

# **Report into the Systematic and Institutionalised US Desecration of the Qur`an and other Islamic Rituals**

**Testimonies from Former Guantánamo Bay Detainees**

**Cageprisoners.com**

**26<sup>th</sup> May 2005<sup>1</sup>**

*Cageprisoners.com is a non-sectarian Islamic human rights website which is the premiere source of information about Guantanamo Bay detainees and the ghost detainees in English. It exists solely to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other detainees held as part of the War on Terror.*

*We have the backing of lawyers for the detainees, activists, former detainees, families of prisoners and academics and are heavily relied upon as an information resource for researchers into the collateral damage of the US-led War on 'Terror'.*



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<sup>1</sup> The report was first published on the 16<sup>th</sup> May.

## Introduction

'It should be clear to any thinking person that all these detainees could not have colluded, especially since some were in solitary confinement for their duration in Guantanamo Bay; and the US is guilty of a systematic and horrific assault on Islam and the religious beliefs and practices of a fifth of Humanity in their so-called 'war on terror'. The prolonged period of the abuses from the beginning to the end of their detention clearly shows that it is institutionalised and authorised by the chain of command headed by Donald Rumsfeld and George W. Bush.'

*Dr. Adnan Siddiqui, CagePrisoner's Spokesman*

## Statement by Moazzam Begg

It appears strange that after more than three years of complaints and protests from the captives held by the USA in the concentration camps of Kandahar, Bagram and Guantánamo Bay, that there is finally an acknowledgment that it is the *faith* of the detainees that is targeted: the religion of Islam.

However, what astounds us is the belated, duplicitous and hypocritical remonstrance proclaimed by nations that were the foremost in doing America's bidding: abducting and surrendering Muslims, with utter disregard for the explicit injunctions prohibiting such behaviour, stated in that same desecrated Qur'an that they now display indignation for.

US spokesman Richard Boucher, commenting in response to angry anti-American demonstrations throughout the world over the alleged desecration of the Qur'an at the Guantánamo prison, has said that copies of the Qur'an were available to Muslim detainees, along with the opportunity to worship. That is true, but under what conditions?

The ridiculing of the *atha'an* (call to prayer); forcible shaving of the beard – as punishment; use of sexual enticement during interrogations; derision of the Prophet; withholding of food in Ramadhan; prohibition of Quranic recitation, proscription of *atha'an* and congregational prayer in Bagram, Afghanistan - a Muslim country; derision of Islamic rituals and supplications; forcible removal of prisoners whilst in the act of prayer, in addition to the degradation of the Qur'an have all been categorically reported by men formerly detained by the US military. The reports are far too recurrent, concurrent and consistent to deny, particularly as former US interrogators and soldiers have corroborated these reports.

The desecration of the Qur'an began from the outset, as I learned in February 2002, with the notorious incident in Kandahar, where it was widely known that a soldier of the US Marine Corps had torn up a copy of the Qur'an and thrown it into a bucket used for urination and defecation. In Bagram, that same year, I saw incidents that provoked fury, including the placing of Qur'ans in an area used as a latrine. As cells were entered and searched I witnessed an occasion when a Qur'an was snatched from a captive's hands and thrown to the ground. When distributing the Qur'ans to detainees, I remember clearly that one guard went around shoving them through the cages, singing out in a newspaper-boy style, "Extra, Extra! Come get your Qur'an – your holiest of Holy Books. Learn how to kill Americans!"

In my final months at Guantánamo I was put in a cell close to a prisoner who was not even allowed a Qur'an. Instead he had an English translation consisting of photocopied pages crudely stapled together. It was filled with deliberate mistranslations and omissions – including whole chapters and verses. *Surah al-Baqarah* (the Heifer): 30, was blatant: “And when your Lord said to the Angels, ‘Verily I shall place upon the earth for you a lesser God (*khalifah*)...” No Muslim scholar, or translator – however deviated – could make such a flagrant error as to mistake ‘representative’ for ‘lesser God’.

I recall so often making the *du'aa* (supplication), “O Allah, you have said, ‘Indeed We have revealed the Remembrance (the Qur'an), and We shall maintain its protection’, so protect it this day my Lord, for we cannot!”

Whilst in custody several soldiers and interrogators tried to propagate Christianity to me, not knowing that back in the UK I ran an Islamic bookstore. Nevertheless, I entertained their entreaties and accepted a copy of the Bible that they had perhaps thought that I'd never read. Every detainee that saw my bible was acutely aware of the respect that we, as Muslims, accorded that book – because it contained therein the word of God, and despite our rejection of its authenticity, must not be disrespected. In fact, I believe we treated it with higher regard than those who claimed to be its protagonists.

Boucher further states that US personnel assigned to Guantánamo went through cultural training to ensure that they understood the procedures for protecting the rights and dignity of detainees of all faiths. It is telling then, that after such ‘training’ exercises US military personnel are regularly reported defiling the sanctity of all that is considered sacred to those whose right to freedom they have already violated. It is precisely because they know the sensitivities involved that they continue to target them. And the orders come from the apex: the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces, George. W. Bush.

