

2010

# Aafia Siddiqui: Campaign Pack



JUSTICE FOR  
**Aafia**  
COALITION

Justice for Aafia Coalition  
(JFAC)

3/22/2010

*'The power you gave them to torture me, rape me and every time allow them to search me naked. I'm dead. I was dead since the very first time I was raped, searched naked, each and every time you need to present me in court – I'm searched naked... Leave me alone or send me back to my country Pakistan.'*

**- Dr. Aafia Siddiqui**

**Justice for Aafia Coalition**

[www.justiceforaafia.org](http://www.justiceforaafia.org)

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**Global Voice for Justice**, a member of the  
coalition, who produced the initial draft of this  
campaign pack.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was born on 2 March 1972 in Karachi, Pakistan. She is one of three siblings. Aafia's father Mohammad Siddiqui was a UK-trained doctor and her mother, Ismet, is a homemaker. Aafia has three children: Ahmed (b. 1996), Maryam (b. 1998), and Suleman (b. 2002). Apart from Ahmed, Aafia's children remain missing to this day.

Aafia moved to Texas in 1990 to be near her brother, and after spending a year at the University of Houston, transferred to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Siddiqui's fellow students say she was a quiet, studious woman who was devout in her religious beliefs but not an extremist.

During her time at MIT, Aafia joined the campus Muslim Student Association (MSA) and was actively involved in efforts to portray the teachings of Islam to non-Muslims in order to better their understanding of her faith and invite them to Islam. Her emphasis in her life on bettering the conditions of Muslims even pervaded her academic achievements. During her sophomore year at MIT, she won a grant of \$5,000 to study the effects of Islam on women living in Pakistan. In addition to her many academic achievements, Aafia earned the honourable status of committing the entire Qur'an to memory.

Following her graduation, Aafia married a medical student Mohammed Amjad Khan. She subsequently entered Brandeis University as a graduate student in cognitive neuroscience. Citing the difficulty of living as Muslims in the United States after 9/11 and following FBI harassment of her husband, Aafia and her husband returned to Pakistan. They stayed in Pakistan for a short time, and then returned to the United States. They remained there until 2002, and then moved back to Pakistan. Some problems developed in their marriage, and Aafia was eight months pregnant with their third child when she and Khan were separated. She and the children stayed at her mother's house, while Khan lived elsewhere in Karachi. After giving birth to her son, Aafia stayed at her mother's house for the rest of the year, returning to the US without her children around December 2002 to look for a job in the Baltimore area, where her sister had begun working at Sinai Hospital. On 1 March 2003, Pakistani authorities arrested Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Aafia and her children disappeared just 27 days later.

## **KIDNAPPED**

According to Aafia's mother, Aafia left their home in Gulshan-e-Iqbal in a Metro-cab on 28 March, 2003 to catch a flight to Rawalpindi, but never reached the airport. In February 2010 Aafia's eldest son returned to the scene and described how, when he, his mother and siblings came out of their home, fifteen to twenty people, including a 'white lady' and members of the ISI, were waiting in three to four vehicles on the next street and subsequently kidnapped them. Aafia was placed into one black car

and the children into another. She described to her lawyer that she was immediately hooded and drugged. When she awoke she was tied to a gurney in a place that could not have been Karachi because the air was very dry.

Following her trial, Aafia's lawyer Elaine Sharpe, described how Aafia's baby, Suleman, was reportedly killed during the arrest. Dr Siddiqui was later shown a picture of her baby, lying in a pool of blood. It is not known if Suleman or Maryam, who would now be 11 years old, are alive.

Aafia Siddiqui had been missing for more than a year when the FBI put her photographs on its website.

Aafia's mother described how an intelligence agency official came to her house a week after the incident, and warned her not to make an issue out of her daughter's disappearance and threatened her with dire consequences if she did. Both the Pakistan government as well as US officials in Washington denied any knowledge of Aafia's custody.

