

Beyond Guantanamo

Anwar al-Awlaki

Dear Brothers and sisters, Assalamoalaykum wa rehmatullah wa baraakah. Ibn-e-Taymiyyah it was related that when he was being transported in Alexandria and being sent to prison, a bystander saw him and said, "My master this is the time for patience," ibn-e-taymiyyah looked at him and said "Rather this is the time to be thankful. By Allah such joy and happiness are descending upon my heart at this moment that if it was divided between the people of Shaam and Egypt there would be some left over. And if I had that amount in gold and distributed it, it would not equal even the tenth of the blessing that I am experiences now." Later, on Monday the 6th of the month of Shaban, year 726 Hijri he was again arrested on orders from the ruler and was ordered transferred to the citadel prison in Damascus. When he first learnt of this he said, "I was waiting for this and this contains great benefit." When he was later in the prison he said, "If this prison was exchanged for its weight in gold I would not consider it to be enough to repay this blessing I am in and the good that it has brought me." When he entered the ground of the citadel prison, Damascus he stood up and looked at its walls and recited the verse

So a wall will be put up between them, with a gate therein. Inside it will be Mercy, and outside it will be torment." (Al-Hadid: 13)

So, my dear brothers and sisters and all of the attendees of the caged prisoner event for this year, these are the words of Ibn-e-Taymiyyah, a prisoner. A prison can be place of a blessing or a place of wrath, it is a place of blessings for those who are patient with the decree of Allah, for those who make the best out of it, for those who ponder and contemplate and use the time for good and it could be a wrath for those who are not patient and who are not content and happy with the decree and destiny that Allah has chosen for them. MY words to you are going to be from the prisoners to the prisoners, so really they are not my words but I have compiled together some of the words said or written by prisoners and I send these words to the prisoners. Prisons can be houses of wisdom and prison can be a chance for man to get away from the aspect of the world that make a person overwhelmed and preoccupied and can be a chance for contemplation and thinking.

I would start with an open letter from the incarcerated brothers in Belmarsh prison, UK says;

In the name of Allah the most kind, the most merciful to whom belongs all praise and honor, To all our honorable brethren and sisters worldwide. May Allah's peace and grace be upon on you. We your brothers at belmarsh prison and on behalf of the brothers captive across the UK specially those who are deprived of any form of communication with the outside world

collectively and with one voice would like to say thanks to Allah that we have you out there and thanks to you for being what you are. We praise your undivided attention, care and love which touched our hearts and brought tears of joy to our eyes. We value every word of comfort and advice surely Allah makes best of his servants the instruments of His Blessings. All your letters and post cards and artworks are being gathered and preserved for Historical records.

Our praise and admiration extended foremost to all the children who continually wrote to us and then to all those who tirelessly and zealously campaigned for us, organized websites, arranged meetings, held demonstrations and made speeches in propagation of the truth. To our staunch friends who unwavering in their grace and belief are un-swayed by the political whims and influx of climate fluctuations which strive to cast the die of your valor on the golden pages of history that future generations may honor you and drive lessons from all your courage self-sacrifice and care, May Allah reward you manifold.

We often ponder what we may have done to our great men of knowledge; the magnanimous learnt those who enjoy a great deal of respect within the Muslim community that we have not have heard of them unless through media interviews and scholars whom are conversant with the Holy Quran and the book of traditions and well versed, the enlightened intellects and intellectuals and those whom are rightly known as the leaders of Muslims in the UK and Europe have we misunderstood their duties or are their duties other than what the Holy Book commands have we becomes invisible in their eyes or insignificant in their attention. Does not rank impose obligations surely we have been noticed by children. Would one prefer the shades of the spider's webs to the light of the truth, then to what benefit is this abandonment and to whom and to what wisdom this silence, that it has become our duty to bring to their attention their unintentional negligence. Please do accept our apologies in advance if we may have been hasty.

Your Sincerely,

Your Brothers,

Belmarsh Prison.

25th Nov, 2005

Dear listeners one of the things that I regret now that I have left the US is that I have not spent time visiting my brothers behind bars. I realize my mistake now because I have been through it,

it means a lot for a prisoner to know that there are people with him and thinking about him and traveling such a long distance only to visit them for the sake of Allah and Allah alone. Following is a letter from Baber Ahmed along the lines of what I mentioned, we sometimes neglect our duties to our fellow Muslims until we fall into their trials and realize the importance of standing in support of the oppressed.