Moazzam Begg  
14<sup>th</sup> May 2005

## Statement by Feroz Abbasi

As concerning the desecration of the Qur'an as witnessed by myself and what I heard from others:

### EYEWITNESS ABUSE BY US MARONITE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETER

At Concentration Camp X-ray between January 11th 2002 and March 28th 2002, early on in this period, no Qur'ans were issued to us. The brothers, masha`a Allah, being strongly religious, naturally wanted Qur'ans to pass the long days of languishing in the cages away. At this time we spent all our time in the cages except for recreation (I only ever had two sessions (15 minutes each) given to me during this whole period), shower, or interrogation (all in shackles or still in a cage). So they requested some Qur'ans. The establishment responded by giving those who had pocket Qur'ans with them when they were abducted their Qur'ans back. So the situation arose where some had Qur'ans and some not.

Hence one brother in the same section as I - I was then bravo bravo nine. This brother was likely bravo bravo six or thereabouts. Not ten metres away from me - wanted to pass his Qur'an to a brother just five meters away from him except that he had no means without resorting to asking the MPs to do it. He did just that. They could not understand him because he did not speak English or could not make himself understood if he did.

So they brought over a translator. A Maronite Christian Lebanese Arab interpreter whom I believe was named: Dirke. This character took the pocket sized Qur'an from the abductee held it in his left hand. And with the back of his right hand slapped the Qur'an repeatedly saying repeatedly, in English for his comrades to hear (who, male and female, found it chucklingly amusing), "Why do you want to pass this **SHIT** around, why do you want to pass this **SHIT** around?" I swear by Allah! I witnessed this clearly, not ten metres away from me, with my *own* eyes and ears. I swear by Allah.

### FIRST HUNGER STRIKE CAUSED BY GUARD STAMPING ON THE QUR'AN

The first hunger strike in Camp X-ray, Guantánamo, started specifically and because an MP (Military Police, guard, soldier) was alleged to have stamped on the Qur'an in another section, not my own. The soldier that was being accused of it, a PFC (Private First Class) Creel, approached me with worry lining his face, lamenting that he was being accused of it because his name is the only name the abductees remembered. I doubt that he was the one who did it. But his obvious worry goes some way to giving credibility to the alleged incident.

It was because of the first hunger strike that the rule at Guantánamo was issued which stated that no soldier is allowed to touch the Qur'an, whether fully Arabic, Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation, or another language translation. Only the Muslim "chaplain" touches any Qur'an. This obviously was a farce, as the rule was repeatedly and systematically infringed by the establishment itself.

## **NEXT STRIKE CAUSED BY QUR'ANS BEING PLACED IN 'SHIT' BUCKETS**

One of the reasons for the second hunger strike which occurred around June/July 2002 (by my reckoning, we were not allowed to know the time or the date) was the desecration of the Qur'an. One of the Arabs explained to me that brothers had been used in Kandahar detention facility (the same I was held in) to empty the "shit buckets" (I don't mean to use profanity but that is what the soldiers called them), one if not more actually saw a copy of the "Uthmani" Qur'an dunked in the faeces and urine in a "shit bucket", which could only have been done by a soldier. The brother that told me this also expressed his grief that they could not do anything to retrieve it.

## **US POLICY ON RESPECTING RELIGIONS FARCICAL AND EXPEDIENT**

A change happened around the beginning of 2003 when I was "celebrating" completing a whole year at Guantánamo (first arrived January 11th 2002) and "looking forward" to my year anniversary at first arriving at Concentration Camp Delta (March 28th 2002, I believe, or there about, it was a Sunday.). The interrogators at this time were given extensive powers to manipulate our conditions as they liked. The "level" system also came in at this very time also. The abductees the interrogators liked were given the full range of "comfort items" (essentials to everybody else -including the Americans) and were dubbed a level 1 "detainee". The rest had more and more stuff taken away from them until level 4 only had a blanket and an I.S.O. mat (exercise/foam camping mat) to the best of my memory. Level 4s had their Qur'ans taken away from them.

## **DELIBERATE MANIPULATION AND ABUSE OF THE QUR'AN BY INTEROGATORS**

Because the Qur'an was being used as a tool by the interrogators, as the Arabs put it: "To be given like a blanket when they are happy with you and to be taken away like a bottle when they are not." The majority (I believe) of the Arab brothers opted for a compromise situation and tried to give their Qur'ans back to the "establishment". They wanted to keep the Qur'an out of this interrogator versus abductee battle of wills. Obviously the establishment did not take the Qur'ans back. Simply because then they could not claim with "credibility" to the world that they were "treating us humanely" and "respecting our religious rights".

Obviously with them, and the rest of the world, the perception of truth counts, the truth doesn't. But they could not claim to respect our religion if we had not Qur'ans. So they refused to take the Qur'ans back. The brothers (mainly level 4 Arabs, the "hardcores" as the soldiers labelled them) responded by refusing to "flick through the Qur'an", which had been accepted as a condition that the Qur'an not be touched by the soldiers after the first hunger strike at Guantánamo. They claimed they had to check the Qur'ans in case an abductee was hiding a "weapon" in the Qur'an itself. So the "flicking through" achieved that without the Qur'an being desecrated.

