

# Yemenis Freed After Transfer From Secret Prisons, Report Says

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Three Yemeni men who were held for well over a year in secret American prisons overseas were quietly released last month after being transferred to their home country, where a court concluded they had no terrorist ties, according to a report released Tuesday by Amnesty International.

The report says evidence promised by the United States was apparently never transferred to Yemeni authorities. It also adds other new details to accounts of the Central Intelligence Agency's program of holding terrorist suspects in secret detention centers or transferring them to other countries, where some said they were tortured.

The Yemenis said their American jailers, whom they do not accuse of abusing them, took great care to keep them from surmising the detention centers' location, keeping windows covered and removing wrappers and labels from food, clothing and water bottles, the report says.

In the report -- which includes information on the web of companies the C.I.A. uses to own and operate its fleet of aircraft for moving the suspects -- Amnesty International officials call for an end to the C.I.A.'s practice of rendition, in which suspects are seized and transported without judicial process.

"The bottom line is that secretly sending individuals to unknown locations where they are likely to be tortured or treated inhumanly is unlawful, and the C.I.A. must stop," said William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International U.S.A.

A C.I.A. spokesman declined to comment on the report.

The report came one day after the Pentagon released 2,700 pages of documents from hearings for detainees held by the United States military at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The new documents, the second major installment released since last month in response to a lawsuit filed by The Associated Press, are a window on the frustration of both prisoners who claim they are innocent and the American military officers who must judge whether they are lying.

"Your story sounds like about 500 others," an unidentified colonel declared while questioning a Guantanamo detainee arrested in Pakistan in December 2001. "Everybody has their passport stolen; everybody is in Afghanistan and Pakistan doing charity work."

American and Afghan soldiers are dying, but according to the detainees' stories, "nobody is killing them," the exasperated officer said. He told the detainee, "Your story doesn't ring true. Help us help you."

Amnesty International first described the cases of the Yemeni prisoners -- Muhammad Bashmilah, Salah Ali Qaru and Muhammad al-Assad -- late last year.

Mr. Bashmilah and Mr. Qaru were arrested in Jordan and transferred to American custody in October 2003, while Mr. Assad was arrested in Tanzania and turned over to American officials in December 2003, Amnesty International said.

They were kept in at least four secret facilities that likely are situated in at least three

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countries, probably including Djibouti, Afghanistan, and somewhere in Eastern Europe, Amnesty International concluded after studying the men's descriptions of transfer flights and other data.

After months of interrogation by Americans, they were flown to Yemen in May 2005. "The U.S. authorities effectively instructed the Yemeni officials to detain the men, apparently promising to transfer their case files," the report says.

But it says the files never arrived. In February, Yemeni authorities finally charged the men with forging travel documents, sentenced them to two years and ruled that they had served their time, the report says.

Mr. Assad was freed March 14, and Mr. Bashmilah and Mr. Qaru on March 27, the report says.

If American authorities appear to have struggled over whether the three Yemenis posed a threat, the voluminous transcripts released by the Pentagon suggest similar difficulties assessing some prisoners held at Guantanamo.

One detainee, Abdul Majid Mohammadi, described himself as an Iranian Christian -- an anomaly in a counterterrorism campaign usually described as focusing on Islamist extremism. Swearing by "Jesus and God," he admitted to having been a drug dealer and having obtained papers to cross the Iran-Afghanistan border from an Afghan with ties to a pro-Taliban group.

Several detainees from Afghanistan are described as having worked for the Afghan government under Hamid Karzai, the pro-American politician who led the interim administration after American-led forces toppled the Taliban and who was elected president in 2004.

Muhammad Aman, for example, said he was a clerk for the military under the pro-Soviet Communist government, under the Taliban and finally under Mr. Karzai. Like other prisoners, he said the Taliban had forced him to work for them.

"All the workers that you see in the current government of Afghanistan worked for the Taliban too," Mr. Aman told the review board.

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