

Canadian Judge Grants Freedom to Omar Khadr, Once Held as Child in Guantanamo Bay Prison

By [Deirdre Fulton](#)

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Canadian-born Khadr was taken to Afghanistan by his father, a senior al Qaeda member who apprenticed the boy to a group of bomb makers who opened fire when U.S. troops came to their compound. Khadr was captured in the firefight, during which he was blinded in one eye and shot twice. (Photo: freeomar.ca)

At long last, a Canadian judge has granted bail to Omar Khadr, who was just 15 years old when he was shot and captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2002, and who subsequently became the youngest detainee in Guantanamo Bay prison.

[According](#) to the *Toronto Star*, Alberta Justice June Ross released her [23-page verdict](#) Friday, a month after Khadr, now 28, appeared in an Edmonton court appealing for bail while his Guantanamo conviction is being challenged in a Washington, D.C. court.

The Canadian government, which *Reuters* [notes](#) “has consistently opposed any effort to free the one-time child soldier,” [said](#) it would appeal the decision.

Commenting after the decision, one of Khadr’s attorneys Nathan Whitling said, “Omar is fortunate to be back in Canada where we have real courts and real laws.”

And Maher Arar, a fellow Canadian whose case also [galvanized](#) human rights groups worldwide, tweeted of the verdict:

Sent as a teenager from the detention center at Bagram U.S. air base in Afghanistan to Guantanamo Bay naval base in 2002, Khadr has said he was severely mistreated at both facilities.

[According](#) to *Reuters*: “Khadr claims that during at least 142 interrogations in Afghanistan and Guantanamo, he was beaten, chained in painful positions, forced to urinate on himself, terrorized by barking dogs, subjected to flashing lights and sleep deprivation and threatened with rape.”

In 2010, Khadr pleaded guilty to killing an American soldier while he was a young teenager as part of a deal that allowed him to avoid a war crimes trial. He later recanted the admission. The plea agreement also made it possible for him to be moved from Guantanamo to a Canadian prison in 2012.

Upon his transfer to Canada, Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) legal director Baher Azmy [said](#) in a statement:

Khadr never should have been brought to Guantanamo. He was a child of fifteen at the time he was captured, and his subsequent detention and prosecution for purported war crimes was unlawful, as was his torture by U.S. officials.

Like several other boys held at Guantanamo, some as young as twelve years old, Khadr lost much of his childhood. Canada should not perpetuate the abuse he endured in one of the world's most notorious prisons. Instead, Canada should release him immediately and provide him with appropriate counseling, education, and assistance in transitioning to a normal life.

Khadr's lawyers have [said](#) that at his appeal in the United States, "the defense will argue that Khadr is not guilty of a war crime, and only made his admissions under extreme duress," *CBC News* reports.

The *Canadian Press* has a [full timeline](#) of Khadr's legal saga. The conditions of Khadr's release will be set May 5, 2015.

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