It was then that the establishment responded that any abductee who did not flick through their Qur'an (which was to be done every time the abductee left his cage) would not get any Rec.

("Recreational" time i.e. walk around on a concrete slab in a wire fence cage and then have a five minute shower).

The abductees who were part of this "disobedience" (or more rightly, obedience to Allah) thought the Qur'an more important than walking in circles for 15minutes (as I remember it) and a shower.

### **FEMALE MP RENAMES HERSELF 'ALLAH' AND REPEATEDLY KNOCKS OVER QUR'AN**

I heard from either one or a number of MPs that there was a female MP who at the end of her deployment (just before July 2004) knocked the Qur'an over onto the ground twice, within days of each other (if not the day after the first deliberate act) which started the blocks rioting. She also had a name -the soldiers had name tags which they masking-taped over as they were told: "so that they (the abductees) don't track you (the soldiers) down and kill you and your families when they are released" when in fact the true reason was the abductees were noting the trouble makers down and complaining to the interrogators. The response was wholly American. Instead of stopping the trouble makers, they protected them by issuing orders that they cover their name tags for anonymity and free licence in their crimes against us.- that could be selectively taped over to spell "Allah" which she did. And she walked around the blocks with her name tag spelling "Allah" on her breast. Her reasons for doing this were apparently that, as she allegedly said, "We (the abductees) get treated better than they (the soldiers) do." This information is from a good source, a Sergeant Bowyer, who was respectable to us.

### **PAKISTAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S CALL HYPOCRITICAL AND FARCICAL**

The claims of Pakistan that: "Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri called for severe punishment for any soldiers found to have desecrated the Qur'an - a crime that in Pakistan is punishable by death," are farcical to say the least, when it was the Pakistani law enforcement agencies that put most of the brothers in Guantánamo there in first place. It was also Pakistan that gave the U.S. and their allies the go to use their air- space to bomb Afghanistan. They, by putting Muslims in Guantánamo and in disbeliever hands, directly instituted the desecration of Allah's name, His Uncreated Word, and His religion.

**US9UK-000024DP: Abductee; Feroz Ali Abbasi.  
14<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

## **Statement by Jamal Al-Harith**

The US has desecrated the Quran on a number of occasions. The reason for the first hunger strike in Camp X-ray, which involved about 75% of the detainees was over a guard who kicked the Quran onto the floor from its perch hanging on the side of the cage. Numerous hunger strikes in Camp Delta were over another guard who threw it into the toilet. When searching our cages the guards would sometimes throw the Quran onto the floor. During interrogation, an interrogator jumped up and down on the Quran and taunted a prisoner. In Afghanistan, in the American concentration camps, a Quran was thrown in a waste bucket by a guard. I recall one occasion in Guantanamo where I and some of the brothers from Tipton were hosed down with an industrial-strength hose in our case; the soldiers targeted the Quran and went from cell to cell, down the block, hosing everyone and everything. I think the Tipton brothers will remember the guard's name. They (the US officials) don't just desecrate the Quran but act arrogant with it. There are numerous other occasions that the other ex-prisoners can confirm.

Jamal Al Harith

15th May 2005

## **Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Rhuhel Ahmed**

We witnessed on numerous occasions US soldiers mishandling the Quran and also desecrating it. In Afghanistan, we witnessed US soldiers throwing the Quran in buckets that were used to urinate in, on purpose. In Guantanamo, the Quran was intentionally thrown on the floor, even after the soldiers were told not to do it, for the sole purpose of making the detainees angry and the soldiers knowing that they can get away with what they were doing. It was also stood upon, again thrown in the toilets, had obscene language written in them by the soldiers. I, myself mentioned this to the British delegate that used to come to visit us. He told me that he would mention it to whoever was in charge of the Camp but it seemed like nothing had happened because from the time we got there and just before we left we would hear of so many incidences where the Quran was mishandled purposely by the soldiers. There were also instances in which the interrogators would mishandle the Quran while interrogating detainees.

Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal, Rhuhel Ahmed

16th May 2005

## **Statement by Martin Mubanga**

When I was in Charlie Block in Camp Delta cell 33, and Rhuhel Ahmed was in cell 34, there took place an incident involving the Quran. Namely that when 6-7 MP's (Military Police) came in to search my cell and search me, one of them picked up the Quran, searched it and then threw it on the floor whilst I was made to kneel with my hands on my head and face turned the other way. However, Rhuhel who was watching this informed me that they had thrown the Quran on the floor and he began to verbally reproach them. I was, at this moment in time, being restrained by 4-5 MP's and was unable to do anything.

Later, their excuse was that this particular MP was new and therefore did not know the correct procedure regarding searching the Quran.

This incident took place within the first few months of my being in Camp Delta, but years later similiar incidents still took place and occured with frequency. A brother by the name of Shakil did try to instigate various actions with the help of brothers to try to force the Americans to place notices within various blocks so that all the MP's could read and know the correct procedure with regards to the Quran be they old or new guards.

However the General and his Henchmen refused.

