

MOHAMEDOU OULD SLAHI'S GITMO MEMOIR: A SLOW DEATH

Slate has a remarkable three part excerpt from the memoir of Mouhamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritanian Gitmo detainee subjected to some of the worst torture. The intro, by Larry Siems, is [here](#). (Some posts on his still-ongoing habeas fight are [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).) The whole thing reflects a remarkable, chilling, understanding of the Americans who kept him captive, even as he succumbs to his torture and starts lying to make the torture stop.

Reading the memoir, even as over a hundred detainees continue their hunger strike, I'm struck by the repeated theme of slow death, both in what Americans say to him, and in how he processes his own torture.

In Slahi's story of Bagram, he tells of a "cowboy," believing he doesn't speak English, wishing he'll die slowly.

Now I am sitting in front of a bunch of dead-regular U.S. citizens; my first impression, when I saw them chewing without a break: "What's wrong with these guys, do they have to eat so much?" Most of the guards are tall, and overweight. Some of them were friendly and some very hostile. Whenever I realized that a guard [was hostile], I pretended that I understood no English. I remember one cowboy coming to me with an ugly frown on his face.

"You speak English?" he asked.

"No English," I replied.

"We don't like you to speak English, we want you to die slowly," he said.

"No English," I kept replying. I didn't want to give him the satisfaction that

his message arrived. People with hatred have always something to get off their chests, but I wasn't ready to be that drain.

Slahi thinks about slow death as he recounts the fake rendition staged with Donald Rumsfeld's authorization, in which a Jordanian and Egyptian took Slahi on a boat trip to make him think he might be rendered to Egypt. After hours a beating, they wrapped him in ice.

The order went as follows: They stuffed the air between my clothes and me with ice cubes from my neck to my ankles, and whenever the ice melted they put in new hard ice cubes. Moreover, every once in a while, one of the guards smashed me, most of the time in the face. The ice served both for pain and for wiping out the bruises I had from that afternoon. Everything seemed to be perfectly prepared. Historically, dictators during medieval and pre-medieval times used this method to let the victim die slowly. The other method of hitting the victim while blindfolded in inconsistent intervals of time was used by Nazis during WWII. There is nothing more terrorizing than making somebody expect a smash every single heartbeat.

"I am from Hasi Matruh, where are you from?" said the Egyptian, addressing his Jordanian colleague. He was speaking as if nothing was happening. You could tell he was used to torturing people.

"I am from the south," answered the Jordanian.

What would it be like if I landed in Egypt after about 25 hours of torture? What would the interrogation look like?

And even after they break Slahi and he begins to invent lies for them, guards kept repeating the

theme of endless death.

“You know who you are?” said [redacted guard name].

“Uh.”

“You are a terrorist,” he continued.

“Yes, sir!”

“If we kill you once, it wouldn’t do. We must kill you 3,000 times. But instead, we feed you!”

“Yes, sir.”

Remember, Slahi, because he broke down and made up lies for his captors, is treated better than most other compliant detainees.

Yet it seems, like them, Slahi experiences just slow death.