Baber Ahmed says in December 2001 a handful of Muslims alleged as terror suspects were arrested and detained indefinitely. Few amongst the Muslims in the UK bothered to even say something including myself let alone make a stand. In fact, those who are not even Muslims made a stand first and began to speak out. However, when in December 2004 three years later the House of Lords, unanimously ruled that detention without trial was illegal and disproportionate, all of sudden Muslims began to appear from everywhere and openly support the now victorious cause, whilst it is improper and un-Islamic to question the intentions of these Muslims and why they remained quiet when their efforts were most needed, it is wholly correct to say that this group is not the same in rank as those Muslims who supported this cause when it was un-popular, unfashionable and frowned upon. The same thing happened with the Guantanamo detainees. In early 2002 the first images appeared of Muslims being transported to Guantanamo bay hooded, shackled, deprived of senses and bare footed. Reports began to emerge how US soldiers were throwing Qur'ans in toilets and female US interrogators were smearing menstrual blood on the faces of the Muslims detainees yet there was a deafening silence from the majority of the Muslims until when it was announced in March 2004 that five Britons would be coming home from the Guantanamo bay suddenly statements of support began to appear from everywhere once victory has been declared and their ordeal was over. Unfortunately, this state of affairs represents reality. We are not there to support clear cut causes for fear of being adversely labeled as extreme, unpopular or unfashionable but then what is the point of supporting a cause once it triumphs and becomes famous and popular. Allah the Almighty works in wondrous ways sometimes when we are hesitant to support even our own causes Allah forces us to support them whether we like it or not. A few days ago an Algerian detainee known as A was released from Wood Hill prison after having spent 3 years and half in prison without charge or trial. Shortly before he was released I said to him brother I don't know if I will ever see you again but in case I don't I wanted to take this opportunity to ask for your forgiveness. He asked me forgiveness for what I replied 3 years ago I watched on TV as you and several others were arrested and unjustly detained without trial but I didn't do anything because I didn't care. Now I am in prison and you are going home and tomorrow those Muslims who didn't do anything about me they will be in prison and I will go home and then those who do not do anything about them, they will be in prison whilst the others will go home and so on. Having said this I embraced him. A few days later he went home but I remained in prison.

So dear listeners let's take heed by these words of advice and do something let's remember the sayings of Rasoolullah Sallal-lahu-alaihay-wasalam

F'kul aynee (Arabic)

"Release the prisoner"

Let's remember the sayings of scholars who said that if a Muslim is incarcerated in the west it becomes an obligation on the Muslims of east to free them if such happens to a Muslim in east then it is an obligation on the Muslims in the west to do likewise.

Let's remember the sayings of Rasoolullah Sallal-lahu-alaihay-wasalam who said that The Ummah is one and they are like a built wall and they are like one body

Dear listeners the following is a Poem by Sheikh Abu-Muhammad al Maqdisi who has spent a major portion of His life behind bars and still is in Jordan, a scholar whose scholarship is manifest through his works, I say this because we live in times when scholars could be manufactured, governments can promote certain scholars, media can promote certain scholars and they become famous and when they become famous and their word is taken seriously while there are many scholars out there who are more scholarly and are steeped in Islamic knowledge yet nobody knows them because the media and governments are against them. Sheikh Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi has written this poem from in Arabic so obviously some of the eloquence is lost in translation but still there are some beneficial meanings and words which we could contemplate upon in the translations of his poems. He says

Dear Brothers who dwells in these prisons

To you I write with distresses

If to Allah you hold fast

Then what harm the misfortune of time will do to you

Beware dear brother of (making) corrupting your thought

Regarding the promise of the Deity Mighty and Strong

Verily he has promised the believers with salvation

As he saved Yunus alaihay-salam from the dark depths of the belly of the fish

Dear Brother before you pass the ancient ones
Remember, These prisons are but like those prisons.
Did not Yusuf alaihay-salam dwell in them for a phase?
And Musa (alaihay-salam) the tyrants threatened him with it?
And such was the Messenger of the generous Deity
To imprison him the pagans plotted
So my Lord saved him through his Hijrah and in the company of that trust worthy friend
And in the footsteps the believers traversed
Like Ahmed that firm Imam and
Likewise was Ibn-e-Taymiyyah was blessed with it
In the fortress of Shaam as a prisoner he dwelt
Hundreds of thousands of the true faithful dwelt for a time in these prisons
be not weak, Dear Brother nor lose Hope, when your time comes, nor submit
Strengthen yourself by remembering the Deity, most Supreme
And Hasten in memorizing the manifest book
That is for your heart a secure stronghold
And this is for your spirit
And assisting provisions
These are hardships soon they will all cease
And remaining from it will be various fruits and benefits
So if they intimidate you and they threaten you

Never weaken or soften to them

And even if they insult you and they torture you

And if they beat you submit not

You are not the first to be tortured

For a mighty religion and a manifest legislation

Nor are you alone on this path

For there are countless caravans throughout the years

If an eid passes by and a son is born

And months rotate while you are imprisoned

Do not grieve O brother of the righteous Ones

Of departing from family and losing children

And if they forbid you from their visits

And likewise their letters never appear

So if this for a Lord and Religion

Then where is the patience?