Martin Mubanga  
16th May 2005

## **Statement by Tarek Dergoul**

When I was in Kandahar, I witnessed the Qur'an being thrown around and kicked, torn up and thrown into a bucket which was being used as a toilet. While we would be in prayer, 20 to 30 guards would storm in (other guards were outside of the cage, with their guns pointed at us), break up our prayer, force us to the back of the cell, put us on our knees with our fingers interlaced behind our heads whilst they trashed our cage and turned everything upside down at their leisure - including the Qur'an.

Whilst I was in Cuba there were continuous cell searches throughout my two and a half year detention. When the cell was searched I was taken out, the Qur'an was picked up by the guards and flicked through, like it was a newspaper and then thrown on the bunk.

Whilst in isolation, which is where I spent most of my time, our Qur'an was hung in a surgical mask, but when I was taken out and brought back to the cell, it would not be in the same place I left it.

Continuous hunger and non co-operation strikes were being observed by the inmates in protest of the ongoing mistreatment of our Holy Qur'an.

Interrogators stepped on the Qur'an and guards would kick and write obscene words on the sacred text.

The Qur'an would be used as a punishment tool. Sometimes when sent to the isolation block, the Qur'an would be taken away and placed in a box. This same box would then be placed outside the cell and searched and mistreated at anytime by anyone.

Once whilst being questioned, an interrogator arrived with a copy of the Qur'an placed on top of his MacDonalds coffee cup. He then sat down, reclined back, lifted and crossed his legs on top of a table. He then started to flick through the pages, reading verses from the Qur'an and mocking what he was reading. "More questions than answers," was one remark he made.

**Tarek Dergoul**  
**May 17<sup>th</sup> 2005**

“Tarek describes standard interrogations consisting of *‘swearing at Allah, swearing at the Prophet, and the Qur`an. They used to read the English translation of the Qur`an, with their feet up, mocking, for example saying, ‘There are more questions in it than answers.’* The insults were not restricted to the verbal; Dergoul remembers numerous occasions, both in Kandahar and Guantánamo, where the Qur`an was *‘ripped up, thrown on the floor and thrown into the toilet’*. In an attempt to protect their sacred book being mistreated by the Americans, up to 300 inmates returned their Qur`ans in an act of protest. This injurious degradation of their faith was yet another means of the Military Police asserting their authority over the prisoners and their religious practices; as one MP rejoined, when asked why could they not leave the Qur`an alone, *‘We do with you and the Qur`an as we wish.’*

”During one interrogation session, the officer in question stood on a copy of the Qur`an, treated by Muslims with the utmost respect and reverence, triggering a massive strike amongst approximately 300 prisoners in the camp. *‘They did not eat or drink for over a month. It got to the stage where detainees were falling down due to dizziness. It was the first time they had to give them intravenous injections, because so many prisoners were involved.’*

The situation deteriorated further, when a group of the MP’s marked their departure by writing obscenities in copies of the Muslims’ holy book. *‘They were leaving after a ten month term. They wrote ‘F\*\*\* off, F\*\*\* you.’ in the Qur`ans’*. Increasing numbers joined the strike, and when their attempts failed to elicit a response, their protest extended to non-co-operation.

*‘They refused to be shackled. They would not come out of their cells for any reasons or under any circumstances - not for interrogations nor recreation.’* Their refusal was met by the Extreme Reaction Force, five heavily armed individuals clad in riot gear and armed with shields, charging in and battering the prisoners.

Tarek recalls an occasion when the Military Police attempted to beat Rustum, an 18-year old Uzbek prisoner, who was himself an expert in martial arts. *‘He single-handedly took out all five cowards. They ran out of the cell and re-organised their strategy. Then they rushed back in*

*again and he beat them up again. They ran out a second time and waited for some minutes before trying again. The third time, they attacked using three or four bottles of pepper spray finally overcoming him.'*

Realising how precious the Qur'an was to the prisoners, the Americans would frequently exploit it as a tool of punishment, its pages often missing or misprinted, removing copies from solitary confinement, and moving the detainees from cell to cell, at times to those where there were no Qur'ans. *'When I asked the SOG (Sergeant-of-the-Guards), why we could not carry our own Qur'ans, as we had done in the beginning, he blankly refused, 'Orders have come from above.'*

**Interview with Tarek Dergoul, *Lions in the Dens of Guantánamo*, Cageprisoners, 2004**  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=1611>.

“One interrogator grabbed the Koran with his feet up on the table and read it like he was reading a magazine. He made jokes about the Koran,” the statement said, recounting one interrogation session. The guards would swear at Muslims and curse Allah and the prophet Mohammed,” Dergoul said, adding that on several occasions he joined other inmates on hunger strike to protest at the treatment of the Koran. Although a loudspeaker system was set up to broadcast the Muslim call to prayer five times a day as required, this was also abused, Dergoul, the son of a Moroccan baker, said in the statement. “They would make it play five times a day, or sometimes they would not play it,” he said. “They played it at the wrong time, at times they spoke over the tannoy and mocked it with their own voices, saying 'Allah Akbar' (God is great). Sometimes they would not play it for a week.” **UK Detainee Dergoul Tells Shocking Account of Guantánamo, Middle East Online, 4-08-04,** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=2722>.

