

'Man in the Hood': Never do this again

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KUALA LUMPUR: He went through hell at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and now, Ali Shalah wants to do his best to prevent it from happening to other people.

"I work day and night helping to make sure this does not happen again," said Ali, 45, who came to be known throughout the world as the "Man in the Hood".

The image of Ali in a hood, standing on a block with arms outstretched and wires attached to his fingers, was among the most definitive visuals of the torture at the Abu Ghraib prison managed by the American army.

Ali yesterday related his six-month experience at the Perdana Global Peace Organisation's "Ex-

pose War Crimes Criminalise War" conference.

During a half-hour presentation, Ali related how he was tortured by American soldiers. He was picked up on Oct 13, 2003.

"I was given electric shocks on three separate sessions. In the last session, I bit my tongue and was bleeding from the mouth," he said through an interpreter.

He was burnt with cigarettes, made to sit in a small toilet flooded with sewage and had objects stuffed repeatedly into his anus.

He said while all this was painful, a more spiritually challenging torture came during the fasting month. "Food was served at midnight and during the fasting period."

A lecturer at the Al-Alamiya Islamic Institute in Baghdad, Ali said he was picked up by American

troops while on his way for prayers. He said charges were levelled at him when he refused to declare if he was a Sunni or Shia.

Ali said the torture stopped one day, and 49 days later, he was taken out of the prison to a camp. There, another prisoner told him he had overheard guards saying Ali had been wrongfully arrested.

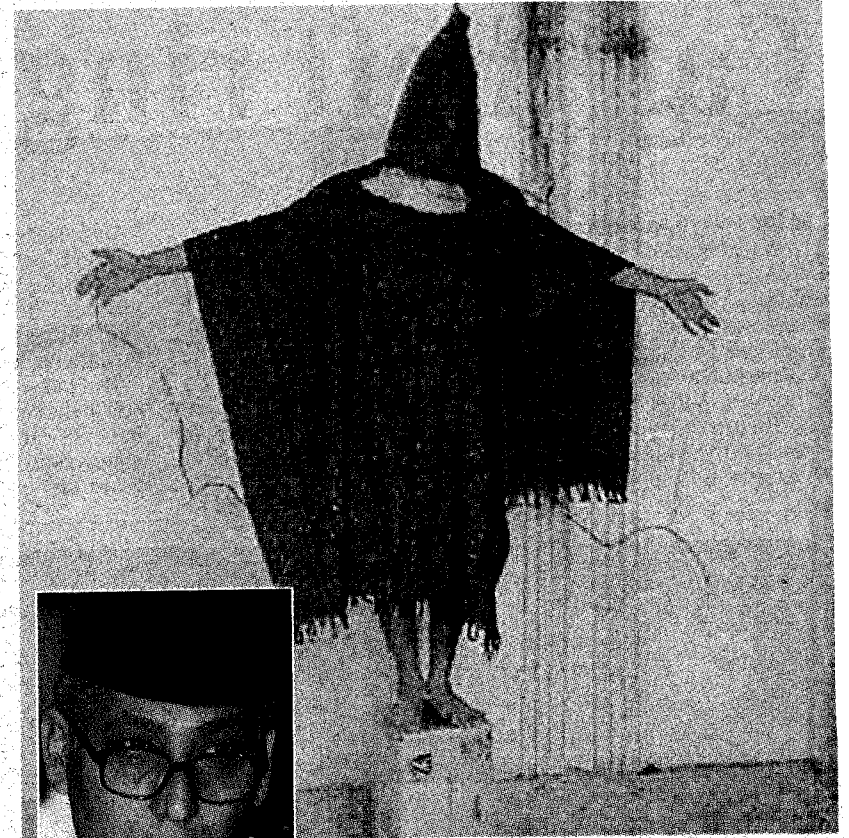
"I was put in a truck and taken to a highway and thrown out. A passing car stopped and took me home."

Although his ordeal has ended, it continues in different ways for others in Iraq.

"My experience is a drop in the sea," he said, while calling on Malaysians to pray for his compatriots.

"Don't forget us in your prayers," said Ali, who now resides in Amman, Jordan.

NST- 7/2/2007



This image was among the most definitive visuals of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison. (Inset) Ali Shalah.