

Guantánamo Diary author released after 14 years in illegal detention

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Guantánamo Bay detainee Mohamedou Ould Slahi, 45, has been released after fourteen years of being unlawfully detained at the camp. Slahi has never been charged with a crime by the US. He was repatriated to his native Mauritania on Monday, three months after a government panel approved his release in late July.

Slahi is the author of *Guantánamo Diary*, a first-hand account of the torture inflicted on him by US intelligence agencies and their foreign accomplices. Slahi wrote his memoir in 2005, three years into his detention. The book was published last year with heavy redactions imposed by the US government; the uncensored manuscript remains classified. *Guantánamo Diary* has become an international bestseller, with translations published in over 25 countries.

Slahi was tortured under the “special interrogation plan” that was personally approved by then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Slahi’s torture included violent beatings, sleep deprivation, sexual assault, mock executions and threats against his family’s safety, especially against that of his mother, whom he was close to. Slahi’s mother died on March 27, 2013, unable to see her son for over a decade.

“We are thrilled that our client’s nightmare is finally ending,” said Nancy Hollander, one of Slahi’s *pro bono* attorneys. “After all these years, he wants nothing more than to be with his family and rebuild his life. We’re so grateful to everyone who helped make this day a reality.”

Sixty other detainees remain in the camp, 31 of whom have not been charged with a crime and have not been cleared for release. Of the 779 people who have been detained at Guantánamo Bay, at least 675 detainees have been released without ever being charged with a crime, according to Human Rights Watch. Nine people have died.

Slahi attended university in Germany on a scholarship in 1988. In 1991, he traveled to Afghanistan to fight with al-Qaeda, one of many Islamic fundamentalist militias backed by the US in its proxy wars against the Soviet Union. After 1992, Slahi left Afghanistan and had no further involvement with al-Qaeda. He returned to Germany, then began working in Canada as an electrical engineer. In 2001, Slahi voluntarily reported to a Mauritanian police station for questioning. Slahi was then “extraordinarily rendered” by the US—he was abducted and transferred to a number of CIA “black sites,” where he was interrogated and tortured. Slahi was transferred to the Guantánamo Bay detention camp in Cuba in August 2002.

In 2010, US federal district judge James Robertson ruled Slahi’s detention unlawful and ordered his immediate release. The Obama administration successfully appealed the decision and it was vacated by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. Slahi’s *habeas corpus* case is still pending.

The Obama administration has consistently approved Pentagon spending bills to keep the Guantánamo Bay detention camp running. The last detainee released before Slahi was Omar Khadr, a 15-year-old child soldier who spent thirteen years under illegal detention, with ten of those years in the Cuban torture camp. Khadr was released on bail last May, and is now 30 years old.



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