“There were several hunger strikes which were all about guards being disrespectful to the Koran. I took part in about four hunger strikes. One started in December 2002 and went on for about six weeks. People were fainting left, right and centre. I felt very weak and ill and could only do a hunger strike for three days at a time.” **Tarek Dergoul, *My Torture In Camp Delta Cage*, by Paul Waugh, Evening Standard** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=2721>.

“Copies of the Koran would be trampled on by soldiers and, on one occasion, thrown into a toilet bucket” (*How We Survived Jail Hell* David Rose, *The Observer*, 2004. **Account of detention of Shafiq Rasul Asif Iqbal Ruhel Ahmad**)

“The behaviour of the guards towards our religious practices as well as the Koran was also, in my view, designed to cause us as much distress as possible. They would kick the Koran, throw it into the toilet and generally disrespect it.” **Composite Statement Detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, p. 27, Asif Iqbal Shafiq Rasul and Rhuhel Ahmed. August 2004** <http://www.freebabarahmad.co.uk/downloads/detentioninGuantánamo.pdf>

“Rhuhel says that one protest in Camp X-Ray started in his block. He says ‘I saw a guard walk into a detainee’s cell, search through the Koran and drop it on the floor. The detainee told him to pick it up and put it into its holder. I remember the guard looked at the Koran on the floor and said ‘this’ and then kicked it. Every one started shouting and banging the doors. The guard ran out of the cell and the entire camp was on lock down for half a day. (**Composite Statement Detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, p. 39. Asif Iqbal Shafiq Rasul and Rhuhel Ahmed. August 2004** <http://www.freebabarahmad.co.uk/downloads/detentioninGuantánamo.pdf>

“Asif says, ‘I cannot remember the date; however, about a week before the incident I describe, a guard in Rhuhel’s block kicked the Koran. This happened often in the early days and we were eventually promised it would not happen again. When this guard kicked the Koran, people were extremely upset and went on a short hunger strike.’” **Composite Statement Detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, p. 39. Asif Iqbal Shafiq Rasul and Rhuhel Ahmed. August 2004** <http://www.freebabarahmad.co.uk/downloads/detentioninGuantánamo.pdf>

“Here, I want to be insistent on letting know to the whole world through what I say until where the Americans went on to humiliate us and flout our most elementary principles. It concerns the treatment inflicted to the Qur`an; anything that could reduce it to nothing was used. They urinated over it, they ripped it; they cut it with scissors in front of us. They defecated on it and painted our faces with it. Yes, all this should be said so that the Muslim world understands which degree of hate this sacred Book inspires in them. I do not see why it came to that. One day, and in the Red Cross presence, they took all the Qur`ans of the prison to rip them in front of all of us. They behaved as regards to this noble Book as if it were a vulgar object. When we protested, we were tortured very badly. Each time they behaved like that as regards to the Qur`an, we were roused and obviously we were severely punished. It was a vicious circle.” (**Mohamed Mazouz, Survivor of Guantánamo, La Gazette Du Maroc** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=6862> )

“Abuse of the Qur`an was done routinely particularly in the early days of detention. They would throw the holy book on the ground, trample upon it and tell the prisoner under interrogation no one could stop them from doing that. The news of sacrilege sent shockwaves among the prisoners and all of us went on a hunger strike. We declined to participate in the interrogation and also did not eat anything for many days. All of us ended the hunger strike except for a Palestinian. It was due to our efforts and sacrifices that we restored the honour of the Qur`an.”

The hunger strike ended only after senior U.S. officials apologized for the desecration, Rahim added. (**Ex Guantanamo Detainee Confirms Quran Desecration, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, AlJazeera, 17-05-05**)

"When I wanted to pray, they would burst into my cell with police dogs to terrorize me and prevent me from praying. They also would trample the Quran underfoot and throw it in the urine bucket. We staged protests in the prison about the desecrating of the Holy Quran, so the management promised us that they would issue orders to the American soldiers not to touch the copies of the Quran again." (*Abdullah Tabarak, released Moroccan detainee in an interview with an Islamist paper, as reported in the Financial Times, December 30 2004, and the BBC*)

"They tore the Quran to pieces in front of us, threw it into the toilet. When people were praying, they forced their way in and put their feet on people's heads and beat them." (*Former detainee Airyat Vakhitov told Russian television, ORT, in June 2004, <http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/rferl/2004/04-06-28.rferl.html>*)

"Late at night, drunken female soldiers used to come and trample on the Koran." (*Mohammad Al Musawi, Camp Delta, Newsmax report*)

"He said their Korans were taken and handled disrespectfully.... Al-Mutairi recalled three prisoner hunger strikes... A third came after the Korans were mishandled." *Guantánamo Lifetime Interrupted* by Richard A. Serrano **LA Times**, 15-04-2005, quoting Kuwaiti ex-detainee, **Nasser Al Mutairi** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=6697>