## **SECRET DETENTION**

Aafia claims that she was kidnapped by the Pakistani intelligence services with her children and transferred into US custody. She further alleges that she was detained in a series of secret prisons for five years during which time she was repeatedly abused, tortured and raped. Aafia's claim is substantiated by former Bagram detainees who affirmed the presence of a female detainee of Pakistani origin at Bagram, with the prisoner ID "650". The International Committee for the Red Cross also confirmed that a woman had been detained at Bagram. Immediately after his release from Guantanamo in 2009, ex-Bagram detainee, Binyam Mohamed declared that the woman he saw in Bagram, with the prison no. 650, was indeed Aafia Siddiqui.

The US has previously denied the presence of female detainees in Bagram and that Aafia was ever held there, bar for medical treatment (after they shot her) in July 2008.

Little is known about what happened to Aafia and her children in the five years in which they were missing. However, in October 2009, when Aafia was visited by a Pakistani parliamentary delegation she spoke a little about the five years in which she had been disappeared, saying "I have been through living hell". She described being given an injection and when she came to, she was in a cell. She said she was being brainwashed by men who spoke perfect English, who may have been Afghans. She did not think they were Pakistanis. She described being forced to make false confessions and sign statements. She alleged that she had been tortured although she provided no details. She was also told by her captors that if she did not co-operate, her children would suffer. During her trial, Aafia alluded to being tortured in secret

prisons, to being raped, her children being tortured, and being threatened to be “sent back to the bad guys” – men she described as sounding like Americans but could not be “real Americans” but “pretend Americans” due to the treatment they had subjected her to. After her trial it emerged that the government of Pakistan had put a gag order on Aafia’s family in exchange for releasing her eldest son Ahmed.

## **RE-ARREST IN AFGHANISTAN**

On 7 July 2008, a press conference led by British journalist Yvonne Ridley, in Pakistan resulted in mass international coverage of Aafia’s case as her disappearance was questioned by the media and political figures in Pakistan. Within weeks, the US administration reported that she was arrested by Afghani forces along with her 13 year old son, outside the governor of Ghazni’s compound, allegedly with manuals on explosives and ‘dangerous substances in sealed jars’ on her person. Her lawyers claim that the evidence was planted on her. Aafia would later testify during her trial that the bag in which the evidence was found was not her own and was given to her, being unaware of its contents. She also claimed that the handwritten notes were forcibly copied from a magazine under threat of torture of her children. She recalled the presence of a boy at the Ghazni police station whom she believed could have been her son, but could not know with certainty since they had been separate for several years.

On 3 August 2008 an agent from the FBI visited the home of her brother in Houston, Texas and confirmed that she was being detained in Afghanistan. On Monday 4 August 2008, federal prosecutors in the US confirmed that Aafia Siddiqui had been extradited to the US from Afghanistan where they alleged she had been detained since mid-July 2008. They further allege that whilst in custody she fired at US officers (none being injured) and was herself shot twice in the process. Aafia confirmed during her trial that she was hiding behind a curtain in the prison, as the US claim, with the intent of escaping as she feared being returned to a secret prison, but categorically denied picking up the gun or attempting to shoot anyone. Aafia was charged in the US with assaulting and attempted murder of US personnel in Afghanistan.

## **RELEASE OF AHMED SIDDIQUI**

In late August 2008, Michael G Garcia, the US attorney general of the southern region confirmed in a letter to Dr Fowzia Siddiqui that Aafia’s son, Ahmed had been in the custody of the FBI since 2003 and was he was currently in the custody of the Karzai government. Earlier the US ambassador to Pakistan, Anne W Patterson had earlier claimed that Washington has no information regarding the children. Ahmed was finally released to the custody of Aafia’s family in Pakistan in September 2009. He later gave a statement to police in Lahore, Pakistan, that he had been held in a juvenile prison in Afghanistan for years. On being reunited with his father for the

first time, he ran away screaming in horror, claiming that his father was amongst those who used to beat him in Afghanistan.

## THE TRIAL

The trial of Aafia Siddiqui began Tuesday 19 January 2010, in a Manhattan federal courtroom. Prior to the jury entering the courtroom, Aafia turned to onlookers saying; "This isn't a fair court, (...) Why do I have to be here? (...) There are many different versions of how this happened," referring to the alleged shooting.

