



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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Center for Victims of Torture Welcomes Mohammed al-Qahtani's Transfer but Urges Swift Additional Action Toward Closing Guantánamo

ST. PAUL, Minn. and WASHINGTON — The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) today responds to Mohammed al-Qahtani's transfer out of the Guantánamo Bay Prison, noting the extreme impacts he has endured at the hands of the U.S. government and urging additional swift action towards closure.

“The United States extensively tortured a schizophrenic man with a traumatic brain injury, held him for two decades and effectively denied him the medical care he desperately needs,” said CVT Washington Director Scott Roehm. “While Mr. al-Qahtani's transfer is of course welcome, it underscores Guantánamo's profound, ongoing human costs, and it emphasizes the urgency with which the Biden administration needs to be acting to close Guantánamo.”

Below are important facts and background related to today's transfer:

Mr. al-Qahtani was cleared for transfer out of Guantánamo by unanimous agreement of Cabinet-level officials from every national security agency.

The Periodic Review Board (PRB), which determined Mr. al-Qahtani could be transferred, is an administrative review process established by [executive order](#). The PRB is composed of senior officials from the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice and State; the Joint Staff; and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). It is tasked with determining “whether law of war detention remains necessary to protect against a continuing significant threat to the security of the United States.” In making that determination, the PRB reviews information about the detainee prepared by ODNI. It also considers other factors, including the detainee's mental and physical health and his record in confinement. The PRB operates by consensus—ultimately, a detainee can only be cleared for transfer if Cabinet-level officials from each of the above departments and agencies unanimously agree.

Mr. al-Qahtani's medical condition is debilitating, permanent and untreatable at Guantánamo.

Mr. al-Qahtani suffered from severe mental illness even before he was sent to Guantánamo. He experienced a traumatic brain injury in a car accident as a child and was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia. An independent psychiatrist who examined him at Guantánamo [confirmed](#) the diagnosis, with which the military's own doctors agree, and concluded that Guantánamo staff are not capable of treating him.

The systematic program of physical, sexual and psychological torture to which he was subjected at Guantánamo – comprehensively [documented](#) by the Senate Armed Services Committee – exacerbated Mr. al-Qahtani’s mental illness. He has repeatedly attempted to harm himself, including by cutting and swallowing broken glass.

Mr. al-Qahtani’s medical condition would have required him to be repatriated regardless of any decision by the PRB.

Several years ago, Mr. al-Qahtani obtained a federal court order to grant him a Mixed Medical Commission, which is an independent medical evaluation provided for in [Army regulations](#) that implement the Geneva Conventions, to determine whether he is entitled to medical repatriation. Had the government complied with that order, the severity of Mr. al-Qahtani’s medical condition would have met the test for required repatriation: when a medical condition “become(s) chronic to the extent that prognosis appears to preclude recovery” within one year of the condition’s inception or date of injury.

Arguments that Mr. al-Qahtani should not be transferred are specious and stale.

Those who oppose Mr. al-Qahtani’s transfer point to allegations – never tested in court – that are two decades old and relate to circumstances (the “battlefield” in Afghanistan) and/or people (Osama Bin Laden) that no longer exist. They entirely ignore what is most relevant to making transfer determinations: present day circumstances.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization with offices in Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, United States and additional project sites around the world.

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