

Transcript of Statement from Mohammed Sulaymon Barre

Mohammed Sulaymon Barre was released from Guantanamo on December 20, 2009, and returned to his family in Somaliland. Mr. Barre had fled Somalia during the civil war in the early 1990s. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees granted Mr. Barre refugee status in Pakistan where he lived and worked freely for many years prior to his detention. In November 2001, soon after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistani authorities came to Mr. Barre's house in the middle of the night and arrested him. He is believed to have been sold to the United States for bounty at a time when the United States was offering sizable sums for the handover of purported enemies. Once in the custody of U.S. forces, Mr. Barre was sent to the U.S. military base at Bagram, where U.S. guards abused him and coercively interrogated him before transferring him to Guantánamo. He was never charged with any crime.

“I say to the torturers of Guantanamo, their leaders, and the politicians and people of power who back them in Washington: is it not time that you should awaken from your slumber? Is it not time that you should realize what you are doing and acknowledge the mistakes you have made? Time has passed, and time passes quickly. Hurry up and close this prison that has become a blot of shame upon all of America. Do it fast. Do it quickly.

“Closing this place should not mean just the transfer of these men to other prisons. That would only make things worse. Closing it should mean the release of these men and transferring them to where they can be safe.

“And that is not enough. There should be an appropriate and reasonable apology.

“To those who say that they fear that those men, when released, would join enemy groups and therefore we should keep them in prison indefinitely, I say: don't you know that keeping these detainees in prison is the very thing that feeds the animus against the United States? I say to those who believe in these notions: the thing you fear is the very thing you cause by your wrongful actions. This is what constitutes the real threat to the national security of the United States, not the closing of the prison and the release of detainees.

“Peace be upon you.”

-Mohammed Sulaymon