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Statement of Muhammad Rahim

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

My name is Muhammad Rahim. I want to begin by thanking you for this opportunity to show you what I know in my heart: that I pose no threat to the United States or its interests.

I am not an enemy to the United States. In the 1980s, Americans assisted me and other Afghans against the Russian invaders. In the 1990s, I worked alongside the DEA on drug eradication and assisted at the American Ambassador's visit to Jalalabad.

I want to be clear: the terrible attacks of 9/11 were acts of al Qaeda. The government and people of Afghanistan did not and would never agree to attacks on civilians. Al Qaeda ushered in a generation of war, pain, and death in which Americans, Afghans, and many others suffered, so soon after the Russians were driven out of Afghanistan. It led to many horrors inflicted on innocent people.

There is a long history of conflict in Afghanistan, and an equally long history of friendship emerging afterward. As the United States became friends and allies with Germany and Japan after World War II, God willing, the United States and Afghanistan will become friends once again. I am the last Afghan in Guantanamo, and I hope to be a small part of that process.

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As a 57-year old man in poor health, I am confident that the United States does not fear that I would return to a battlefield that no longer exists. But I can understand that you might fear what I would say if released, so I will tell you the lessons I learned in Guantanamo.

First, from the violations I experienced, I learned the importance of respecting the human rights of every man, woman, boy and girl. One of those human rights is education. I have two daughters, who graduated high school, but could not attend college. I hope that Afghanistan will open its high schools and universities to girls and women as soon as possible.

Second, from my long imprisonment, I learned the virtue of patience. Violence looks like an immediate solution, but in reality it only prolongs the suffering. At an Afghan jurga where conflicts are resolved, the people involved often wish they had learned the lesson of peace earlier. In Guantanamo, I have struggled with patience, and sometimes let my frustration get the better of me. But I learned that every conflict can be resolved with patience.

Finally, from meeting hundreds of Americans, I learned that the positive view of America I had as a young person was mostly justified. As a young person, virtually every book or agricultural product I saw had its origins in the United States. During the darkest times of my captivity, the biggest shock was that Americans could be doing these things to me. But during these fifteen years in Guantanamo, I learned that many of the Americans I interact with have big hearts and reciprocate kindness and respect. Not just attorneys and personal

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representatives, but also guards, officers, and medical staff. I especially want to thank the medical staff who treated me with kindness, respect, and humanity during my recent hospital stay.

What would I do if eventually released? I would pursue my love of cooking and hope to open a small booth or food truck. We don't have much here, but it is wonderful what one can accomplish with a microwave and a passion for food. Sharing food is an experience that brings people together, no matter where they are from.

I know that you have a job to do, to keep your country and families safe. I appreciate you doing that job, and hope you understand that I am no threat to you or those that you love. I humbly ask you to clear me for release, so that one day I may return to those whom I love.

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