



Djamel Ameziane

Djamel Ameziane is an ethnic Berber from Algeria who fled his home country 16 years ago in order to escape persecution and seek a better life. He lived in Austria and then, from 1995, in Canada, where he made a refugee claim which was rejected in 2000. With few options and facing forced return to Algeria, he traveled to Afghanistan, one of the few countries he could enter without a visa. Following the 2001 military offensive against the Taliban, as a foreigner he was an easy target for corrupt local police who captured him while he was trying to cross the border into Pakistan as he fled the fighting. Mr. Ameziane was then sold to U.S. military forces for a bounty.

He was taken first to the U.S. Airbase at Kandahar, Afghanistan and then to Guantanamo in February 2002. Nearly seven years after he was first captured, he remains imprisoned without charge and without judicial review of his detention to date.

Mr. Ameziane has never been alleged by the U.S. government to have engaged in any acts of terrorism or hostilities. At no time has the United States charged him with any crime, nor accused him of participating in any hostile action, of possessing or using any weapons, of participating in any military training activity or of being a member of any alleged terrorist organization.

Detention in Guantanamo

On his arrival in Guantanamo, Mr. Ameziane was held for two and a half months in Camp X-Ray, in a 6-foot-by-6-foot wire mesh cell. Later, Mr. Ameziane was held in solitary confinement for over a year in a small windowless cell in Camp 6, one of the harshest facilities in Guantanamo.

He has been subjected to brutal acts of physical violence at Guantanamo. In one violent incident, military guards sprayed his entire body with cayenne pepper and then hosed him down with water to simulate the skin-burning effect of pepper spray. They then held his head back and placed a water hose between his nose and mouth, running it for several minutes over his face and suffocating him, repeating the operation several times. In describing that experience he writes, "I had the impression that my head was sinking in water. Simply thinking of it gives me the chills."

Following that episode, guards cuffed and chained him and took him to an interrogation room, where he was left for several hours, writhing in pain, his clothes soaked while air conditioning blasted in the room, and his body burning from the pepper spray.

Risk of human rights violations in Algeria

Mr. Ameziane could face incommunicado detention, torture and ill-treatment, and other human rights violations if he were returned to his native Algeria. As international human rights NGOs and the U.S. Department of State itself have reported, torture and ill-treatment are frequently used in detaining and interrogating persons suspected of links with terrorism. Other Algerian detainees recently returned from Guantanamo were all detained immediately upon arrival for questioning for a period of nearly two weeks, during which they were denied access to a lawyer and their families.

Canadian Private Sponsorship Application

The Anglican Diocese of Montreal has submitted a sponsorship application on behalf of Djamel Ameziane under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. The governments of Canada and Québec are required to process this application and approve Mr. Ameziane's resettlement in Canada if he meets the regulatory requirements, i.e. he is a refugee in need of a durable solution and is not inadmissible to Canada (e.g. on criminality or security grounds).

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* also defines a category of applicants for resettlement who are in “urgent need of protection”. These are refugees whose “life, liberty or physical safety is under immediate threat and, if not protected, the person is likely to be

(a) killed;

(b) subjected to violence, torture, sexual assault or arbitrary imprisonment; or

(c) returned to their country of nationality or of their former habitual residence.” (IRPR 138)

Mr. Ameziane has been subjected to violence and torture in Guantanamo and continues to be subjected to arbitrary imprisonment, now lasting nearly seven years, with no prospects of safe release unless he is resettled to Canada.

He clearly meets the definition and should be processed according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s special guidelines for refugees in urgent need of protection, including through the issuance of a Temporary Resident Permit if necessary to ensure that his arbitrary imprisonment is ended as soon as possible.

*For more information on efforts to sponsor detainees in Guantanamo for resettlement in Canada, see:
<http://www.ccrweb.ca/guantanamo.htm>*



Anwar Hassan

Originally from Xinjiang province in China, Anwar fled his home after being imprisoned in 1999 for his religious beliefs. He was living in a Uighur community in Afghanistan at the time of the 2001 US-led military intervention. To escape the bombing, he fled to Pakistan, where he was picked up and sold to the United States for a bounty. He was transferred to Guantanamo, where he has now been imprisoned for seven years, even though the US authorities long ago determined that he is not an enemy combatant.

