

PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 5 JULY 2016
ABDUL RABBANI ABU RAHMAH, ISN 1460
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Board. We are the Personal Representatives (PRs) for ISN 1460, Mr. Abdul Rahim Mawlana Ghulam Rabbani, and will be assisting Mr. Rabbani with his case this morning.

Abdul Rahim has maintained a positive attitude and cooperated in the Periodic Review process since his initial notification and has participated in all scheduled meetings. We have been surprised by his candid answers to all of our questions. He does not paint a rosy picture of his past and has told us of specific past decisions and actions that resulted in legal issues. He strikes us as a simple person with minimal education. Due to his inability to read or write well, a fellow detainee agreed to write his statement for him. Because of this, we believe his personal statement may not appear as open or candid, but we believe Abdul Rahim's responses to Board questions may provide more insight into his pre-detention activities. While he does have some difficulty understanding abstract questions, he mentioned he will do his best to answer your questions completely.

Though he completed elementary school, he was unable to pursue more formal education. To support himself, he found work driving taxis, leading tours, coached Arkan Sport Football Club, a Karachi minor league soccer team, as well as buying and selling merchandise as a young adult. These low-income positions, however, did not sustain his wife and children in the late 1990s, so Abdul Rahim began working for Al Qaida. He located housing and arranged transportation for their fighters to provide for his family prior to his capture and detention. At the time, he did not fully understand the effects of his actions and prioritized family support, care, and feeding. Abdul Rahim quickly realized during his time in Guantanamo, though, that Al Qaida is a terrorist organization and that it was wrong to aid their fighters as a housing and transportation facilitator.

Abdul Rahim often thinks of reuniting with and how to resume supporting his wife and two teenage sons after his transfer from Guantanamo Bay. He has been a quiet, compliant detainee preferring to spend his time watching soccer and reading the Quran. He is open to transfer to any Arabic-speaking country in the Gulf region, but prefers Saudi Arabia to Pakistan due to the deteriorating security and safety situation in that country, and is willing to participate in any rehabilitation or reintegration program required for transfer. Abdul Rahim is an avid soccer player and sports fan. He encourages his sons to train in martial arts to help them focus, exercise, and learn discipline. Abdul mentioned the possibility of becoming a small business owner running a martial arts studio or return to taxi driving. Based on the outpouring of family statements of support from both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, they are more than ready to provide for him whenever he is transferred, and to help him find honest work possibly in carpentry or as a private chauffeur, or any other trade. Additionally, his PC and Reprieve agree to help him adjust to life after his transfer. We are confident that Abdul Rahim's desire to pursue a peaceful way of life, to raise his sons as good citizens, and to dissuade them from joining extremist groups if transferred from Guantanamo Bay, is genuine. The support from his family and Reprieve will

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help him return to society as a productive citizen, and to reject Al Qaida or any other terrorist organization in the future. Based on everything we have seen and heard during our meetings, as well as the statements from his family and his PC, we do not believe that Abdul Rahim is a continuing significant threat to the United States.

Thank you for your time and attention and we look forward to answering any questions you may have during this Board.

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PERIODIC REVIEW BOARD INITIAL HEARING, 7 JULY 2016
ABDUL RABBANI ABU RAHMAH
PRIVATE COUNSEL OPENING STATEMENT

Good Morning. My name is Agnieszka Fryszman and I am one of the private counsel for Abdul Rabbani. I spent the start of my career working for the United States government. I am now in private practice and focus primarily on representing victims of human trafficking and other human rights abuses, including representing victims of terror attacks.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist Mr. Rabbani in this review process.

I have represented Mr. Rabbani since 2005 and have had many meetings with him over that time. In my statement I will focus on four things that I will summarize and then turn to in more detail:

1. Consistently over the 10 years that we have met with him, Mr. Rabbani has accepted the reason for his incarceration here. He has acknowledged responsibility for his mistakes and his conduct.
2. Mr. Rabbani has never been an ideologue or jih adist. Over the 10 years that we have met with him, he has never once – not even a single time -expressed any anger or animus towards the United States or towards any American citizen.
3. During his time at Guantanamo, Mr. Rabbani has kept himself busy with simple pursuits – he sweeps up and cleans his block for example -and stays away from conflict.
4. There is a plan in place to support Mr. Rabbani. If he is approved for transfer, he will have housing, job opportunities and be supported by his family as well as receive NGO support, including from the Life After Guantanamo Project, as demonstrated by the stack of letters we have submitted.

I believe Mr. Rabbani squarely fits the criteria this panel has used when evaluating detainees for successful repatriation.