Three government witnesses testified on the opening day of the trial; Army Capt. Robert Snyder, John Threadcraft, a former army officer and John Jefferson, an FBI agent. Both were stationed in Afghanistan at the time of the alleged assault and murder attempt.

During the trial, while Snyder testified that Aafia had been arrested with a handwritten note outlining plans to attack the Empire State Building, the Brooklyn Bridge and Wall Street, Aafia disrupted the proceedings with a loud outburst aimed at Snyder, after, which she proclaimed her innocence stating; "Since I'll never get a chance to speak, if you were in a secret prison.. where children were tortured... This is no list of targets against New York. I was never planning to bomb it. You're lying."

In the morning before the closing remarks, the last government witness, FBI Special Agent, Angela Sercer testified. Sercer monitored Aafia for 12 hours a day over a two week period while she was at a hospital in Bagram. She tried to rebut Aafia Siddiqui's testimony, by saying that Aafia told her she was in "hiding" for the last five years and further that she "married" someone to change her name.

However under cross examination, Sercer admitted that while at the hospital Aafia expressed fear of "being tortured". Sercer also admitted that Aafia expressed concern about the "welfare of the boy" and asked about him "every day". Moreover, that Aafia only agreed to talk to her upon promises that the boy would be safe. According to the testimony Aafia said that the Afghans had "beaten her"; that her "husband had beaten her and her children"; and that she was "afraid of coming into physical harm".

When Sercer was further questioned about what Aafia said about her children during that two week period, she admitted that Aafia expressed concern about the "safety and welfare of her children", but felt that the "kids had been killed or tortured in a secret prison". "She said that they were dead, didn't she" asked Defence attorney, Elaine Sharpe; reluctantly Sercer answered, "Yes."

The trial took an unusual turn with an FBI official asserting that the finger prints taken from the rifle, which was purportedly used by Aafia to shoot at the U.S. interrogators, did not match hers. Another event complicated the case further, when

the testimony of witness Masood Haider Gul appeared different from the one given by U.S. Captain Schnieder earlier. The defence denied all charges, stating that "the soldiers had given different versions of where she was when the M-4 was allegedly fired and how many shots were fired."

The trial lasted for 2 weeks and the jury deliberated for 2 days before reaching a verdict. On February 3, 2010, she was convicted and found guilty on all counts. , despite the following discrepancies:

- The court proceedings were flawed, and limited to the incident in Ghazni, which itself lacked concrete evidence.
- It is still unexplained how a frail, 110 pound woman, confronted with three US army officers, two interpreters and two FBI agents managed to assault three of them, snatch a rifle from one of them, open fire at close range, hit no one, but she herself was wounded.
- There were no fingerprints on the gun.
- There was no gunshot residue from the gun.
- There were no bullet holes in the walls from that particular gun.
- There were no bullets cases or shells in the area from the specified gun.
- The testimony of the government's six eyewitnesses contradicted each other.
- The statements Aafia made to FBI agent Angela Sercher were made whilst she was under 24 hour surveillance by FBI agents in the hospital at Bagram, with her arms and legs tied to a bed for weeks, several types of medication, sleep-deprived and at the mercy of the agent for food, water and in order to relieve herself. Sercher did not identify herself to Aafia as a FBI agent. The use of these statements in court were objected to by the defence on the basis of 'Miranda laws' which mandate that a detainee must be informed of their rights, have access to an attorney, or in the case of international law, consular staff and law enforcement officials must identify themselves. Despite this the judge denied the motion and allowed this to form part of the questioning.
- Aafia's disappearance, torture and missing children were not at all addressed during the court case.

## CURRENT STATUS

Aafia is due to be sentenced on 6th May 2010 and faces up to 60 years in prison for attempted murder and armed assault.

Following her conviction, she remains at the Metropolitan Detention Centre in New York where she has spent the best part of her detention in the US. Throughout that time, she has been subject to humiliating and degrading strip and cavity searches, prompting her to refuse legal visits on many occasions. Since the beginning of March Aafia has been refused all contact with her family and has not been permitted any letters, phonecalls, visits or reading material under the pretext of “the security of the nation.”

The whereabouts and welfare of Aafia’s two younger children remain a mystery.

## TAKE ACTION

Every human being who believes in true justice recognises that the best defence against injustice is confronting it openly, often and vigorously. Please take the following steps to help establish true justice for Dr. Aafia Siddiqui and her family.

### 1. Write to the US and Pakistani authorities

- Complaining about the unjust verdict that was delivered despite the paucity of evidence against her
- To ensure her immediate repatriation to Pakistan
- Demand an investigation into the circumstances of the disappearance of Aafia in 2003 and that of her children and allegations of torture
- The immediate recovery/release of her two youngest children whose whereabouts and welfare remain unknown

**Eric Holder,**

Attorney General,  
U.S. Department of Justice,  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
NW Washington, DC  
20530-0001,  
Tel: 202-353-1555,  
Email: [AskDoJ@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskDoJ@usdoj.gov)

**The Honorable Hilary Clinton,**

Secretary of State,  
U.S. Department of State,  
2201 C Street, N.W.,  
Washington DC 20520,  
Tel: +1 202 647 4000  
Fax: +1 202 261 8577

**His Excellency Ambassador Husain Haqqani,**

Pakistani Ambassador to the US,  
3517 International Court NW,  
Washington DC 20008,  
Tel: +1 202 243 6500,  
Email: [info@embassyofpakistanusa.org](mailto:info@embassyofpakistanusa.org)

**Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi,**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Islamabad  
Pakistan,  
Tel: +92 51 921 0335,

Fax: +92 51 920 7600,  
Email: spokesman@yahoo.com

**President Obama**

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Tel: 202-456-1111  
Fax: 202-456-2461  
Email him here.

Please include your e-mail address

**2. Write to the relevant authorities** below to complain about the decision to deny Aafia Siddiqui any meaningful communication, letters, visits, phone calls, to her family or other persons, or any reading material, on the pretext of "the security of the nation". See model letter at the end of this pack.

**MDC BROOKLYN METROPOLITAN DETENTION CENTER**

80 29TH STREET  
BROOKLYN,  
NY 11232  
Phone: 718-840-4200  
Fax: 718-840-5001  
E-mail: [EXECASSISTANT@BOP.GOV](mailto:EXECASSISTANT@BOP.GOV)

**Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg**

City Hall  
New York,  
NY 10007  
Phone: 311 (or 212-NEW-YORK outside NYC)  
Fax: (212) 312-0700

**US Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York**

ATTN: Preet Bharara  
1 Street Andrews Plaza  
New York City, NY 10007

**3. Write to the UN Special Rapporteurs to:**

- Raise the case of Aafia Siddiqui and her children with the government of the United States and Pakistan.
- Request a prompt and independent investigation by these governments into the circumstances surrounding their enforced disappearance, including their

- (a) initial apprehension, arrest, detention, interrogation and treatment in Pakistan by agents of the Pakistani and US governments
- (b) their interrogation, detention and treatment whilst being held in any other locations
- (c) specific allegations from Aafia Siddiqui and Ahmed Siddiqui regarding their torture and mistreatment in custody
- (d) the current location, conditions of confinement and physical and psychological wellbeing of Maryam and Suleman Siddiqui.
- Request that all information that is obtained is shared with Aafia Siddiqui and her family, as the lack of information about whereabouts and well being of the missing children have caused and continue to cause them great suffering and anxiety.

**Mr. Santiago Corcuera, Chairperson**

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations Office at Geneva  
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
Email: wgeid@ohchr.org  
Fax: +41 22 917 90 06

**Mr. Martin Scheinin**

Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while  
Countering Terrorism  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson  
8-14 Avenue de la Paix  
1211 Genève 10  
Email: sronin@ohchr.org  
Fax: +41 22 917 9006

**Mr. Manfred Nowak**

Special Rapporteur on Torture  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson  
8-14 Avenue de la Paix  
1211 Genève 10  
Email: bkainz@ohchr.org  
Fax: +41 22 917 9006

## Support

- Send letters of support to Aafia:

AAFIA SIDDIQUI #90279-054  
MDC BROOKLYN  
METROPOLITAN DETENTION CENTER  
P.O. BOX 329002  
BROOKLYN, NY 11232  
USA

Letters can also be emailed to [letters@justiceforaafia.org](mailto:letters@justiceforaafia.org)

- Send messages of support to her family – [support@justiceforaafia.org](mailto:support@justiceforaafia.org)
- Pray for Aafia and her family.