Personal History

Anwar Hassan, was born in 1974 and grew up in Xinjiang province, China. He is an ethnic Uighur (Uighurs are a largely Muslim minority group). His mother, two sisters and brother continue to live in China.

Anwar was imprisoned in China for one month in 1999 for “being Uighur” and for exercising his religious beliefs. He was tortured and beaten in prison and on his release he left China for Kyrgyzstan. Fearing deportation to China by corrupt local police there, he travelled to Afghanistan to live in a Uighur community. Following the destruction of the Uighur camp by the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan, Anwar fled to Pakistan to seek sanctuary with seventeen other Uighur men. Once in Pakistan, all of these men were captured and sold to the United States for bounty.

Anwar speaks Uighur and a little Arabic. After seven years’ detention in Guantanamo, he also speaks English well. Anwar hopes someday to marry and have a family. He is surprisingly accepting of the situation he finds himself in. At this point he is looking forward, not backward, and wants to get on with the rest of his life.

Imprisonment at Guantanamo

Anwar believes that he has been at Guantanamo Bay since early 2002, after having been transferred from Afghanistan. During his years there, he has spent time in the infamous Camp 6 where he was kept in solitary confinement.

In November 2004, a Combatant Status Review Tribunal panel determined that Anwar was *not* an enemy combatant. The Tribunal urged US authorities to “expedite release of [Anwar] and grant him political asylum.” Since then he has remained imprisoned and is presently detained at Camp Iguana, awaiting resettlement to a third country.

Risk of Persecution

If Anwar is returned to China, he faces persecution and torture at the hands of a government on the basis of ethnicity (Uighur) and religious beliefs (Islam).

Need for Refugee Protection and Resettlement in Canada

A church group in Toronto has come forward to sponsor Anwar for resettlement to Canada. He also has the backing of the sizeable Uighur community there. With few other prospects of durable solutions elsewhere and acknowledgement from US courts that he needs asylum, Canada’s generosity is the best chance that Anwar has for a better life.

For more information on efforts to sponsor detainees in Guantanamo for resettlement in Canada, see:
<http://www.ccrweb.ca/guantanamo.htm>



Maasoum Abdah Mouhammad

Maasoum Abdah Mouhammed likes to be known by his nickname Bilal. He was living in Kabul at the time of the US bombardment in 2001. He fled to Pakistan with three other fellow Syrian housemates for fear of being targeted as foreigners in Afghanistan. All four were arrested by Pakistani authorities at the Afghan-Pakistan border and sold to the United States for a bounty. He has been in prison at Guantanamo since mid 2002. Maasoum has not been charged with any crime, but he cannot safely return to Syria for fear of persecution after being held in Guantanamo and on the basis of being Kurdish.

Personal History

Maasoum is the fourth child of nine children in a poor, working-class Kurdish family from the northeast of Syria. He completed his high school education in Syria and worked at a variety of jobs in constructions, manufacturing, small business and for a short time as a police officer. In 2000 and 2001 Maasoum was living at a small guesthouse in Kabul where he was one of seven Syrian lodgers. He had traveled to Kabul to look for work and in order to find a wife, because he could not afford the price of a dowry in Syria.

After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the fall of 2001, Maasoum and his fellow Syrian housemates felt that they were in danger as foreigners in Afghanistan. He and three of his housemates attempted to travel to Pakistan. They were arrested by Pakistani officials at the Afghan-Pakistan border and sold to the United States for bounty.

Imprisonment at Guantanamo

He and the other three Syrians he lived with in Kabul have been imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay since mid 2002. Maasoum has never been charged with any crime, but has been subjected to the deeply unfair process at Guantanamo where the Combatant Status Review Tribunal found him an “enemy combatant” based on vague allegations and secret evidence. Maasoum strenuously denies all allegations: he was not a member of a military force and has never knowingly even met anyone from the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.

Need for Refugee Protection and Resettlement in Canada

Maasoum would like to return to Syria to be with his family, but he fears that he cannot do so because of the political situation there. This fear is heightened because any prisoner released from Guantanamo, even if uncharged, is seen as an Islamic fundamentalist. The repression of Kurds in Syria is also well-documented and includes violent clashes between Syrian authorities and unarmed Kurds in Maasoum’s hometown of Al-Qameshli in 2004.

Maasoum would not only welcome safety in a country such as Canada, but he has a level of education and an aptitude for languages, including some knowledge of French and English, that would ease his resettlement here.

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