

Britain: Binyam Mohamed interview reveals MI5 collusion in torture and abuse

Robert Stevens
11 March 2009

On March 8, the *Mail on Sunday* published an interview with former Guantánamo Bay detainee and British resident Binyam Mohamed.

Mohamed was finally released without charge last week, after being held captive by the United States for almost seven years. He was originally detained in Pakistan in 2002 and was then sent by means of "extraordinary rendition" to Morocco, Afghanistan, and finally to Cuba, where he spent the past four years.

The newspaper also published documents, obtained by Mohamed relating to his court hearing in the United States, showing the extent of the collusion of MI5, the British intelligence service, in his torture and abuse whilst he was incarcerated in Morocco.

Mohamed's testimony and other evidence gives the lie to long-standing British government claims that it does not engage in, order or allow the use of torture. The British security services were, from the very start of his detention in Morocco, in regular contact with the CIA, including sending lists of questions they wanted to be asked. They were also fully aware of his ongoing torture, according to heavily redacted documents obtained by the *Mail* from Mohamed.

One document from November 2002 shows that within a few months of Mohamed being "taken to Morocco aboard an illegal 'extraordinary rendition' flight by the US Central Intelligence Agency, MI5 twice gave the CIA details of questions they wanted his interrogators to put to him, together with dossiers of photographs".

The *Mail* adds that "Other sources have confirmed his record is accurate".

In his interview Mohamed states that this was during a period when he was being tortured on a daily basis for prolonged periods. This included regular beatings at the hands of one Moroccan torturer, "Marwan". According to Mohamed, "they cut off my clothes with some kind of doctor's scalpel. I was totally naked. I was afraid to ask Marwan what would happen because it would show fear.

"I tried to put on a brave face. But maybe I was going to be raped. Maybe they'd electrocute me. Maybe castrate me. They took the scalpel to my right chest. It was only a small cut.

Maybe an inch. Then they cut my left chest.

"One of them took my penis in his hand and began to make cuts. He did it once, and they stood still for maybe a minute, watching my reaction. I was in agony, crying, trying desperately to suppress myself, but I was screaming.

"I remember Marwan seemed to smoke half a cigarette, throw it down, and start another. They must have done this 20 to 30 times in maybe two hours. There was blood all over. They cut all over my private parts. One of them said it would be better just to cut it off, as I would only breed terrorists".

The newspaper states that "The materials seen by the *Mail on Sunday* confirm much of his account".

Following his initial detention in Karachi, Pakistan, in April 2002, on a passport violation, Mohamed was turned over to the FBI. After asking to see a lawyer he was told by an FBI agent, "The law's changed. There are no lawyers. Either you're going to answer me the easy way or I get the information I need another way".

In Pakistan, Mohamed faced methods of torture that included sleep deprivation, being beaten while hung by his wrists for hours on end, as well as a mock execution.

As a result of his torture in Pakistan, he confessed to a number of things he had never done, including a plan to create a "radioactive bomb". He recalls that, as a joke, he had told interrogators that he had visited a spoof website whilst in Pakistan, which included instructions on how to make a nuclear device. The *Mail* states that the site "included advice to refine bomb-grade uranium by whirling a bucket round one's head".

It was while being questioned in Pakistan that Mohamed told them he had lived in an area known as Little Morocco. This simple answer was to have major ramifications. In the *Mail* he said, "The feedback I got later from the Americans was that because the Brits told them I had lived in a Moroccan area, they thought Moroccans would be more likely to make me talk. At the same time, they thought I must know something about what Moroccans were up to in London."

Mohamed stated that the torture and abuse he endured in Kabul in Afghanistan, at a secret location known to prisoners as the "Dark Prison", was the worst he faced in the whole seven years of his detention. He explained, "There were loudspeakers in the cell, pumping out what felt like about 160 watts, a

deafening volume, non-stop, 24 hours a day. They played the same CD for a month, *The Eminem Show*".

