

Former prisoner recounts

ordeal

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KUALA LUMPUR: Muslim detainees at Guantanamo Bay were subjected to humiliation and physical torture, which could make them lose their faith and beliefs, a former detainee said.

Sami Al'Hajj, a Sudanese journalist with the Al-Jazeera television station, said detainees were stripped, beaten and deprived of water and sleep for long periods of time.

The Quran was also ripped to pieces, defecated upon and flushed into the toilet.

Sami, who was a panellist during the War and Mass Media session at the Criminalise War Conference and exhibition at Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday, said prisoners were not allowed to pray.

"We were only allowed to bathe and given new clothes once every five months."

Sami was detained at Guantanamo Bay for seven years and released on May 1 last year, without being charged. He was the only journalist ever detained there.

He said that some detainees committed suicide as they could not face the torture.

He also said that medical practitioners and psychiatrists employed at Guantanamo Bay would formulate programmes to destroy the prisoners' minds.

"Prisoners were not allowed to communicate with their families and they had to stay in small, dark cells.

"Every five minutes, we would be asked to move our hands. The guards stopped us from sleeping. We were also not allowed to stand while in the cell."

Prisoners were also fed with expired canned food once a day.

In the past five years, Sami said there were at least 40 prisoners who went on hunger strikes in Guantanamo Bay.

Those who did so would be forced-fed through tubes shoved up their nostrils and into their stomachs.

"The guards would then remove the tubes and insert it into the next prisoner without first cleaning it. No anaesthetics were administered."

Sami was arrested in October 2001 upon arriving at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

He was accused of wanting to film an interview between Al-Jazeera correspondent Tassir Alony and Osama Bin Laden.

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