"Nothing compared to the agony of seeing the Qur'an defiled, Ahmad told Aljazeera. I could bear all the obscene abuse and all the beatings but I was agonised to see one US soldier stomp on the Holy Qur'an, while another soldier in Kandahar threw it into the toilet," he said. While in detention at Bagram air base, Ahmad recounted how a female soldier entered his cell to search him. She had brought a dog with her and she proceeded to give the dog the Qur'an to sniff through." **Wissam Abdul Rahman Ahmad, Al Jazeera Ex-Detainee - US Soldiers Defiled Qur'an 8-7-04** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=2357>

"Abdul Rahman said that he and some 70 other prisoners were also denied the right to perform their daily prayers and recite the Noble Qur'an." **Wissam Abdul Rahman Ahmad, 7-7-04, Tareq Delwani, Islam Online** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=2339>

"Ehsannullah, 29, said American soldiers who initially questioned him in Kandahar before shipping him to Guantánamo hit him and taunted him by dumping the Koran in a toilet." It was a very bad situation for us," said Ehsannullah, who comes from the home region of the Taliban leader, Mohammad Omar. "We cried so much and shouted, 'Please do not do that to the Holy Koran.'" *Returning Afghans Talk of Guantánamo*, **Marc Kaufman and April Witt, The Washington Post, 26-03-03**, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=6513>

"Merza Khan, who had been captured in northern Afghanistan while fighting for the Taliban, said Americans in Kandahar tied him up and alternately forced him to lie face down on the ground, then squat with his hands on his head for hours. He also said he saw American soldiers throw the Koran on the ground and sit on it while in Kandahar." *Returning Afghans Talk of Guantánamo*, **Marc Kaufman and April Witt, The Washington Post, 26-03-03**, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=6513>

“Captives at the Guantánamo Bay prison are alleging that guards kicked and stomped on Korans and cursed Allah, and that interrogators punished them by taking away their pants, knowing that would prevent them from praying. Guards also mocked captives at prayer and censored Islamic religious books, the captives allege. And in one incident, they say, a prison barber cut a cross-shaped patch of hair on an inmate's head. Most of the complaints come from the recently declassified notes of defence lawyers' interviews with prisoners, which Guantánamo officials initially stamped "secret." Under a federal court procedure for due-process appeals by about 100 inmates, portions are now being declassified.” ***Guantánamo Detainees Accuse Guards of Religious Abuses, Carol Rosenberg, Miami Herald/Knight Ridder Newspapers, 06/03/2005***  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=5699>.

“New York attorney Joshua Colangelo-Bryan's notes from his interview with Jumah al Dossari, 31, of Bahrain. "Subsequently, a lieutenant arrived and ... he hit Mr. al Dossari and insulted the Koran." ***Guantánamo Detainees Accuse Guards of Religious Abuses, Carol Rosenberg, Miami Herald/Knight Ridder Newspapers, 06/03/2005***  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=5699>.

“New York attorney Marc Falkoff said his 13 Yemeni clients, men in their 20s and 30s, were also victims of religious humiliation. Falkoff said prisoner Majid Ahmad, 24, told him that an interrogator stepped on his Koran at one point - a sacrilege in Islam - and that prisoners are "mocked during prayers." ***Guantánamo Detainees Accuse Guards of Religious Abuses, Carol Rosenberg, Miami Herald/Knight Ridder Newspapers, 06/03/2005***  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=5699>.

“Three Kuwaiti captives - Fawzi al Odah, 27, Fouad al Rabiah, 45, and Khalid al Mutairi, 29 - separately complained to their lawyer that military police threw their Korans into the toilet, according to the notes of Kristine Huskey, a Washington attorney.” ***Guantánamo Detainees Accuse Guards of Religious Abuses, Carol Rosenberg, Miami Herald/Knight Ridder Newspapers, 06/03/2005***  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=5699>.

“A British detainee at Guantánamo Bay has told his lawyer he was tortured using the 'strappado', a technique common in Latin American dictatorships in which a prisoner is left suspended from a bar with handcuffs until they cut deeply into his wrists. The reason, the prisoner says, was that he was caught reciting the Koran at a time when talking was banned.” ***Guantánamo Briton 'In Handcuff Torture', David Rose, The Observer 02/01/2005***  
[http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,1382033,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1382033,00.html)  
<http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=4491>.

“Mr. al-Mutairi said there were three major hunger strikes in his more than three years of imprisonment at Guantánamo. He said that after one of them, a protest of guards' handling of copies of the Koran, which had been tossed into a pile and stepped on, a senior officer delivered an apology over the camp's loudspeaker system, pledging that such abuses would stop. Interpreters, standing outside each prison block, translated the officer's apology.

A former interrogator at Guantánamo, in an interview with The Times, confirmed the accounts of the hunger strikes, including the public expression of regret over the treatment of the Korans.”

***Inquiry Finds Abuses At Guantánamo Bay, Neil A Lewis and Eric Schmitt, New York Times*** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=7056>.

