

Ex-detainee held at Guantánamo Bay for two decades dies in Pakistan



Former Guantanamo detainee, Abdul Rahim Rabbani

Islamabad, November 2 (RHC)-- Former Guantanamo detainee, Abdul Rahim Rabbani, who spent about two decades at the U.S.-controlled Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba without charge or trial, has passed away at the age of 57 following an illness.

Abdul Rahim along his brother, Ahmed, spent 18 years in Guantanamo without charge or trial and was released in Feb last year. Both men were approved for release in 2021, but it is unclear why they remained imprisoned.

The brothers, who were never charged with any crimes during 20 years in U.S. custody, were flown to Pakistan in an arrangement with authorities there.

Following their release, the brothers were left without any provision by the governments of the United States or Pakistan and were forced to rely on private individuals.

The brothers, who had been repatriated to Pakistan, said that they were tortured by CIA officers before being transferred to Guantanamo. Pakistan's security services first detained the brothers in the southern port city of Karachi in September 2002.

About two years they were transferred to Guantanamo prison after being held at a CIA black site known as "the salt pit" outside Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

"The death of Abdul Rahim is an indictment of lack of care that is extended to men who were severely tortured and abused by the U.S. government," the CAGE International advocacy group said in a Friday statement.

Ahmed Rabbani began a series of hunger strikes in 2013 that lasted for seven years. He would survive on nutritional supplements, sometimes forcibly fed to him through a tube.

Maya Foa, director of justice charity Reprieve, which provided legal representation to Ahmed Rabbani until 2022, called his two decades of imprisonment a "tragedy" that "exemplifies how far the USA strayed from its founding principles during the 'war on terror' era."

"They robbed a family of a son, a husband, and a father. That injustice can never be rectified. A full reckoning of the harms caused by the disastrous 'war on terror' can only begin when Guantanamo is closed for good," Foa said in February 2023.

The Guantanamo Bay military camp prison facility, which is based within a US Navy military base, was established by then-President George W Bush in 2002 to hold foreign terrorism suspects following the 9/11 attacks in New York.

The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from the war-ravaged country comes amidst alarming surge in violence and takeover of multiple districts by the Taliban

Guantanamo Bay prison has become a symbol of US aggression and disregard for international law due to interrogation methods that critics say amount to torture, and detainees being held for long periods without trial.

U.S. President Joe Biden and his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, had expressed hope to close the facility, where 32 people are still being detained. At its peak in 2003, the prison held 680 captives at one time.

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