

ANNEX A

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Witness Statement of Mohamedou Ould Slahi

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
AL HASSAN DEFENCEWITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION

Surname : Ould Slahi -- Houbeini	Sex: Male
First name : Mohamedou	Father's name : Sellahi
Nickname/aliases (if any) :	Mother's name : Marieme
Place of birth : Rosso, Mauritania	ID number B.1
Date of birth / age : 31 Dec. 1970	Nationality : Mauritanian
Ethnicity : Arab/Berber/African	Religion : Islam

Language (s) spoken : Arabic, French, English, German, Dutch

Language (s) written : Arabic, French, English, German, Dutch

Language (s) used in interview: English

Current occupation : Writer

Previous occupation (s) : IT/Admin

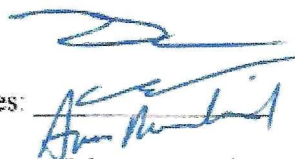
Place, date (s) and time (s) of interview: 16 July 2024, Amsterdam

Interviewer (s): Melinda Taylor

Names of other persons during the interview: Jonathan Hafetz (my counsel). Other persons present, Maouloud Al Ansary, Claudia Barrera Piñeiro

Signature: 

(Witness)

Signatures: 


(Others present)

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WITNESS STATEMENT

1. My name is Mohamedou Ould Slahi.
2. I am giving this statement voluntarily and I will describe everything I know to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I will make it clear when I am talking about things that I have personally experienced, observed and/or heard as opposed to things that I learned from others.
3. I have not been threatened or forced to give this statement, nor have I been offered any promises or inducements to do so.
4. I am aware that my statement may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Court.
5. Whether or not this statement is used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Court, I understand that I may be liable to prosecution by the International Criminal Court for contempt for interfering with its administration of justice or for providing false testimony if, in this statement, I say anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.
6. I respectfully submit this statement to the International Criminal Court in the case of *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*. I understand that the defendant, Mr. Hassan, was convicted in a judgment dated June 26, 2024, and is now awaiting sentence. I was asked to provide this statement by Mr. Hassan's counsel to provide information that might help inform the Court's sentencing decision based on my own personal experience.
7. I do not know Mr. Hassan, and I do not know the details of his case (although we are from the same region of Africa). I do, however, know a great deal about what it's like to be a torture survivor and to be released after a long period of detention. I also know what it's like to make the transition to a life that is constructive and hopeful after such a traumatic ordeal. I hope that my submission can provide the Court with the perspective of someone who has experienced torture and emerged from years of detention and darkness to find a positive path forward as a free person.
8. In November 2001, I was abducted from my home in Mauritania by government authorities and then transported to a secret prison in Jordan by the CIA under its extraordinary rendition program. I was held in Jordan for eight months and was tortured by the Jordanian authorities. After being flown to Afghanistan, I was taken to the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, where I was held for more than 14 years, from August 2002 until my release in October 2016. At Guantanamo, I was subjected to various forms of torture, including sleep deprivation, isolation, temperature extremes, and beatings and sexual humiliation. One time, I was blindfolded and taken out to sea in a boat for a mock execution. I was never charged with or convicted of a crime. In fact, the military prosecutor assigned to my case refused to prosecute me because the statements I had made, which formed the core of

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the government's case against me, had been obtained under torture. My torture has been extensively documented, including by multiple U.S. government sources.

