

By Mark Mazzetti

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WASHINGTON — An American teenager detained in [Kuwait](#) two weeks ago and placed on an American no-fly list claims that he was severely beaten by his Kuwaiti captors during a weeklong interrogation about possible contacts with terrorism suspects in Yemen.

The teenager, Gulet Mohamed, a Somali-American who turned 19 during his captivity, said in a telephone interview on Wednesday from a Kuwaiti detention cell that he was beaten with sticks, forced to stand for hours, threatened with electric shocks and warned that his mother would be imprisoned if he did not give truthful answers about his travels in Yemen and Somalia in 2009.

American officials have offered few details about the case, except to confirm that Mr. Mohamed is on a no-fly list and, for now at least, cannot return to the United States. Mr. Mohamed, from Alexandria, Va., remains in a Kuwaiti detention center even after Kuwait's government, according to his brother, determined that he should be released.

Mr. Mohamed said that Kuwaiti interrogators repeatedly asked whether he had ever met [Anwar al-Awlaki](#), the American-born cleric now hiding in Yemen who is suspected in terrorist plots by [Al Qaeda](#)'s Yemen affiliate. He said that the Kuwaitis also asked detailed questions about his family in the United States and his family's clan in Somalia — information he said he assumed that American officials provided to the Kuwaitis.

Mr. Mohamed denies ever meeting with militants. "I am a good Muslim, I despise terrorism," he said in the interview.

The [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) declined to comment about the episode, and State

Department officials would not answer questions about whether American officials helped engineer Mr. Mohamed's arrest. A message left at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington was not returned.

Mr. Mohamed's case is the latest in a string of episodes over the past year in which Americans have been detained overseas and questioned about their travels to Yemen, where a number of attempted terrorist attacks against the United States have originated. The Obama administration has expanded terrorist watch lists to prevent people who have traveled to Yemen to travel to the United States without additional screening — or detention and questioning.

During the 90-minute telephone interview, Mr. Mohamed was agitated as he recounted his captivity, tripping over his words and breaking into tears. He said he left the United States in March 2009 to "see the world and learn my religion," and had planned to return to the United States for college.

He said he had traveled to Yemen to study Arabic, but stayed less than a month because his mother worried about his safety. He said that he spent five months later that year living with an aunt and uncle in northern Somalia, before moving to Kuwait in August 2009 to live with an uncle and continue his Arabic studies.

He said that after being taken into custody, he had been visited once by an American Embassy official in Kuwait, and that F.B.I. agents visited a week later to tell him that he could not return to the United States until he gave truthful answers about his travels.

On Tuesday, his lawyer wrote a letter to the Justice Department demanding an investigation into the episode.

"The manner of his detention and the questions asked of Mr. Mohamed indicate to him that he was taken into custody at the behest of the United States," wrote Gadeir Abbas, a lawyer appointed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Mr. Mohamed said the episode began Dec. 20, when he went to the airport in Kuwait City to

renew his Kuwaiti visa, which he had done every three months since he arrived in the country.

He became worried when a normally routine visit lasted several hours, as Kuwaiti officials made him wait in a spartan office. After five hours, he said, two men in civilian clothes entered the office with handcuffs, and soon he was blindfolded and spirited away to a detention site that he estimated was a 15-minute drive from the airport.

Over the next several days, he said, his captors grew increasingly hostile and began beating his feet with sticks and striking him in the face when they asked him about his time in Yemen.

“Are you a terrorist?” they asked, according to his account.

“No,” he replied.

“Do you know Anwar?” his interrogators asked, referring to Mr. Awlaki.

“I’ve never met him,” Mr. Mohamed recalled saying.

“You are from Virginia, you have to know him,” they responded, according to Mr. Mohamed. From 2001 to 2002, Mr. Awlaki was the imam of a prominent mosque in northern Virginia.

Mr. Mohamed said he rarely slept during a week or so at the prison and was able to mark time only by the daily cycle of Islamic prayers.

He said that his interrogators told him they would have American officials detain his mother in Virginia and that “he would never see her again” if he did not tell the truth about his connections to terrorists. During the interrogation sessions, he said, the Kuwaitis also tried to intimidate him by repeatedly barking orders to “bring the electricity.”

Mr. Mohamed said he was eventually transferred to the deportation center in Kuwait, where he is currently detained. He said that the American Embassy officer told him that his travels had raised “red flags.” The officer, he said, told him that the embassy had been unaware of his whereabouts and had been searching hospitals and local jails since his disappearance — an assertion he said he did not believe.

It is unclear how long Mr. Mohamed will remain in limbo. His older brother, Mohed, has traveled to Kuwait, and he said in an interview on Wednesday that the Kuwaitis told him they were pushing for his release, but that the American Embassy had not yet filled out paperwork that would allow Mr. Mohamed to be freed.

Mohed Mohamed said that his family, which fled Somalia in 1995, has always been pro-American and grateful to the United States for its intervention in Somalia’s civil war in the 1990s.

He said that his younger brother was the most adventurous of seven siblings, and the first to travel outside the United States since the family had arrived.

Waiting to learn his fate, Gulet Mohamed said the past two weeks had changed him.

“I cannot sleep,” he said. “I cannot eat. I’m scared to walk to the bathroom because I’m afraid they will hunt me down.”

“I’ve been beaten and tortured, physically and mentally,” he said, choking back tears. “I’m not the same.”