

By Andy Worthington

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Regular readers will know that the ongoing injustice at Guantánamo, where 172 men remain, is so severe that President Obama’s promise to close the prison has, instead, turned into [a concession by defense secretary Robert Gates](#), speaking to the Senate Armed Services Committee last week, that “the prospects for closing Guantánamo, as best I can tell, are very, very low given broad opposition to doing that here in the Congress.” In fact, the options for any of these men leaving anytime soon have been so severely diminished not only through [the actions of Congress](#), but also through the actions of the judiciary (specifically, [the D.C. Circuit Court](#)) and through policy decisions taken by the administration itself that it is now, sadly, appropriate to consider that the majority of those held should be regarded as

[political prisoners](#)

Those who fit this category in particular are the 89 prisoners cleared for release by President Obama’s Guantánamo Review Task Force, a sober collection of career officials and lawyers from government departments and the intelligence services, who reviewed all the Guantánamo cases throughout 2009, and concluded that [28 Yemenis should be released](#) — and that another 30 should be released when the security situation in Yemen improves. This latter category of prisoner — held in what the Task Force described as “conditional detention” — were particularly unfortunate, as “conditional detention” is clearly one of those disturbing novelities invented in post-9/11 America, which, to all intents and purposes, may well mean, in reality, that they will be held indefinitely.

However, for the other 28 Yemenis, there appeared to be no obstacle to their release until, on Christmas Day 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, tried to blow up a plane bound for Detroit. When it emerged that Abdulmutallab had apparently been recruited in Yemen, the backlash in the US against releasing any Yemenis was so ferocious that President Obama immediately caved in to the criticism, announcing [an open-ended moratorium](#) on releasing any Yemenis, even though, by doing so, he was consigning them to “guilt by nationality,” and was sending a message to the Yemeni people that they were all regarded as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers.

With one exception — Mohammed Hassan Odaini, a patently innocent man who [won his habeas corpus petition last May](#), and was [released in July](#)

— the administration has refused to break its moratorium, providing additional safeguards to ensure that no Yemenis are released by appealing every successful habeas corpus petition (except that of Mohammed Hassan Odaini), including that of one particularly unfortunate individual, Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif.

Latif, who was cleared for release from Guantánamo by a military review board in 2007, under the Bush administration, and has verifiable mental health problems, possibly including schizophrenia, which have led to him attempting suicide on several occasions, was nevertheless required to wait another three years in the prison until, on July 21 last year, Judge Henry H. Kennedy Jr. [granted his habeas petition](#), evidently believing his story that he had traveled to Pakistan, and then Afghanistan in search of cheap medical treatment for the injuries he suffered in a car crash — the pre-existing condition that has been so ruinously exacerbated after nine

years of abuse in Guantánamo. Even then, however, his suffering did not come to an end, as the Obama administration refused to release him, and, instead, appealed his successful petition.

His lawyers’ submission on his behalf can be found [here \(PDF\)](#) , and it is, I believe, a savage indictment of the administration’s politically motivated cowardice — and of the indifference of the US media and the American public — that no pressure has been exerted to secure his release, as his case presents the most obvious example of the Yemenis cleared for release whose continued presence at Guantánamo is dictated solely by politics of the most cynical kind.

I have previously published two letters sent by Latif from Guantánamo to one of his lawyers, David Remes, in my articles, [Guantánamo Is “A Piece of Hell That Kills Everything”: A Bleak New Year Message from Yemeni Prisoner Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif](#) and

[A Cry for Help from Guantánamo: Adnan Latif Asks, “Who Is Going to Rescue Me From the Injustice and the Torture I Am Enduring?”](#)

and David recently sent me a third letter, written on December 26, 2010, which I am reproducing below in the hope that it will keep Adnan’s plight in people’s minds, and will encourage readers to consider that a campaign to put pressure on the United States to honour its commitments to free prisoners cleared for release is necessary if the Obama administration is to avoid complaints that it is engaged in arbitrary detention, mocking its own procedures by holding men cleared for release, insulting the people of Yemen, and presiding over a system that is no longer holding men based on any spurious notion of justice, but is, instead, holding them as political prisoners.

A letter from Guantánamo by Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif, December 26, 2010

David Remes,

Do whatever you wish to do, the issue is over.

I am happy to express from this darkness and draw a true picture of the condition in which I exist. I am moving towards a dark cave and a dark life in the shadow of a dark prison. This is a prison that does not know humanity, and does not know [anything] except the language of

power, oppression and humiliation for whoever enters it. It does not differentiate between a criminal and the innocent, and between the right of the sick or the elderly who is weak and is unable to bear and a man who is still bearing all this from the prison administration that is evil in mercy.

Hardship is the only language that is used here. Anybody who is able to die will be able to achieve happiness for himself, he has no other hope except that. The requirement is to announce the end, and challenge the self love for life and the soul that insists to end it all and leave this life which is no longer anymore called a life, instead it itself has become death and renewable torture. Ending it is a mercy and happiness for this soul.

I will not allow any more of this and I will end it. I will send [move] it to a world that is much better than this world. There, the real life will live again that will be filled with complete happiness and be rid of all harassments. There, the environment will clear up, things will calm down and you will be able to relax and you will not see the world of evil people.

I am in need of a person who blindfolds his eyes from me [looks the other way] and leaves me in my freedom so that I can choose my end. With all my pains, I say goodbye to you and the cry of death should be enough for you.

A world power failed to safeguard peace and human rights and from saving me. I will do whatever I am able to do to rid myself of the imposed death on me at any moment of this prison.