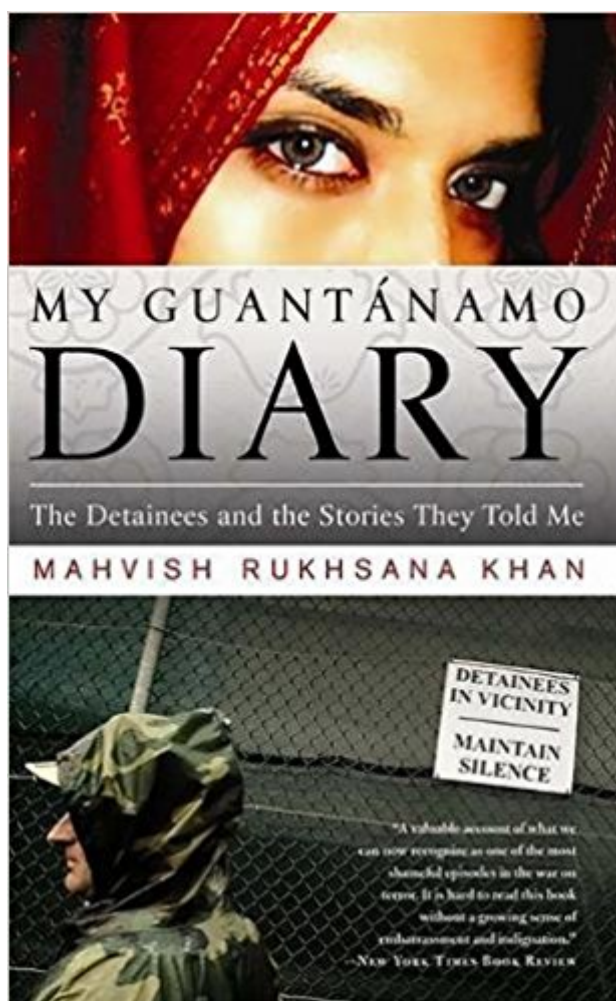


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My Guantanamo Diary: The Detainees And The Stories They Told Me



Synopsis

Mahvish Khan is the only Afghan-American to walk into Guantanamo of her own accord. This unique book is her story, and the story of the men she grew to know uniquely well inside the cages of Guantanamo. Mahvish Khan is an American lawyer, born to immigrant Afghan parents. She was outraged that her country, the USA, seemed to have suspended its tradition of equality for all under the law with regard to those imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and so she volunteered to translate for the lawyers - including British lawyer and founder of Reprieve Clive Stafford Smith - acting pro bono for the prisoners. Because she spoke their language, understood their customs and brought them Starbucks chai, the closest available drink to the kind of tea they would drink at home, they quickly befriended her, offering fatherly advice as well as a uniquely personal insight into their plight, and that of their families thousands of miles away at home. Some at Guantanamo are terrorists who deserve to be convicted and sentenced as such. Some are paediatricians and school teachers. We cannot tell the difference until we see them as individuals with their own unique stories. They deserve that much. No other writer has had access to the detainees. This book is a testament to their captivity. It documents the voices of men who have been tortured and held in a black hole of indefinite detention without legal recourse for years. It shows who they are and also allows readers to see that these men are more similar to us than they are different.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In her moving debut memoir, a young journalist recounts her time as a translator for