Where is the certainty?

And where are your past speeches?

Regarding the wait of the millah of the trust worthy Messenger

That intimate friend went willingly to slaughter his son, A clear trial

On a magnificent noble day like today without any anxiety

He put him down upon his forehead

So my lord saved him through his goodwill
And ransomed him with a fat sheep
But you, your sons are in a carefree life
and diversion and amusement
and a secure home
yet you have not been asked to slaughter them
rather merely for a patience of a temporary separation
for verily they are in the care of a merciful Lord
and you are in solitude with him and faith
for the pleasure of a Lord and assisting a religion
life and all children become insignificant
for the pleasure of a Lord mighty and generous
the prisons come perfumed
and the bitter comes sweet

Following are poems by professor Sami Al-Oryaan who is incarcerated in the U.S';

Innocent

He's been indicted,
the general decided,
the paper incited,
He must be guilty

The agents presumed,
prosecutors consumed,
the Judge assumed,
we're sure he is guilty

The bigots are infused,
TV is amused,
The public is confused,
But trust us, He is guilty

Doesn't matter what we saw,
We'll simply change the law,
Call it the final straw,
We think he is guilty

We have him on a call,
It may be to congressional Hall,
Our goal is to make him fall,
Because we believe he is guilty

The trial would be perfect,
When guilty is the verdict,
Even if the evidence is suspect,
Never mind, we find him guilty

Darioni spoke his mind,
To people of every kind,
Justice may be blind,
But its hard to find because he is innocent

Strip search

His body was built
His head was bald
His heart was dead
His face was cold
His eyes were fierce
Mustache was thick
He lifted up his finger
I was his pick
Take off your jumper
And shirt and boxers

But I have only been to the library

Have not seen or met anybody

Strip, you're going to strip

And don't you dare move your lip

Take off your jumper

And shirt and boxers

Open your mouth

Show me your tongue

Give me a cough

Deep from your lungs

Hold your buttocks

And bend over

Turn around

Lift it up

And stay sober

The routine is to humiliate

To scar and intimidate

His search took an eternity

In the name of security

He strip you of your dignity

Shake down

They came Monday morning In front of my door

Five C.Os and one L.T at six foot and four

Come up, shut up, cough up they said

Turn around, back up, and hold down your head

They joked and laughed, It's time for a shake down

Control, destroy, and don't you dare frown

Contraband, contraband, he yelled from the side

My heart just sank he found my hide

Extra blanket, extra sheet, Boxers he has thrown

Plastic spoon, Peanut butter and a picture he has drawn

My heart was beating, Faster than before

If he finds it my life isn't the same anymore

Seconds and minutes were passing like years

Frustrated, worried and crying without tears

Undaunted they left, the cell upside down

Startled it looked, like a tornado hit town

But I calmed and laughed, And thanked the Lord

My Pencil is safe, And mightier than the sword

This is a letter by a prisoner named Masood khan, actually this a speech that he delivered in court, its concise and brief, he says

Bismillah, All praises are due to Allah the Most merciful. I wasn't going to give this short statement here today but decided that as I should never despair from my Lord's mercy, I should likewise never despair from enjoining what is justly right and forbidding what is justly wrong. Truly our Lord is oft-forgiving and merciful and in this short life provides ample opportunities to turn to him and to correct our affairs before it's too late. I therefore enjoin upon myself and upon everyone to fear God as he should rightly be feared and to know that God is swift in responding to the supplications of the oppressed. I've come to realize that it is truly through trials and hardship that one comes to know and love his creator. I can therefore, honestly say that in this blessing of hardship I am not the one who has been hurt but sadly those who have brought on this injustice have only hurt themselves. In closing I would like to say thank you again to the community and our supporters, for everyone's ongoing support for us and others, May God protect and reward them abundantly.

Following is a piece title a moment of aspiration by Rashid ramday

and I am commanded to do justice among you, Allâh is Our Lord and Your Lord. For us Our deeds and for you Your deeds. there is no dispute between us and you. Allâh will assemble us (all), and to Him is the final return. 42:15

From every transient moment that decay rose

but the hope flourished to blossoms on the bow of faith in thousands,

Whispering in silence I am in the hands of God, safe.

