

With David Remnick

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When Mohamedou Salahi arrived at the Guantánamo Bay detention camp, in August of 2002, he was hopeful. He knew why he had been detained: he had crossed paths with Al Qaeda operatives, and his cousin had once called him from Osama bin Laden's phone. But Salahi was no terrorist—he held no extremist views—and had no information of any plots. He trusted the American system of justice and thought the authorities would realize their mistake before long.

He was wrong.

Salahi spent fifteen years at Guantánamo, where he was subjected to some of the worst excesses of America's war on terror; Donald Rumsfeld personally signed off on the orders for his torture. And, under torture, Salahi confessed to everything—even though he had done nothing. "If they would have wanted him to confess to being on the grassy knoll for the J.F.K. assassination, I'm sure we could have got him to confess to that, too," Mark Fallon, who led an investigation unit at Guantánamo, said.

Ben Taub reported Mohamedou Salahi's story for *The New Yorker* and tried to understand what had gone wrong in the fight against Al Qaeda. Salahi met Ben in Mauritania, because, when the U.S. released him, it was under the condition that Mauritania would withhold his passport. He would like to go abroad—he needs medical treatment, and he hopes to live in a democracy. But, for an innocent victim of Guantánamo, being released isn't the same as being free.



*Illustration by Golden Cosmos*