

March 17, 2010

May peace and God's blessings be upon you,

First, I would like to introduce myself. I am the father of the deceased Yasser Talal Al-Zahrani, a young man formerly detained at Guantanamo. The U.S. government falsely declared that my son committed suicide along with two of his friends, contrary to all the evidence that has surfaced, including testimonies given by some of the prison's guards.

I wish to address this brief message to President Obama, the U.S. judicial authorities, and the American people.

First, I say: Mr. President, the killing of my son at the hands of his guards and under the supervision of the administration of the detention center is a serious and gruesome crime. It is against all human values and ideals, and whoever covers up this gruesome crime or obstructs the criminal and judicial investigations is a co-conspirator with those who have committed the crime itself.

It is not unusual in any society to find crime and criminals, but it is a catastrophe when a democratic society that raises the banner of defending human rights stays silent in the face of such a crime. Mr. President, neither you nor your government stand to gain anything by covering up this crime, unless you believe in the achievements of former President Bush and his Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and wish to share in their legacy.

I say to the judicial authorities: Why do you refuse to look into these flagrant violations of human rights, even though you hear cases and convict people who commit crimes against animals? Do you really believe that only Americans or Westerners are worthy of being considered human beings with rights?

Finally, American people, I would like to tell you that the reason hatred against America is spreading all over the world is because you are disregarding people's feelings and showing contempt and disrespect for the lives of others. Too often you let criminals—from powerful politicians and decision makers to low-level perpetrators—get away with serious crimes. All these people are doing is damaging your reputation and the values you stand for.

Finally, I hope that no one who reads my words will think that I am seeking sympathy for myself or for my son, for no matter what is done, nothing can bring him back to me. However, it is my firm hope that the criminals are held accountable and brought to justice.

I want to thank all those who remain concerned with fighting human rights violations.

Talal Al-Zahrani

