingly, they later captured the real Hassan Ghul, but then let him go whilst I, the innocent taxi driver, got rendered to Guantánamo, where I remain 17 years later. There’s no disputing the facts: the US Senate confirmed my mistreatment in their 2014 Senate report on CIA torture.

The ICC promises to “hold those responsible accountable for their crimes and...help prevent these crimes from happening again.” They say that they “cannot reach this goal alone” and ask for the help of others.

So, along with others, I went out on a limb and was willing to challenge the most powerful nation on earth – even though I am still in their grasp, and still being abused by them.

I have been on a hunger strike for over six years now, peacefully protesting my detention without trial. Every day here in Guantánamo I am force fed in an incredibly painful way, described as “cruel, degrading and inhuman” treatment by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In other words, my torture continues.

My lawyers provided the evidence to the prosecutors who concluded that an investigation should go forward. But then the ICC panel overruled them. I thought it would end like everything else – might is right, and the US can torture me with impunity, from the “dark prison” to Guantánamo Bay. But I am delighted that the ICC review yesterday proves that this is not the case.

There is not much I can do here in Guantánamo. I can't see my wife. I have never touched my son, Jawad, who was born soon after I was kidnapped. But I have been able to paint with supplies brought by my lawyers. So I thought that one thing I can do for the judges, to express my thanks for their courage, is to do a painting for them. I will draw my wife and children sitting on the ground. In front of them, the American soldiers are dragging me by my hair towards Guantánamo. I will be shackled and chained. My clothes will be all torn, as I am humiliated before the whole world. I would like the court to hang this somewhere in their building, to show what their work means to the victims of such crimes.

There is a wider principle at play here, which is very important: if the United States will not allow its own people to be subject to the rule of law when they torture prisoners, how can others be held to account? It begs us to ask the question: Why shouldn't Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, assassinate those he dislikes on the streets of London? Why should Bashir Assad, President of Syria, not use chemical weapons on his own people?

I am not interested in revenge against the people who strung me up by my wrists and left me dangling in a dark pit for days on end, gradually dislocating my shoulders. I do not demand that they be sent to prison. I do not demand money. If they were ordered to pay me with \$1 million for each year I have spent being abused, that would not compensate me. But I would be happy with just three words: “We are sorry”. And I would be happy if my own suffering could be

exposed, so that nobody else has to go through this nightmare, ever again.