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America's "war on terrorism" trophy prisoner: University professor Sami Al-Arian – His Ordeal Continues

By Stephen Lendman
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— Al-Arian is a Kuwaiti-born son of Palestinian refugees who fled during the 1947-49 Nakba catastrophe;

— he came to America in 1975 and was denied citizenship because of his faith and ethnicity; ever since, he's been an award-winning scholar, community leader and civil activist;

— he was a distinguished University of South Florida (USF) computer science professor until being unjustly fired for his human rights efforts for Arabs and Muslims;

— now he's one of hundreds of political prisoners doing hard time in US prisons and treated no differently than others like him at Guantanamo;

— the system is a gulag (at home and offshore) and shame of the nation (http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2006/03/us-gulag-prison-system-shame-of-nation.html)

— Al-Arian's case is special; the FBI hounded him for 11 years; he was unjustly indicted, arrested, tried, yet exonerated in court – acquitted on eight false terrorism charges with the jury deadlocked on nine others 10 – 2 in his favor; DOJ routinely dismisses these cases; retrying them rarely happens; but it wasn't the plan for Al-Arian;

— DOJ continued to pursue him, struck a plea bargain, then broke it; in violation of its terms, it subpoenaed him three times before grand juries;

— the scheme is to entrap him under perjury and obstruction charges; on advice of counsel, Al-Arian won't testify; his plea agreement exempts him;

— the first two times he was held in contempt and his sentence extended; it may be extended a third time; under his agreement, he was to be released for time served and voluntarily deported on May 1, 2006; DOJ had other plans; it likely still does;

— Al-Arian is a "war on terrorism" trophy prisoner; he was targeted for his faith, ethnicity and political activism;

— he's been in prison since February 20, 2003; held in over a dozen maximum and other federal prison facilities, treated punitively in all of them, held in solitary confinement for 37 months, and until April 14, 2008 (most recently) was in special housing unit (SHU) isolation at the Jessup, Maryland's Howard County Detention Center.

Here's how events unfolded this month. On April 11, Al-Arian was taken to the Alexandria, VA federal courthouse, held in a holding cell for three hours, then moved to the Alexandria Detention Center. He remained there until immigration authorities (ICE) took him to Fairfax, VA for processing.

At 10PM, he was taken to the Jessup, MD Howard County Detention Center and placed in the general population, according to standard procedure.

At 1AM April 12, he was transferred to the SHU unit, held in isolation under 23-hour lockdown, forced to endure frigid temperatures, and blasted with continuous deafening sounds for maximum punitive effect.

In January 2007, Al-Arian went on hunger strike (ingesting only water after 18 total abstinence days) to protest his abusive treatment. When it ended after two months, he lost 55 pounds, was very weak, unable to walk or stand on his own, and had to be confined to a wheelchair. He also endangered his life. Al-Arian is diabetic and needs regular sustenance for his health. Prison authorities were indifferent and abusive.

On March 3, 2008, Al-Arian again went on hunger strike. It's now in its 47th day, he's lost over 34 pounds (likely much more), been denied medical treatment, then on April 14 was transferred again – this time temporarily to an ICE holdover cell before being moved again to continue his ordeal.

Before the move, his family got 30 minutes with him behind a glass partition. His wife Nahla was here from Egypt where she moved and has now returned. His daughter Laila and son Abdullah were also there. They were shocked at what they saw. His son said "He (was) far thinner and weaker than the last time (they) saw him. (They) don't know how much more of this he can take. The government needs to release him, if for nothing else, than for his life."

Mrs. Al-Arian was visibly shaken and said "He looked like he'd been through a concentration camp. We want him to stop the hunger strike but he feels he has no other choice. This indefinite imprisonment has torn our family apart. We have had to suffer through three different release dates without him ever being freed."

So far, even in ICE custody, there's no indication it's planned, justice demands it now, it's been shamelessly denied, and "His life is on the line" according to his daughter. She urges all her father's supporters to "become involved at this critical stage" and tell DOJ to "do the right thing and let him go….But there isn't much time."

On April 15, ICE agents transferred Al-Arian again – this time to the Hampton Roads Regional Jail in Portsmouth, VA. Since arriving, he's been subjected to even worse treatment than in Maryland.

Initially, he was placed in the general population. Hours later, he was moved to a segregation unit and told he was put on suicide watch because of his hunger strike. He's being treated barbarically. He was placed in a cold prison cell. His eyeglasses, clothing and undergarments were removed and replaced with a thin hospital gown. He has no bed sheets, blankets or pillows, just a hard metal bed frame supporting a one-inch thick mattress. He also has no drinking cup which is vital for water during his hunger strike.

He was told he can have one telephone call every 15 days but none from attorneys. Before

being transferred, ICE officials said Hampton Roads Jail wouldn't subject him to humiliating and abusive treatment. Instead, it's worse than in Maryland, Al-Arian is greatly weakened after 46 days without food, his situation is grave, prison authorities are hostile and dismissive, and DOJ may be trying to kill him.

The Tampa Bay Coalition for Justice supports Al-Arian proudly, it's backed him from the start, and it urges everyone of conscience to contact their elected officials, DOJ and DHS to demand that justice delayed him no longer be denied. His imprisonment term ended April 11, yet he remains confined. His plea bargain stipulated that his long ordeal end and that he be deported expeditiously.

The Bush administration disdains the law and shows no signs of complying. Its actions are vile and barbarous. It's up to thousands of Al-Arian supporters to act. Justice can no longer be delayed. His life now depends on it.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to The Global Research News Hour on RepublicBroadcasting.org Mondays from 11AM – 1PM for cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests.

On April 21 at noon US Central time, Laila Al-Arian will be interviewed for the hour to discuss her father's case. Listen and respond to its urgency.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III." http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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