Mohamed spent many hours and days in shackles: "Sometimes it was in a standing position, with my wrists chained to the top of the door frame. Sometimes they were chained in the middle, at waist level, and sometimes they were chained at the bottom, on the floor. The longest was when they chained me for eight days on end, in a position that meant I couldn't stand straight nor sit".

He added, "I couldn't sleep. I had no idea whether it was day or night".

"Mentally right now, the result of my experience is that I feel emotionally dead. You could do anything to me, and I wouldn't feel it anymore", he said.

The British government is at present refusing to shed any further light on the Binyam Mohamed case, except to say that the Attorney General Baroness Scotland is conducting an investigation. This has been ongoing since October of last year with her remit to determine only whether a further criminal investigation is required.

These delaying tactics are because Mohamed has documentary proof of the collusion of MI5 in his torture and by dint of that, the involvement of the British government at the highest levels.

Of his period of torture in Morocco, which began on July 21, 2002, Mohamed recalled, "They started bringing British files to the interrogations—not one, but several of them, thick binders, some of them containing sheaves of photos of people who lived in London and places there like mosques. It was obvious the British were feeding them questions about people in London. When I realised that the British were co-operating with the people who were torturing me, I felt completely naked. It was when they started asking the questions supplied by the British that my situation worsened. They sold me out".

The documents seen by the *Mail* reveal that MI5 knew Mohamed had not been transferred to any known US base. They claimed that they did not know where he was, but still proceeded to instruct the CIA to ask him certain questions.

According to the *Mail*, "the documents also show that MI5 officers held a 'case conference' on Mohamed with their US colleagues at MI5's London headquarters on September 30, 2002, when Mohamed's torture in Morocco had been going on for weeks. What was said at the conference remains unknown".

"As late as February 2003, MI5 received a report from the Americans of what Mohamed said under torture. A copy of the report given to Mohamed has been heavily redacted (blanked out)".

The *Mail* also cites a document showing the extent of the collaboration of MI5 with the CIA. A telegram was sent from MI5 to the CIA on 5 November 2002, entitled, "Request for further Detainee questioning". A disclaimer written on it reads, "This information has been communicated in confidence to the recipient government and shall not be released without the

agreement of the British Government".

Despite being heavily redacted, the document still reveals the high level involvement of MI5 in his torture. The telegram instructed Mohamed's interrogators to show him the contents of a "photobook recently sent over", and then to ask him questions about them.

The telegram requested the following questions be asked: "Does Mohamed know [two lines redacted]? What was the man's name? How does Mohamed know him? Can Mohamed describe him? Where did they meet? Where was the man from? Who facilitated his travel from the UK? Where did this man go? What were his intentions?"

It then states, "We would appreciate the opportunity to pose further questions, dependent on answers given to the above".

On November 11, another telegram was sent by MI5 to the CIA headed "update request". Substantially redacted, the following section remains: "We note that we have also requested that briefs be put to Binyam Mohamed and would appreciate a guide from you as to the likely timescale for these too. We fully appreciate that this can be a long-winded process, but the urgent nature of these enquiries will be obvious to you".

Mohamed recounts that he was informed by another interrogator in Morocco who "told me, 'Do you know who sent you here? The British sent you here'".

A further memo discloses how MI5 stressed to the CIA that they had a critical role to play in his interrogation. The memo states, "We believe that our knowledge of the UK scene may provide contextual background useful during any continuing interview process. This may enable individual officers to identify any inconsistencies during discussions. This will place the detainee under more direct pressure and would seem to be the most effective way of obtaining intelligence on Mohammed's [sic] activities/plans concerning the UK".

The British government has been instrumental in ensuring that the full contents of other important documents have not come to light. In February lawyers representing the Foreign Secretary David Miliband persuaded the High Court that parts of a US Intelligence appraisal that summarised Mohamed's treatment should not be made public. The High Court judges were informed that to do so would jeopardise the UK's intelligence-sharing relationship with the US.

This was accepted despite the judges concluding that nothing in the document could be described as sensitive intelligence.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact