

CAGEPRISONERS

Testimony of Zeeshan Siddiqui

Zeeshan Siddiqui is a British citizen who was an engineering student in a London university. In February 2003 he decided to travel to Pakistan in order study his religion further.

While on the trip he was detained by the Pakistani security services and tortured while they tried to accuse him of being a member of Al Qaeda. The abuse that Siddiqui suffered resulted in irreparable physical damage and intense psychological damage.

After going through a terrible ordeal where he was held in secret detention, he was eventually released without any charges being brought against him. He returned to the UK scarred by his experience. After some time the UK government placed a control order on Siddiqui, despite his fragile state of mind. Eventually he took off the control order tag and absconded from the order. Siddiqui is still missing today.

Journey to Pakistan

My name is Zeeshan Siddiqui. I am a citizen of the United Kingdom.

I went to Pakistan on 17 February 2003 in order to study Islamic knowledge with a Madrassa in Lahore. I did not find this place to study before I left the UK. I knew it would be easy to find a school in Pakistan once I arrived there. The Madrassa I ended up in was called Jamaat Uloom Al Islamia. I choose this particular school as it had English speaking teachers. The man in charge of the school was Mufti Rashid. He was also was my main teacher. He had moved from a prestigious school in order to set this one up and he is well known in Lahore.

I travelled from Gatwick airport with a brother called Yahya. My plan was that on arriving in Pakistan I would find a group called Tablighi Jamaat so that they could help me with my studying. It is a mainstream moderate Islamic group. Many of their members are also members of moderate UK organisations like the Muslim Council of Britain. Whilst in Pakistan I regularly attended their meetings. I went to their annual gathering in 2003 and 2004. I would have gone to 2005 but I had been detained by then.

When I left England I took about £5000 with me. I had saved that money from my jobs as a sales representative for the Dixon's group and as a station assistant for London Underground. I have bank records that prove this.

I consider myself to be very religious and I practice my religion. This was part of the reason I wanted to study Islamic jurisprudence in Pakistan. I am not affiliated to any Islamic or radical groups and I never have been.

On arriving in Pakistan I went to stay with Yahya's relatives. I stayed there for about 1 week to 10 days just to get orientated. I handed my money over to one of his uncles, who is called Colonel Pervez. He said he would look after it by depositing it in Habib bank in Gujarat for safe keeping.

I decided to leave Islamabad at the end of March because things were becoming difficult here for foreigners. The police started to harass any one from abroad.

Around March I left this flat to go to Junaid Babar's house in Lahore. I stayed here for a few weeks. I was introduced to Sujeels Madrassa which was being built. I stayed here from around March to June 2003. I first met Junaid in Crawley mosque in December 2002. I was staying in the mosque for a 10 day period and Junaid only stayed for one day. I knew he was going back to Pakistan because he told me that he was married and his pregnant wife was waiting for him. When I was in Pakistan I bumped into Junaid again and he offered to let me stay with him as long as I paid his rent for him. He seemed very money orientated. He took my passport. He wanted to sell it and split the money. I did not like this. I did not get on very well with him. He had a depraved character. He would often get angry about being reminded to pray.

Then from June 2003 to December 2003 I was living in a village called Gurkoi in the district Dir Malakant Province in the North West Frontier Province.

I began studying in Lahore in December 2003. I was studying Arabic grammar, Arabic speaking, Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, History of Islam and Systems of Islam and Quranic studies. My studies were 7 days a week from dawn until the afternoon prayer.

I was staying in Lahore within the premises of the Madrassa which is located on Wahadat Road. Staying here did not cost me any money as all the Madrassa run on the principle that an Islamic education should be free. The person who ran this school was Shajeel Shahid. I stayed in a room in the compound with two other British guys. I think they are back in the U.K. I stayed in the Madrassa from December 2003 to June 2004. The Madrassa was raided in June 2004 and

closed down. I think it was closed down because this Madrassa endorsed a fatwa which stated that anyone who fights in Waziristan against Muslims is an apostate and his funeral prayer should not be read.

On the day it was raided I was out when I came back it was surrounded by police. I went from there to Raiwind where the head office of Tablighi Jamaat is. I stayed in Raiwind with this group. I agreed to stay with this group propagating and preaching Islam for 4 months.

At some point after I signed up with the program with Tabligh I left to go to Dir. I decided that this wasn't the thing for me and I thought the Madrassa I had heard of in Dir would be quite good. I wanted to teach there. The Madrassa in Dir houses orphans. I spent the next few months here learning from Maulana Zubair. I was also teaching younger children in the Madrassa. I was staying in the village until about September 2004.

After this I went to Waziristan to help with humanitarian work. I went with some guys I knew in Raiwind. I knew them from Kashmir. We were distributing clothes, food and medicines. This is quite common for people to do. There are a lot of refugees in Waziristan. The person I met in Raiwind was associated with a charitable trust which had donated things for the refugees. I helped in distributing these. I did this for about one month.

Then in October I came back to Raiwind. I spent the next 40 days with Tablighi Jamaat. During these days I met Maulana Abdsu Satar from Shapqadr. When my 40 days were over I went to stay with him in his village. He said I could continue my Islamic studies with him as he was a scholar. He could speak English quite well. I stayed in his house in a new house he and his brother had made in Shapqadr. He asked me to lend me him some money to help finish the house. I gave him about £700 for the house. I also paid him £200 to stay with him.

He was supposed to pay me back the money I had lent him at the end of April. I asked for my money and told him I was planning to return to the UK and needed the money for a ticket. He asked for 10 more days. I was at this time staying in his house. I rang him to ask him for my money after the 10 days had expired and his nephew told me he needed another 10 days. I agreed to wait.

Arrest

Then on 15 May about one hour before Fajr prayer I was sleeping in my room which was shared by Abdul Sattar's nephew. I was asleep in my bed surrounded by mosquito net.

Suddenly at about 3.30 am there was a loud bang which woke me up. It sounded like someone hitting metal. I woke up and saw that loads of men were standing around my bed. They had assault rifles in their hands which were pointed at me. I was disorientated and even said 'Assalaamu alaikum' to these men. I guess the bang had been the metal gates on the front of the house being forced open. One of the men in my room spoke in English. He asked, 'Is this the man?' Another man replied, 'yes, this is him'.

Their accents were Pakistani but they were speaking English. They were wearing civilian clothes. They had 4 land cruisers and in total there were about 20 of them. One of them grabbed my bag and in Urdu said what's in the bag as it was locked. I said I will show you and grabbed my key. I was moving towards my key under my pillow. They took the key and grabbed me.

Two of them grabbed me and took me outside. They took me to the garden. Another man put a shackle on my wrists. Then they put a piece of material over my eyes. . There was a long chain attached to the shackles. No one explained what was happening. I asked what they were doing. No one replied. I was violently manhandled into one of the 4 land cruisers.

I was placed into the back of the Land Cruiser. They put a hood over my head. I was asking them to take the chain and hood off my head. They were shouting 'bain chowd' which means 'sister fucker' to me all the time. They asked me what was on my computer. They took my bag, computer and my books.

After I was put in the car I was lying and saying my dad is a general and my friend is associated to the District Commissioning Officer of Charsadar. They said we will take you Charsadar. I said I want to pray. They said you can pray there.

Then they told me to shut up. Eventually I became quiet. The men holding men started to squeeze my arm and my neck in painful way. The other man who had hold of the chain to the shackle kept pulling the chain. This was also very painful.

The vehicle was travelling for 15 or 30 minutes. No one during this time had explained to me what was happening. I had an inkling that we were not going to where they said we were going.

Later I have adduced that I was taken to the IB interrogation centre on Shami Road in Peshawar. This is next to the army stadium.

They pulled me out of the land cruiser and dragged me to the inside of a building. I was protesting all the way. They kept telling me to be quiet and swearing at me. I was very frightened about what was happening. I thought if I protested enough I might be able to bluff them. I was trying anything to get these people to leave me alone. I still did not know what was going on.

When we went into the building we turned right and then right again. We went into a little room and they pushed me down onto a chair. As soon as they sat me down they removed my blindfold.

Interrogation Room

I was in a room which was located opposite my cell. This room had one way glass which sometimes I was able to see through when they accidentally turned the light on in the secret portion of the room. The room had hooks like meat hooks on the wall. On the ground they had a metal loop to which they would secure my chain. I was usually interrogated in this room and so I will term it the interrogation room.

The first thing I saw was a desk and on the other side were 5 or 6 people sitting in front of me. Only one of them had come to my house the others were new men. I realised that one of the men in front of me was the bus driver who drove the bus from Peshawar to Shapqadr. I later learnt that he was an Intelligence Bureau (IB) Officer. There was another guy with a Kalashnikov behind me by the door. There was another guy in the room with a chain standing to the other side of me. He was attaching the chain to the hook on the floor.

The man in front of me was called Siffat Guyur. He is the Director General of the NWFP IB. He is also the brother in law of Aftab Shirpau who was the Interior Minister of Pakistan. I know this as my lawyer and the prison wardens told me this.

Siffat Guyur shouted at me in perfect English. He said 'What the fuck have you been doing in Pakistan'. I did not know who he was at the time.

This lasted from 4 am until about 3 pm. This lasted hours and hours. The people in the room kept changing. They kept asking me things like; what is your name, why did you come to Pakistan, why do you have solder in your bag, why have you got night vision goggles with you. They were referring to a LED torch with a strap. They asked me loads of questions about videos I had with me about Islamic issues. They said people had told them that they had seen me with a short wave transceiver contacting people. I told them that it was just a radio I used to listen to the quadrant in the mornings.

Siffat who was in charge told me that they could send me to Guantanamo Bay any time they wanted. He said they had irrefutable evidence that I had links to militants. This is all that all that happened up to about 3 pm. They did not show me any photos or put specific allegations to me. They did go to through my property and ask me what everything was.

I was trying my best to answer them but all along I was asking for a phone call and that I want a lawyer. They said no. I asked for access to the British Commission.

I was told that I was not entitled to speak to the Commission. They said they had a lawyer called Gareth on duty who would not speak to me as I was part of Al Qaeda.

I was being interrogated all day until the afternoon. I had been threatened from the very first moment. I answered all their questions but they refused to believe me.

At around 2 pm I was hooded and shackled and manhandled into the back of a waiting car and driven around for 3 minutes or so. I was then dragged off the car and into a building. I was taken to a very formal office. Siffat was sat behind a desk in a big chair. He said 'Do you know who I am, you should know who I am I am the most senior person here'. I said I had nothing to say to. I need a lawyer. He said it doesn't work like that; first you speak to us then you get a lawyer. Then he said, what is the name of the village you were in? I told him it was in Gurkoi. I was here for about 2 minutes.

Then I was hooded and taken back to the interrogation

Then at about 6pm in the evening a man called Mohammed Fahim Afridi came to the interrogation room. He said 'Hello, mate' with a proper English accent. He said 'you have been asking for a lawyer all day, I am a lawyer I have a LLB you can talk to me.' He then told me that I had been charged with illegal entry, links to militants and having forged government documents in my possession. He asked me loads of questions about my family.

He then slipped up and said 'we will offer you...' As soon as he said this I realised he was part of the intelligence service. I told him that I had realised that he was part of the intelligence service. He very quickly became nasty.

He became abusive and violent. He said you don't realise what situation you are in. You don't know how much trouble you are in.

Up to this point the following threats had been made; to hang me from meat hooks by the shackles on my wrists, yelling and swearing, someone came in with chains to reinforce threats, threatened to pull my nails out, threatened to slit my flesh, they told me that they had been lenient and they could break people's bones, they threatened to torture me.

Afridi then grabbed my hands and said it looks like we are going have to pull your nails out. He said, 'You know that Iraq CD you had? We are capable of doing much worse than that.'

It was about 6pm they were trying to make me eat something but I was too scared to eat it. They then got me a bottle of water.

Then Javed and Nasir Shah came to the interrogation room. These two accused me of being an Indian spy and then an Arab. Nasir Shah spoke to me for about 1 hour in Arabic. I could not respond as I could not speak conversational Arabic. Then they eventually accused me of not even being a Muslim. The interrogation started again. The questions were the same.

At about 8pm an older man who looked senior came in and said why aren't you talking to us? He said you have been trained by an intelligence agency. I said, 'no, I just want a lawyer'. He said, 'OK, tomorrow we will take you to the British commission'.

Torture

Then at about 9 pm the bus driver and another man made me lie down on the floor on my back. My hands were spread and I was chained to the loops on the floor.

Then the two men brought some tablets. They told me to take two tablets. They said I have to take them. They wouldn't tell me what it was. I looked at the box and it was Valium. I said it Valium. They said yes it is to help me sleep. Two men stood over me and made me take it.

I began to get very dizzy. I told them I wanted to use the toilet. They opened the chain and I tried to stand up. I fell down as I lost my balance. Then two more guys came along. Now there was the bus driver, Javed, one of Mohammed Fahim Afridi's servants and another man. They grabbed me by each of my limbs and took me to another room which may have been my cell or a similar room. I will call this room the beating room.

Mohammed Fahim Afridi (Saddique) came to the room. Now in the room there was MFA, Javed, servant, bus driver and one other.

MFA started to beat me with his fists. He was wearing rings which he turned around so the heavy part would be against the palm of his hand. He would then slap and punch me. It really hurt.

MFA was the only one who beat me at this time. He hit me across my face and head. I wear a kerataconic corrective lens in both my eyes. At this time I only had one in my left eye. This lens got knocked out. This continued for a few minutes. I started reciting the declaration of faith for comfort and he began to mock me. I think I was beaten for about 5 minutes the first time then they left me alone for 5 minutes while MFA went to speak to someone on his mobile. He came back after his call and then he beat me for about 15 minutes. While I was being beaten they were throwing cold water at me to try and make me open my eyes. I kept my eyes closed. During this period of beatings Javed and another man pulled my tracksuit bottoms and boxer shorts down so that my penis was showing. Another man wearing gloves inspected my penis. Then he told the others that I was circumcised.

I was carried by four people out to the Interrogation room where I was put onto the floor. I was put onto my back on the floor and I was chained down again. Then someone came into the room and injected me with something. I don't know what this was. I went drowsy and then I don't remember any more about that night.

I think I spent that night in the interrogation room. The next day I woke up about 4 or 5 am. I woke up and was really dizzy and drowsy. I saw one of the lower rank IB guys in that room. He was lying on the floor. As soon as I moved and he heard the chain noise and he woke up. I said it is time for prayer. He said go back to sleep. I protested and then he said ok you have plenty of time I will let you pray later and he went back to sleep. I fell back to sleep again.

Javed came along a couple of hours or so later. I told him I have something very important to tell Siffat. I was trying anything to get out of there. Siffat came with Hajji Zafurullah who is a joint director of the IB. I told them that if they thought I was a spy for India they should let me go and I would spy for them.

The interrogation began at dawn. I was so drowsy from the beating and drugs that I had a headache. I had no food, just some juice from a carton. They kept questioning me but at the same time they were trying to calm me down. They kept asserting that they were good Muslims.

Later on the Pakistanis came and kept trying to tell me to cooperate. They wanted me to write things down for them. They asked me to write down all my personal details including family

history, education, employment and they would send it to the commission. I did write things down and signed the papers. They also asked me to write down things about where I had my money from.

On 16 May I was sitting in a chair in the interrogation room. My head was bleeding onto the wall. I was told I was making the wall dirty. All I remember was feeling tired, scared and drowsy. I was sitting on a chair and then I felt really faint and collapsed onto the floor.

The next thing I knew I woke up in hospital. Someone had injected brown liquid into my nose. I was choking on it and it smelt of spirit. They injected this stuff into my nose about 3 or 4 times continuously. I was struggling to breathe.

I was chained up to the bed by one arm. My other arm had a drip in it. No one was speaking to me. I pulled my arm and ripped the drip needle out of my arm by accident. My arm started bleeding. I was puking up onto the sheet because of the brown liquid. My vomit covered the sheets and my bed. No one did anything about it or to help me. As I had pulled my arm and the drip had come out the IB officers decided to chain both my arms.

The next thing that happens is that someone is trying to put a feeding tube into my nose. I struggled and two men grabbed hold of my head. They kept trying and I was choking. Eventually they managed to get the tube down my nose. Then a man comes along and grabs my legs. They also forcibly fitted me with a catheter.

I was kept in the hospital from around 16 to 26 or 28 May 2005. I was kept in the hospital for 10 days or so. I was very disorientated whilst in here. I do not know if I saw doctors or agents. Once a doctor came to see me and told me he was a psychiatrist. While he was talking to me he got angry and started swearing at me.

After I was released I found out the hospital was the Lady Reading Hospital Bolton Block. I was in the private section of the hospital. There were no other patients. The curtains were never opened. I have a CID statement which confirms my detention.

During the 10 days I was subjected to the following treatment:

1. Refused access to toilet
2. Refused to remove feeding pipe and catheter which were painful
3. Used removal of catheter as a bargaining tool
4. Made me sleep in a bed covered with my own urine. Made me keep clothes on which were covered in urine.
5. IB officers forcefully pulled the catheter out which caused me heavy bleeding and severe pain.
6. Kept me shackled.
7. Beat me across face and head whilst chained in bed.
8. Beat me immediately following removal of catheter whilst I was bleeding.
9. Daily injections in elbow and once in my neck.

10. Threats of sexual abuse. MFA undid shirt and touched chest, then made threats of sexual abuse.

11. Forcing shackle into wrist causing injury.

On 26th May 2005 I was transferred to Peshawar Central Prison. I was detained without any rights. I still had not been to court. I was told that I was under a Restriction Order on me. I was to be denied any contact.

On the first day I was taken to a cell. I was unable to function properly. There were four people in a room about 1.5 m by 1.5m. I asked the three people to record secretly on a piece of paper what happened to me. They agreed and I still have this document. It records the following:

...he condition witnessed by me was as follows: 1. Zeeshan can't walk. 2. Zeeshan can not speak. 3. I saw some cuts on his head. 4. Zeeshan is unable to eat. 5. Zeeshan can't even stand up straight. 6. He is totally out of his senses – we had to carry him even to use the toilet. They came to fit a drip but he was so weak that they could not because they could not find his veins. As he was so weak his head collapsed. Then we took him by wheelchair to the jail hospital where he spend the next three months in order to recover....

I have this document which was signed by my inmates.

British Complicity

I had a hospital appointment on a Saturday. It was the 2nd of July. I had a problem with my eyes. Then on Monday 4 July 2005 the Pakistani guy from the IB and said they were taking me to the hospital. I thought his name was Nasir Shah. I asked are you taking me to the hospital as I have already been. He said we have been given the order to take you to check your eye out. I said I had already been to the Lady Reading Hospital. I was taken there again. I arrived at about 9.30 am. It is across the road from the jail. First they took me to loads of different machines. A CT scan, X-ray etc. Then they took me to get my eye seen. Then they told me I would be spending the night here. They chained me to the bed I had been chained to when they had brought me here to interrogate me.

I have a damaged cornea. I need a special lens to sit on the cornea to prevent the eye being damaged further. They took my lens and would not give it back. I told them I did not have any money to buy medicines in jail. I was asking for my money and I was being denied access to it.

That evening I was kept there overnight. I was chained to the bed. All the IB people were there. The next day Hajji Zafurullah came in as sat down then Siffat came in. Already in the room were Javed (5ft 8, 50's, Medium build, darker skin, thick rimmed glasses, clean shaven with a moustache) and Nasir Shah. Then I knew something strange is going on. No one was talking to me. They were just watching me. Then four assistant directors come in. They just came in quietly and sat down. Then an order was given in Pashto to take my shackles off me. This was done and the shackles were taken out of the room.

Then, a few seconds later, four British guys came in. They go up to Siffat and the others and shook their hands. Then they came up to me and shook my hand. They said are you Mr Siddiqui. I replied yes. They sat down in front of me. They could see I was in such a state. I was unable to even talk properly. They said to me there are people from the British embassy who are designed to help people like you. We are not those people. At a later stage we will try and get those people to speak to you later.

First they just confirmed my address and details. Then they spoke about the consular. They told me they are from the intelligence. They said if you can talk to us then we want you to tell us what you know about people involved in illegal activities. I asked for a lawyer. They said yes but anything you can tell us today we can tell our Pakistani friends and they can help you.

Despite the presence of these British officials, it was not until 15th August 2005 that I received my first consular visit by Helen Feather – it was her who helped arrange my return to the UK which finally happened on 9th January 2006.