

Guantánamo: The Definitive Prisoner List (Updated for 2010)

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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Back in March, I published a four-part list identifying all 779 prisoners held at Guantánamo since the prison opened on January 11, 2002, as “the culmination of a three-year project to record the stories of all the prisoners held at the US prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.” Now updated (as my ongoing project nears its four-year mark), the four parts of the list are available here: [Part One](#), [Part Two](#), [Part Three](#) and [Part Four](#).

As I explained at the time, the first fruit of my research was my book [The Guantánamo Files](#), in which, based on an exhaustive analysis of 8,000 pages of documents released by the Pentagon (plus other sources), I related the story of Guantánamo, established a chronology explaining where and when the prisoners were seized, told the stories of around 450 of these men (and boys), and provided a context for the circumstances in which the remainder of the prisoners were captured.

The list provided references to the chapters in *The Guantánamo Files* where the prisoners’ stories can be found, and also provided numerous links to the hundreds of articles that I wrote between May 2007 and March 2009, for a variety of publications, expanding on and updating the stories of all 779 prisoners. In particular, I covered the stories of the 143 prisoners released from Guantánamo from June 2007 onwards in unprecedented depth, and also covered the stories of the 27 prisoners charged in Guantánamo’s Military Commission trial system in more detail than was available from most, if not all other sources.

In addition, the list also included links to the 12 online chapters, published between November 2007 and February 2009, in which I told the stories of over 250 prisoners that I was unable to include in the book (either because they were not available at the time of writing, or to keep the book at a manageable length).

As a result — and notwithstanding the fact that the [New York Times](#) had made a list of documents relating to each prisoner available online — I believe that I was justified in stating that the list was “the most comprehensive list ever published of the 779 prisoners who have been held at Guantánamo,” providing details of the 533 prisoners released at that point (and the dates of their release), and the 241 prisoners who were still held (including the 59 prisoners who had been cleared for release by military review boards under the Bush administration), for the same reason that my book provides what I have been told is an unparalleled introduction to Guantánamo and the stories of the men held there: because it provides a much-needed context for these stories that is difficult to discern in the Pentagon’s documents without detailed analysis.

When I first published the list in March, I promised — perhaps rather rashly — that I would

update the list as more prisoners were released, a task that proved easier to promise than to accomplish. As a result, this update to the four parts of the list draws on the 290 or so articles that I have published in the last ten months, tracking the Obama administration's stumbling progress towards closing the prison, reporting the stories of [the 41 prisoners released since March](#), and covering other aspects of the Guantánamo story; in particular, the prisoners' [habeas corpus petitions](#) in the US courts, in which, since March, nine prisoners have had their habeas corpus petitions granted by the US courts, and six have had their petitions refused (the total, to date, is 32 victories for the prisoners, and just nine for the government). Overall, as it stood at December 31, 2009, 574 prisoners had been released from Guantánamo (42 under Obama), one — [Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani](#) — had been transferred to the US mainland to face a federal court trial, six had died, and 198 remained, including one man, [Ali Hamza al-Bahlul](#), who is serving a life sentence after a one-sided trial by Military Commission in 2008.

As for my intention, it remains the same as it did when I first published the list. As I explained at the time:

It is my hope that this project will provide an invaluable research tool for those seeking to understand how it came to pass that the government of the United States turned its back on domestic and international law, establishing torture as official US policy, and holding men without charge or trial neither as prisoners of war, protected by the Geneva Conventions, nor as criminal suspects to be put forward for trial in a federal court, but as "illegal enemy combatants."

I also hope that it provides a compelling explanation of how that same government, under the leadership of George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, established a prison in which the overwhelming majority of those held — at least 93 percent of the 779 men and boys imprisoned in total — were either completely innocent people, seized as a result of dubious intelligence or sold for bounty payments, or Taliban foot soldiers, recruited to fight an inter-Muslim civil war that began long before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and that had nothing to do with al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden or international terrorism.

To this I would only add that, nearly a year after President Obama took office, I hope that the list and its references provide a useful antidote to [the current scaremongering](#) regarding the failed Christmas plane bomber, Omar Farouk Abdulmutallab, and his alleged ties with one — just one — of the 574 prisoners released from Guantánamo, in a Yemen-based al-Qaeda cell. This purported connection is being used by those who want the evil stain of Guantánamo to endure forever (still led by former Vice President Dick Cheney, but also including a number of spineless Democrats) to argue that no more of the Yemenis — who make up nearly half of the remaining prisoners — should be released, even though the ex-prisoner in question is a Saudi, even though no more than a dozen or so of the 574 prisoners released have gone on to have any involvement whatsoever with terrorism, and even though all of these men were released during the presidency of George W. Bush.

One year ago, it looked feasible that Guantánamo would close by January 2010. [We now know](#) that President Obama's [self-imposed deadline](#) will be missed, partly through the unprincipled agitating of opportunistic opponents in Congress and the media, and partly through [the government's own lack of courage](#) in the face of this opposition, but this is no

reason for complacency. As the eighth anniversary of the prison's opening approaches, it remains imperative that those who oppose the existence of indefinite detention without charge or trial — and who call, instead, for the full reinstatement of the Geneva Conventions for prisoners of war, and federal court trials for terrorists — maintain the pressure to close Guantánamo, and to charge or release the prisoners held there, as swiftly as possible.

Andy Worthington is the author of [The Guantánamo Files: The Stories of the 774 Detainees in America's Illegal Prison](#) (published by Pluto Press, distributed by Macmillan in the US, and available from Amazon — click on the following for the [US](#) and the [UK](#)). To receive new articles in your inbox, please subscribe to my [RSS feed](#) (and I can also be found on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)). Also see details about the new documentary film, "[Outside the Law: Stories from Guantánamo](#)" (co-directed by Polly Nash and Andy Worthington, and launched in October 2009), and, if you appreciate my work, feel free to [make a donation](#).

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