Mr. Rabbani is a simple man. He is not well educated. When he is nervous or uncomfortable, it is easy to tell. This hearing is undoubtedly stressful for him. You will probably not see his humor or gentle nature in this setting. You will see that he sometimes struggles with comprehension and abstract questions.

Nonetheless, as Mr. Rabbani recently said to me, "I have had a lot of time to think about the mistakes I made."

As my co-counsel John HoJland explains in his statement, which you have in your packet, Mr. Rabbani was an indigent Arabic-speaking, off-and-on taxi driver in Karachi when he was hired for a steady, relatively well-paid job: to provide labor for Khalid Sheik Mohammed. He performed tasks as directed and was paid a salary.

That is a job he certainly regrets taking.

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In his own words: "I found myself in a hole. I don't want to find myself in a hole again. I was an idiot." He has also said "at the end of the day, I deserve what happened to me. I hope you will forgive me and allow me to turn a new page."

Mr. Rabbani did not act for ideological or hate filled reasons. During the entire ten years we have represented him, he has never expressed to us any anti-American sentiment. He has never expressed to us any anger or intent to harm anyone. He's even said he appreciates the prison management and thinks they are doing a good job.

He has always treated me and all of the lawyers on his team with the utmost respect and courtesy, whether they are men, women, Christians or Jews. He asks after our families and shares information on folk remedies for health problems. He has a gentle sense of humor.

During his time at Guantanamo, Mr. Rabbani has most recently occupied himself by cleaning his cell block. He cleans the block twice a week, including the showers and sometimes the rooms. He brings food in and takes food out. The guards provide him with trash bags, soap, and cleaning supplies.

He does this to have something constructive to do. My understanding is that he has been a compliant detainee and that he follows the rules. He's told me that he avoids conflict and does not want to be around detainees who cause trouble.

For example, his brother is here at Guantanamo and is a hunger striker. Abdul tried to talk his brother out of hunger striking.

That is how he will be if and when he is returned home.

He knows that he is no longer young and he has matured while here. Mr. Rabbani is acutely aware of the time he has lost with his family, his wife and his sons. He is aware that he has lost that time as a consequence of his own actions.

He has, however, stayed in contact with his family via the skype and telephone calls provided by the ICRC. They are a close family and are eager to have him back. Mr. Rabbani is eager to return home, to live with his children, and to raise them with his wife. He'd like to coach them in soccer and wants the boys to learn computer skills. He is determined to help them build a good life.

Mr. Rabbani's wife owns her home in Karachi, Pakistan. She and her family are prepared to support Mr. Rabbani when he returns. Her father and brothers live nearby, and have held steady working class jobs as carpenters. They are prepared to provide training and job opportunities to Mr. Rabbani. None of these family members have ties to extremists.

For example, Mr. Rabbani's father-in-law father writes that he and his sons are in a position to help Abdul with his return to normal life and will do all they can to support him. The father taught his sons carpentry, still has many connections in the trade and will assist Abdul in promptly finding steady work, as he did with his own sons. Five declarations from relatives and neighbors in Karachi, all people prepared to assist with Mr. Rabbani's repatriation, have been submitted to you.

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Mr. Rabbani also has family in Saudi Arabia. His family in Medina is stable and middle class. They all have their own apartments and steady jobs, or have retired from steady jobs. For example, his sister's four children are all college educated, including a daughter who is a computer programmer and a son who has a PhD. The brothers have held steady employment as private chauffeurs for over 30 years. The family in Medina is prepared to provide Mr. Rabbani and his family an apartment, substantial support, and a job as a driver. None of these family members have ties to extremists. Indeed, to the contrary, the family stated that "If any family member were so inclined – and they are not – the family would report him to the Ministry of Interior immediately."

As the family wrote in their declaration, "we are prepared to bring Abdul home to Medina, have him close to us where our families can provide a positive example and a source of stability, and ensure that he is provided the support he will need."

Mr. Rabbani's simple skills – driving, cooking – are easily transferable. The Reprieve Life After Guantanamo Project believes he is well situated to find work in these areas and is prepared to support him as he does so. Two declarations from the Life After Guantanamo Project are in your packet.

Mr. Rabbani would prefer to make a clean break with the past, and not return to Pakistan. He'd prefer to go to Saudi Arabia, if possible, and have his wife and children join him there. Finally, wherever he is transferred, Mr. Rabbani is willing to agree to appropriate security measures, and to participate in a rehabilitation program.

I'd like to close with Mr. Rabbani's own words: "I have had a lot of time to think about the mistakes I made. I didn't know anything about politics until I got myself into trouble. I found myself in a big hole. At the end of the day, I deserve what happened to me. I hope you will forgive me and allow me to turn a new page."

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by:

Agnieszka Fryszman
June 21, 2016