"It was (also) a great psychological torture to see how the guards treated the Holy Quran, the words of God... They threw it on the floor after they had searched it. Sometimes, they fetched a dog to sniff it or pick it up from the floor. Sometimes they even threw the Quran in the toilet." (*Mehdi Ghezali, Fånge på Gunatnamo*", p.44 by Gösta Hultén ,Leopard Förlag Stockholm 2005)

“He stressed that he had been repeatedly subject to such abuses in an interview with Spanish daily ABT and added "Muslim inmates of this facility multiple times went on hunger strike in protest to desecration of the holy Qur'an...The American government doesn't fight terrorism but it is obvious that White House is fighting Islam at the cover of its so called terror fighting policy." (*Ibrahim ibn Chekrouane , Moroccan releasee*)

"American troops never let us say our prayers and in order to put pressure on Muslim detainees, they threw the holy Qur'an to dirty places and flushed it down toilets." (*Mohammed Mazouz, Moroccan releasee, interview with Spanish daily, ABT*)

“They tore it and threw it on the floor. They urinated on it. They walked on top of the Koran. They used the Koran like a carpet." (*Mohammed Mazouz, Moroccan releasee*)

“Badar Uzaman Badar, who remained detained at the Guantanamo Bay for three years, has said that US interrogators desecrated the Holy Quran at the US detention facility in Bagram, Afghanistan and at Guantanamo Bay in front of him and various others, and that this “act of mental torture is an everyday phenomenon at Guantanamo Bay”.” (*Daily Times, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\_25-5-2005\_pg10\_3*)

“While in Kandahar...He was returned to the tent by soldiers who cursed the Muslim prophet Mohammed....

At the time of Mr. Al Dossari's arrival in Camp X-Ray, the detainees were forbidden to speak with each other, to pray or even to move within their cells. After several weeks, the detainees were allowed to sit in order to pray. Subsequently, they were allowed to move in order to face Mecca while praying. However, when new detainees arrived, the restrictions on praying and

moving were imposed again for various periods of time...

During this initial period in Camp X-Ray, copies of the Koran were sometimes thrown on the floor. On one occasion, a detainee was beaten while praying. This beating sparked a hunger strike.

On or about Christmas 2002, the head of shift banged on detainees' cells, yelling Merry Christmas and cursing Allah. In response, Mr. Al Dossari and other detainees began yelling and Mr. Al Dossari then began praying. The head of shift came into Mr. Al Dossari's cell and hit Mr. Al Dossari repeatedly. The head of shift then put Mr. Al Dossari's flip-flops on Mr. Al Dossari's copy of the Koran. Subsequently, a lieutenant arrived and entered Mr. Al Dossari's cell, whereupon he hit Mr. Al Dossari. In the clinic, Mr. Al Dossari was given only shorts and a t-shirt to wear despite the fact that his room was quite cold due to excessive air conditioning... Mr. Al Dossari was not provided with the plastic flip-flops normally given to detainees and, therefore, he was forced to use the toilet in his bare feet, which is forbidden in Islamic culture. Mr. Al Dossari's doctor refused to allow Mr. Al Dossari to have a copy of the Koran...

Once, an interrogator wrapped Mr. Al Dossari in Israeli and U.S. flags. Mr. Al Dossari was then asked by the interrogator for his opinion regarding the U.S.'s support of Israel. The interrogator told Mr. Al Dossari that a holy war was occurring, between the Cross and the Star of David on the one hand, and the Crescent on the other...

Typically, there is only one call to prayer per day in Camp 5, despite complaints that have been made to the sergeant on guard and various guard commanders. Otherwise, detainees attempt to estimate appropriate times to pray. On occasion, MPs mimic and ridicule the call to prayer." (*Juma Al Dossari, Bahraini detainee in Guantanamo, Guantanamo Detainees Testimonies, Dorsey & Whitney, published by Human Rights First*)

"On one occasion, members of Unit 94 threw rocks at the cell block imam during prayers.

Interrogators employed religious themes at times. For example, while Mr. Al Murbati was shackled to the floor, songs were played that had Arabic-language lyrics praising Jesus Christ. An interrogator once told Mr. Al Murbati that if he "admitted his mistakes" he would be "delivered like Jonah from the whale." Another interrogator pressed Mr. Al Murbati about why Christians were not allowed to touch the Koran; Mr. Al Murbati answered that under certain circumstances not even Muslims were supposed to touch the Koran." (*Isa Al Mirbati, Bahraini detainee in Guantanamo, Guantanamo Detainees Testimonies, Dorsey & Whitney, published by Human Rights First*)

"During a certain period two years ago, Mr. Al Noaimi frequently heard crying and screaming from an interrogation room, along with a female laughing. He could also hear the interrogators making derogatory statements about God, including saying, "Where is God now?" (*Abdullah Al Noaimi, Bahraini detainee in Guantanamo, Guantanamo Detainees Testimonies, Dorsey & Whitney, published by Human Rights First*)

"In Camp Delta, MPs frequently treated the Koran in a manner that Mr. Haji felt was disrespectful. Mr. Haji decided that to avoid having his Koran so treated, he would not keep it in

his cell. Therefore, he attempted to hand his Koran to an MP, but the MP handed it back. A similar exchange or two ensued. The MP then called an IRF. The IRF entered Mr. Al Haji's cell and beat him, including punching him in the face, twisting his knee and knocking him to the ground." (*Adel Kamel Abdullah Hajj, Bahraini detainee in Guantanamo, Guantanamo Detainees Testimonies, Dorsey & Whitney, published by Human Rights First*)