the detainees of notorious Guantanamo Bay prison. As a law student and American-born daughter of Pashtun (ethnic Afghan) immigrants, Khan seeks a translator position at one of the private law firms that represent the Guantanamo inmates, some of whom spend years in prison before offered a "fair" trial-or even access to counsel. Shockingly, many of the detainees Khan encounters are average citizens placed in prison due to unfortunate circumstances, the blind aggression of modern anti-terror tactics and the incompetence of its enforcers; one detainee, elderly stroke patient Nusrat, was detained after questioning the authorities regarding the arrest of his son (accused of having ties with al-Qaeda). Revealing near-universal abuse, both mental and physical, inflicted on the prisoners, Khan's account is plenty powerful-and that's before she travels alone to war-torn Afghanistan in order to prove her clients' innocence. Khan also divulges her poignant reunions with several prisoners following their release, a bittersweet breath of fresh air amid a nightmarish, eye-opening and important account. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Khan, the daughter of Afghan immigrants and a recent law-school graduate, began volunteering as an interpreter for the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) following the 2004 Supreme Court decision stating that Guantanamo prisoners had to be allowed access to U.S. courts. She first visited the base in January 2006 and met prisoners with widely diverse backgrounds, from a 22-year-old picked up in Pakistan, probably by bounty hunters, and turned over to U.S. forces to detainee #1009, Guantanamo's oldest prisoner, an illiterate old man from the mountains of Afghanistan. Acknowledging that she had no access to the 14 high value detainees with obvious ties to the Taliban, Khan interviews many whose incarceration appears dubious at best. Each has a story of being savagely beaten, deprived of sleep, sexually abused, left in solitary confinement for months, exposed to extreme cold and constant noise—all with no opportunity to prove their innocence. Stunning details all but hidden from the daily news reports may bring American readers to conclude, as has Khan, that my government has duped me. --Deborah Donovan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Almost done reading, really good book. Sad how we imprisoned some people for no reason. Yah there are some that should be there, but some the US goverment offered reward money to turn criminals in. Some people just turned anyone in for money. The abused that the prisoners had to deal with was so uncalled for. Horrible.

This was a very good book written with much compassion. I learned a lot about the culture of the detainees in Guantanamo Bay and it taught me that you can't always judge people based on what is in the news media. Very well written and very interesting book.

So sad, but worth the time. It is good to be informed, even when the truth is cruel and evil.

I have always been interested in and concerned for human rights throughout the world. As one who will eternally be a proud American, I'm still not sure what to make of Khan's memoir because... it frightens me. Regardless, the work she has done is admirable and I think... important. It took me less than two days to finish this book because it is not only excellently written and compelling and shocking, but it forces you think about a great many things you really don't want to think about.

Thanks to the patience and persistence of the author, I was able to 'meet' the many so called 'terrorists' majority of whom, it seemed, were the victims of greed, bounties and plain mismanagement by our administration. The very existence of this camp has tarnished our image globally and after reading the authors first hand encounters, it seemed like all the constitutional safeguards engraved were being violated at Guantanamo. My thanks to the author and the many pro bono lawyers who at considerable personal risk and loss of income have helped us get a better picture of what really was happening in Guantanamo. This is an easy to read book and the personal accounts of the pediatrician, the paralyzed old Afghani and the many others made me wonder if I can ever again trust or believe the 'official' version of these and other events. Thanks Mahvish for authoring this much needed book.

Good read

Mahvish, bravo... your courage tells on your ancestry. It is in your blood... great story, just some comments: 1) Bismillah does not mean God protect you (Khuda hafiz or Allah hafiz are more appropriate) 2) There is no such thing as North American Treaty Organization it is NATO in Afghanistan: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (your editor should have corrected this at least, do it in next edition) 3) Taj self educated to read & write English in five years, almost perfect, his handwriting better than many high school graduates... What does it tell about the facilities they provided him in the prison? 4) Badar Zaman and Abdurrahman, poet brothers, refugees in Pakistan,

one of them did master in English from Peshawar university (very generous of Pakistan- almost free education) ... worked for Pashtoonistan movement (a separatist movement)... ended up in Guantanamo, when released, did not go back to his native country, Afghanistan, why? rather preferred to go back to Peshawar where his family looked like has permanently settled and he continued venting and encouraging the separatist movement... this is what you get in return for providing shelter and education to someone? Why they did not go back and fight the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in their own country?5) Ali's daughter wrote him a letter from Iran was not in Pashto, she addresses her father Pidarjan several times in the letter not baba Jan, what was the reason writer implied she was calling her dad, baba Jan, why?6) Lastly, the writer's claim of Afghan roots, rather than Pakistani Pushtoon raised doubt in my mind; she had jumped back to Afghanistan skipping Pakistan connection. Is it more romantic exploiting Afghan situation than saying her parents were Pakistani Americans? Her parents graduated in 1977 from Peshawar University (KMC), her grandparents still live in Peshawar and are not Afghan refugees... what kinds of roots she has in Afghanistan? All Pushtoon living in settled areas of NWFP, I have not heard them claiming Afghanistan roots, rather wants to turn NWFP in to Pashtoonistan, a separate independent state which does not include any part of Afghanistan at all...All in all, she was able to make me cry several times...

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