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**Memoir serialised by Guardian tells how
beatings, death threats and sexual**

**Mohamedou Ould Slahi endured savage
humiliation**



The groundbreaking memoir of a current Guantánamo inmate that lays bare the harrowing details of the US rendition and torture programme from the perspective of one of its victims is to be published next week after a six-year battle for the manuscript to be declassified.

[Guantánamo Diary](#), the first book written by a still imprisoned detainee, is being published in 20 countries and has been serialised by the Guardian amid renewed calls by civil liberty campaigners for its author's release.

Mohamedou Ould Slahi describes a world tour of torture and humiliation that began in his native Mauritania more than 13 years ago and progressed through Jordan and Afghanistan before he was consigned to US detention in Guantánamo, Cuba, in August 2002 as prisoner number 760. [US military](#) officials told the Guardian this week that despite never being prosecuted and being cleared for release by a judge in 2010, he is unlikely to be released in the next year.

The journal, which Slahi handwrote in English, details how he was subjected to sleep deprivation, death threats, sexual humiliation and intimations that his torturers would go after his mother.

After enduring this, he was subjected to “additional interrogation techniques” personally approved by the then US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. He was blindfolded, forced to drink salt water, and then taken out to sea on a high-speed boat where he was beaten for three hours while immersed in ice.

The end product of the torture, he writes, was lies. Slahi made a number of false confessions in an attempt to end the torment, telling interrogators he planned to blow up the CN Tower in Toronto. Asked if he was telling the truth, he replied: “I don’t care as long as you are pleased. So if you want to buy, I am selling.”

Slahi’s manuscript was subjected to more than 2,500 redactions before declassification, ostensibly to protect classified information, but with the effect of preventing readers from learning the full story of his ordeal. The book is being published with all the censor’s marks in place, and the publishers – Canongate in the UK and Little, Brown in the US – hope they will be able to publish an uncensored edition when Slahi is eventually released.

Although one federal court has ordered his release on the grounds that the evidence against him is thin and tainted by torture, Slahi has been languishing in a form of legal limbo since December 2012 after the justice department entangled the case in an unresolved appeal. Several US officials have indicated that he is unlikely

to be released this year. One, who spoke to the Guardian on condition of anonymity as he had not been cleared to do so, said getting Slahi out of Guantánamo was not a priority. “Our focus is acutely on the individuals who have been approved for transfer,” he said. Slahi is not among them.

Slahi describes the toll the abuse has taken on his body and mind: “I started to hallucinate and hear voices as clear as crystal. I heard my family in a casual familial conversation ... I heard Qur’an readings in a heavenly voice. I heard music from my country. Later on the guards used these hallucinations and started talking with funny voices through the plumbing, encouraging me to hurt the guard and plot an escape. But I wasn’t misled by them, even though I played along.” “We heard somebody – maybe a genie!” they used to say. “Yeah, but I ain’t listening to him,” I responded ... I was on the edge of losing my mind.”

The American Civil Liberties Union has launched an [online petition](#) calling for Slahi’s release. Hina Shamsi, director of the ACLU’s national security project, said: “Mohamedou Slahi is an innocent man whom the United States brutally tortured and has held unlawfully for over a decade. He doesn’t present a threat to the US and has never taken part in any hostilities against it.

“We’re asking the government to put an end to Mohamedou’s years-long ordeal by not contesting his habeas case and releasing him without delay. We hope everyone moved by Mohamedou’s story of abuse and unlawful detention will join us in seeking his freedom.”

The 44-year-old travelled twice to Afghanistan in the early 1990s. There, he swore allegiance to al-Qaida and joined the fight against the Soviet Union-backed regime in Kabul. He says he severed all connection with the group in 1992.

But after 9/11 he was detained on suspicion of being involved in an unsuccessful plot to bomb Los Angeles international airport while living in Canada in 1999. No evidence has been found to support the allegation, other than his own forced confessions. In 2004 a military lawyer refused to play any further part in the prosecution on the grounds that the evidence against him was the product of torture.

The chief military commissions prosecutor in the mid-2000s, Air Force colonel Morris Davis, later said he could not find any offence with which to charge Slahi.

The detainee's lawyer, Nancy Hollander, said: "Mohamedou has never been charged with anything. The US has never charged him with a crime. There is no crime to charge him with. It's not that they haven't found the evidence against him – there isn't evidence against him. He's in what I would consider a horrible legal limbo, and it's just tragic: he needs to go home.

"Mohamedou's book takes us into the heart of this man the US government tortured, and continues to torture with indefinite detention. We feel, smell, even taste the torture he endures in his voice and within his heart. It is a book everyone should read."

Publisher Jamie Byng said Slahi's account was one of the most significant books Canongate would ever publish. "It's a gracious, brutal, humbling, at times funny, but more often enraging, and ultimately heartbreaking testimony by a truly gifted writer. And all of his many international publishers hope that by bringing his story to the wider world we can play a part in ending his wrongful and barbaric imprisonment."

Slahi's memoir is published on the heels of a landmark [US Senate study](#) into CIA torture, and arrives as Republicans in Washington have redoubled their efforts to block Barack Obama from fulfilling his vow to close Guantánamo. The president is determined to reduce the detention centre's population during 2015: on Wednesday, five more detainees left Cuba for Oman and Estonia, the latest in a flurry of post-election transfers. This leaves 122 inmates at Guantánamo. Among them is

[Shaker Aamer](#), a Saudi-born British resident. David Cameron was expected to raise Aamer's plight with Obama during talks in Washington on Friday.

However, British ministers have raised his case at least 15 times in the last five years, according to statements to parliament. In the past, US diplomats have said privately that they are not convinced the British government is serious when it says

it wished to see Aamer returned to the UK, where he could be reunited with his British wife and four children.

Though his captors have long since ceased treating Slahi as a security threat – he is said to inform on other detainees, and lives in a separate facility where he is allowed to garden – the US insists it has legal justification to deprive the Mauritanian of his freedom. Lt Col Myles Caggins, a defense department spokesman, said: “We continue to detain Mohamedou Slahi under the Authorisation for the Use of Military Force of 2001 (AUMF) as informed by the laws of war. He has full access to federal court for review of his detention by United States district court via petition for writ of habeas corpus.”