"A number of Yemeni detainees have alleged that they and others were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in Afghanistan before their transfer to Guantánamo, where they describe the regime as abusive, punitive, slow or failing to treat medical and dental problems, and prone to violent cell extractions and religious intolerance. The latter has allegedly included repeated disrespect for the Koran, including taking detainees' copies, insulting them, wrapping them in the Israeli flag, throwing them on the ground, and stamping on them." **Amnesty International, Guantánamo and Beyond: The continuing pursuit of unchecked power, p 86 13-05-05**

"For example, the British detainees state that they were never given prayer mats and initially were not provided Korans. They also complained that when the Korans were provided, the guards "would kick the Koran, throw it into the toilet and generally disrespect it."

**Guantánamo: Detainee Accounts, p. 9 Human Rights Watch** Statement of Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal and Ruhel Ahmed, "Detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay," released publicly on August 4, 2004, para. 72, 74, available online at:

<http://www.ccrny.org/v2/reports/docs/Gitmo-compositestatementFINAL23july04.pdf>, accessed on August 19, 2004. The disrespect of the Koran by guards at Camp X-Ray was one of the factors prompting a hunger strike. Ibid., para.111-117.

"Shah Mohammed Alihil told Human Rights Watch that he had witnessed the beating of detainee Abdul Salam Zaeef, who had been the Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, while they were both in the punishment cells: He along with other prisoners shouted at one of the guards who threw down a holy Koran one day. He and other prisoners had shouted as a way to show their anger and protest. So he was put in this cell. I saw him one day while he was circled by many guards equipped with protection guards [shields] which were like reflecting mirrors. He was resisting getting into the cell, but the guards were pushing him forward. During this time I saw that one guard got angry and hit Abdul Salam Zaeef with a punch and then other guards also beat him with the protecting guards." **Guantánamo: Detainee Accounts, p. 22, Human Rights Watch**

"Tarek Dergoul alleged that he was himself assaulted and had a chemical spray administered during cell searches, which he claims were staged repeatedly, sometimes during the times when prisoners would be praying. He stated: I often refused to cooperate with cell searches during prayer time. One reason was that they would abuse the Koran. Another was that the guards deliberately felt up my private parts under the guise of searching me." **Guantánamo: Detainee Accounts, p. 23 Human Rights Watch**

"A., the Afghan interviewed by Human Rights Watch, described how prisoners staged acts of disobedience or open belligerence towards their guards after a guard handled a prisoner's copy of

the Koran disrespectfully by throwing it into the prisoner's cell." **Guantánamo: Detainee Accounts, p. 24 Human Rights Watch**

## **POLICY BEYOND GUANTÁNAMO – AFGHANISTAN & IRAQ**

"Ali, age 26, was detained at various Iraqi locations from July 2003 to June 2004. He was subjected to beatings with hands, feet and chains to the point of unconsciousness, stabbing, burning, shocks and mutilation, isolation while naked and hooded in a coffin-like box, prolonged sleep deprivation enforced by beatings and being dragged face-down on the ground, **desecration of the Koran**, soldiers urinating on him, extreme deprivation of food and water, mock executions and threats of death and transfer to Guantánamo or other countries." **American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights First, *Afghan and Iraqi Prisoners Detail Abuse By US Torturers*, Don Knowland, 08/03/2005** <http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=5764>.

"There were rules: for three months, there was no talking, no praying, and no reading Qur'an. The only things allowed were breathing, eating, using the toilet. You could pray and recite Qu'ran in your heart, but not out loud." (**Testimony of 'Salaam', Iraqi formerly held in Abu Ghraib, Christian Peacemaker Team**, <http://www.cageprisoners.com/prisoners.php?id=1440>.)

"They handcuffed me and hung me to the bed. They ordered me to curse Islam and because they started to hit my broken leg, I cursed my religion. They ordered me to thank Jesus that I'm alive. And I did what they ordered me. This is against my belief." (*Iraqi detainee, held in Abu Ghraib, Ameen Saieed Al Sheikh, in a sworn statement, mentioned in Mark Danner's "Torture and Truth"*)

In the ACLU's suit against Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, two of the plaintiffs, Arkan Mohammed Ali and Thahe Mohammed Sabbar, allege that U.S. interrogators repeatedly desecrated the Koran. One interrogator had "a military dog pick up the Koran in his mouth" and another was "throwing the book to the floor and stepping on it," the detainees assert.

"Ahmad Najji Abid Ali Dulaymi, who was held at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq for 10 months, singled out a soldier or noncommissioned officer known to detainees only as "Fox."..."But frankly," he said, "the worst insult and humiliation they were doing to us, especially for the religious ones among us, is when they, especially Fox, tore up holy books of Koran and threw them away into the trash or into dirty water. Almost every day, Fox used to take a brand new Koran, and tear off the plastic cover in front of us and then throw it away into the trash container." (*Los Angeles Times*)