Doors slammed shut, screeching steel on their pivotal pins,

resonance of wet stones against my soul

One by one the last moredis clangs

The silence commands, I walk in two steps

walls of jaded cell enclosed

depressing my heart

I freeze inside the belly of this cold monster

A gate opens in my mind,

the fragrance of rose and jasmine fill the air,

my father arches his back,

the weight of distance and the dust of time on his brow

He smiles and his smile reminiscent of happy moments parks the lights that he pace

silken beard like clouds, a question why?

lachrymose pearls in his eyes

O my soul! my mother runs behind

Breaths of air, fresh, brush my hair

Arms stretched to heaven to embrace

Those soft hands that once combed my hair and dressed me up for school

She never missed a kiss on my face

Allah go with you my son

Such a grace till the day was done

And my little sister races to reach me at once

With bright shining eyes, blush of rose on her cheeks

Calls my name aloud

Reach my hand out to grasp a single touch

Life is such

My dream shatters in the voice of the jailer who shouts

Clear all, checking through the flapping hole

My eyes travel through windows to a file of great steel bars

The view of the exercise yard in sized of squares of equal size

By the mesh cases of rusted hope painted in red dupe

Like a jigsaw just about to fall apart

I pick up the Holy Book begin to recite

O Allah! I am in your hands,

firm my feet on rock, I am on sand

a moment in a decade of time

Another prisoner Abdullah Sani Faras As-Sulaimi Al-Onaizi from Guantanamo Bay writes this letter to his brother , dated 17th of January 2003;

The heart longs and the tears glisten as Allah has destined us to be apart but all praises are due to Allah, sins have been closed the slave in layers, so I ask the lord to forgive my sins and accept my repentance and to wipe away my wrong doings for He is the one who always forgives. The prisoner returns to His Lord as fast as a stream. Our All powerful Lord certainly guides the conscience and restores the defeated then the anxiety goes as The Almighty replaces one set of circumstances with another. My Brother I reassure you that I am under the care of Allah and in good health and well being. My Brother let me tell you that the best of tradesmen is the one who transforms his lose into profit, His bad times into good and his tragedies into gains. By remembering Allah's rewards and taking advantage of time. Our role model in this after our Prophet Peace be upon him is in the righteous believers before us from them Ibn-e-Taymiyyah, May Allah the most high have mercy on Him who used to say whilst in prison in the fortress of Damascus "If I were to give in charity the worth of this fortress filled with gold it would not be enough to thank Allah for the blessings this imprisonment has brought. He also once said, "A prisoner is one whose heart is in prison from his Lord and a captive is the one who is captive to his desires". Some of Gnostics used to say, "If the Kings and their sons knew the degree of happiness we carry in our hearts they would fight us for it with their swords." Another said,"How pitiful the people of this worldly aboard are they leave it without tasting the best of

it.” And when asked what is the best of it, he said, ”Knowing Allah, loving Him and Remembering Him.” Another said, “there are times when I say if those in heaven are living like this then they are in a very pleasant life.” So rest assured my brother I say to you as the poet said before, “Put chains on my hand and burn my chest, yet you cannot siege my mind for a moment, the light is in my heart and my heart is in the hands of my Lord and my Lord is my helper and keeper.” All praise due to Allah under all circumstances and Allah willing these are only a few days and we will meet soon. I see some good news Insha-Allah. My Brother, by Allah I urge you to be kind to our parents and you must be conscious of Allah and seek his approval at all times and be patient about this trial we are going through.

Sani Faras As-Sulaimi Al-Onaizi

Guantanamo

I’ll close with a poem by Babar Ahmed.

Beyond the mask and beyond the front

Beyond the name and beyond the image

Beyond the rhyme and beyond the prose

Beyond the metaphor and beyond the rhetoric

Beyond the campaign and beyond the publicity

Beyond the words and beyond the speeches

There is a caged Bird

There is caged bird whose only wish is to be bird again

There is a caged bird that yearns to fly free again

And soar over the mountain tops and glide through the valleys

There is a caged bird that is no better than any other bird

And no different to any other bird

There is a caged bird whose wings have been cut

And voice has been muted

Whose only desire is to be a bird again

That's why the caged bird sings

Dear listeners we ask Allah Azza wa jal to accept from us our fasting during this blessed Holy Month of Ramadan and I would like to close this talk of mine by encouraging you to give that which belongs to Allah Azza wa Jal but he decided to give it into your hands to give some of it for the sake of assisting and freeing your brothers behind bars.