

‘Guantanamo Diary’ Author Finally Released After 14 Years



Berlin, October 19 (RHC)-- In CIA-administered prisons from Jordan to Afghanistan to Guantanamo Bay, Mohamedou Slahi was beaten, subjected to sleep deprivation and freezing temperatures, tortured with blasting music, and was inflicted with a number of other abuses. But 14 years after he first became a detainee at the infamous facility, during the time in which he wrote of his ordeal in the book “Guantanamo Diary”, he has finally been released.

Slahi is being sent to his native Mauritania after having asked to be reunited with family members either there or in Germany.

While never having been charged with a crime by the United States, U.S. authorities claim he was affiliated with al-Qaida. He has admitted to fighting with the mujahideen in the early 1990s against the Soviet-backed Afghan government, but a federal judge declared in 2010 that he was not a member of al-Qaida. In July, an interagency review board approved Slahi’s release.

In his book, published last year, while he wrote of his inhumane treatment, he also wrote openly about, and with incredible generosity, his relationships with the U.S. guards and interrogators at the site.

A former guard wrote a letter in support of Slahi’s release to the board. A large group of military representatives described him as “one of the most compliant detainees” and as “an advocate for peace”

who “has pursued a new direction in life.”

“I feel grateful and indebted to the people who have stood by me. I have come to learn that goodness is transnational, transcultural, and trans-ethnic. I’m thrilled to reunite with my family,” Slahi said in a statement.

“Eleven years ago Mohamedou wrote his Guantánamo Diary as a gesture of faith in the power of the truth to overcome injustice,” said writer Larry Siems, who edited Slahi’s book, in a statement. “Today that faith has been rewarded.”

Despite U.S. President Barack Obama’s repeated promises to close Guantanamo Bay during his administration, the facility remains open with 60 men still imprisoned and only 20 cleared for release.

Obama faced opposition from both Republicans and members of his own party in Congress and the Senate to close what activists have described as a “gulag.” But Obama has refused to use an executive order to close the facility, a measure that is within his constitutional authority.

“Slahi’s accounts of his treatment provided a chilling insight into the reality suffered by those unlawfully held for more than a decade without charge,” said Elizabeth Beavers, a senior campaigner with Amnesty International USA. “(The detainees) must be charged and tried through fair trial in federal court, or be released to a country that will protect their human rights.”

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