9. I understand not only what it's like to be physically and mentally abused, but also the overall feeling of being detained for years and cut off from one's family. I know how hard it is when this separation is combined with family loss. The last time I saw my mother was when I was abducted from my home in Mauritania in 2001; my mother died while I was still a prisoner at Guantanamo. One of my brothers died while I was imprisoned at Guantanamo as well. I know how this loss can impact a person's sense of self and view of the world, challenging their faith in god and humanity.
10. But I also know that after torture, there is a path of forgiveness and reconciliation.
11. One of the important things after torture and detention is not to lose hope, hope in people and in a better future. Despite all that I endured, I was able to keep my faith in humanity alive. Religion can be an important part of the healing process, as it was for me. I am Muslim, but it doesn't matter what religion a person follows. The most important thing is believing that there is a higher power, something we can continue to place our faith in for a better future and turn to for guidance and emotional support. That is something essential not just to Islam, but to all religions.
12. Other things are important too. The bonds I formed with some of my guards at Guantanamo helped me keep my faith. So did my close relationship with my lawyers. And most of all, the emotional connection to my family. All of this supported me while I was in prison, and it supports me today.
13. I also turned to writing. I started writing while a prisoner at Guantanamo, at the suggestion of my lawyers. I wrote about my experiences there. By good fortune, my writings would later be turned into a bestselling book, *Guantanamo Diary*, which was made into an acclaimed Hollywood film, *The Mauritanian*.
14. Not everyone will become a writer; most prisoners won't. But all prisoners have something special that helps them process their experiences and focus on the beautiful things in life. I know, for example, many prisoners at Guantanamo who turned to visual arts, whether painting, drawing, or sculpture.
15. I will not say I never got angry or had negative thoughts—I did. I found myself in dark places. And sometimes I still do. But despite everything, I always see a better future. And I try to live that way every day.
16. After my release from Guantanamo, I was returned to Mauritania. At first, it was difficult. Many nights, I couldn't sleep, I didn't know day from night. I also continued to face restrictions that prevented me from traveling, including being denied a passport. This was hard since I was free in one sense but still a prisoner in another. But my faith continued to provide a source of support. So did my writing, which I continued to pursue.
17. I have since moved to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where I reside today. I work now as a writer. I have published a book of fiction, *The Actual and True Story of Ahmed and Zarga* (2021), which describes a Bedouin family's survival and legacy amid their changing world in the Sahara Desert. I also work for a not-for-profit theater company

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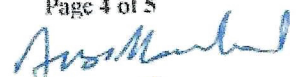
I have made many friends, developed rich professional relationships, and established strong roots in the community.

18. While I still live with the emotional effects of my mistreatment and imprisonment, I do not let the past define me. As a torture survivor, I try to channel this experience and lead a productive life, making the most of each moment. I am deeply grateful to the Netherlands for allowing me the opportunity to do so, and I hope each day to contribute positively to the country and Dutch society.
19. I also know that one cannot begin the healing process until after one is free. My torture stopped relatively early on in my detention. After 2004, I was no longer tortured or threatened with torture. In fact, over time my conditions of confinement became excellent, better than most prisoners, not just at Guantanamo but anywhere. But a prison is still a prison, no matter how nice the surroundings. I didn't truly begin the healing process until after I was released in 2016.
20. I know that other prisoners at Guantanamo who experienced torture also want to focus on the future and to make the most of the time that remains to them. While the past remains a part of you, it is possible, indeed essential, to build a life based around love, joy, and hope. I always tell people you cannot explain freedom to someone who never lost freedom. If anything, my years in detention have made me treasure life even more.
21. I am sometimes asked, "How can you not be angry after what you experienced?" "How can you not want to take revenge." I explain that I believe in forgiveness, in reconciliation, and in hope. And I believe in seeing the humanity in everyone. My faith has taught me that, and each day I appreciate its truth.
22. I hope my sharing my experiences helps you as you make this weighty decision about a person's life. I do not know much about the facts of this case or about Mr. Hassan. I also know the Court will have many factors to consider. But I know deep down—from my own lived experience—that it is possible to construct a full, rich, and compassionate life after torture.

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WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This statement has been read back to me in English, which is a language I understand, and is true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this statement voluntarily and I am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Court in the *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan* case.

I have made this statement knowing that, whether or not it is used in such proceedings, I am liable to prosecution by the International Criminal Court for contempt or false testimony if in it I say anything that I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signed: Dated: July 16th, 2024