## Donate

- Donate for Aafia's legal defence and to finance the campaign for her release:

BANK: Lloyds TSB Bank  
ACCOUNT NAME: Justice For Aafia Coalition  
ACCOUNT NUMBER: 41160960  
SORT CODE: 30-94-42  
IBAN: GB37LOYD30944241160960  
SWIFT: LOYDGB21112

- Print and distribute our standing order forms
- Money can also be sent to Aafia in prison:

Federal Bureau of Prisons  
AAFIA SIDDIQUI  
90279-054  
Post Office Box 474701  
Des Moines, Iowa 50947-0001

The deposit must be in the form of a money order made out to the inmate's full committed name and complete eight digit register number. Cheques and cash cannot be accepted. The sender's name and return address must appear on the upper left hand corner of the envelope to ensure that the funds can be

returned to the sender in the event that they cannot be posted to the inmate's account. The deposit envelope must not contain any items intended for delivery to the inmate.

You can also send money via Western Union's Quick Collect Program -

At an agent location with cash: The inmate's family or friends must complete a Quick Collect Form. To find the nearest agent, they may call 1-800-325-6000 or go to [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com).

By phone using a credit/debit card: The inmate's family or friends may simply call 1-800-634-3422 and press option 2.

ONLINE using a credit/debit card: go to [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com) and select "Quick Collect"

You need to include the following:

- 1) 90279-054 (prison no.)
- 2) Aafia Siddiqui entered on Attention Line
- 3) Code City: FBOP, DC

Inmates can use the money to buy stationary, toiletries, food, for phone calls etc.

- Organise collections or activities to raise funds for example, fundraising dinners, bake-sales, sponsored walks

## Education and Awareness

- Educate the public by organise events by holding events in your community, university campuses and places of worship. You can use our website resources (powerpoint presentation) and videos featured in our multimedia section as part of your events. Submit details of any events to our site - [events@justiceforaafia.org](mailto:events@justiceforaafia.org)
- Subscribe to our mailing list and follow us on Twitter and Facebook to ensure you receive the latest campaign updates.
- Disseminate our resources, action and literature, publicise our events and the latest news on Aafia's case. Print out copies and share these on email lists, internet forums and social networking sites.
- Translate our campaign materials into other languages.

- Approach your local mosque to devote one khutbah to Aafia’s case, particularly on the eve of the anniversary of her abduction (March 28<sup>th</sup>) and her sentencing (May 6<sup>th</sup>). Use our cover letter and khutbah template.
- Write letters to your local and national papers about Aafia’s case, particularly in the run up to the anniversary of her abduction (March 28<sup>th</sup>) and her sentencing (May 6<sup>th</sup>)
- Wear our JFAC badge in solidarity with Aafia. Badges can be produced locally with the artwork files on our site.
- Wear a purple ribbon in solidarity with Aafia. Ribbons can be purchased from the links on our website or via JFAC.
- Join the online protest by changing your profile picture on Facebook to the JFAC logo.
- Purchase JFAC merchandise to raise awareness for Aafia such as our t-shirts, bags and mugs.

## Model Letter: Restore Visitation and Communication Rights to Dr Aafia Siddiqui

Dear [Name],

Dr Aafia Siddiqui (# 90279-054)

I am writing concerning Dr Aafia Siddiqui (# 90279-054), who is reportedly being denied access to reading materials, visits, phone calls or any right to send or receive letters. This is particularly distressing given her fragile mental state and the ordeal that she has reportedly been subjected to over several years in US captivity.

Such actions, if true, would appear to be unlawful and contrary to the spirit of the United States constitution, the Eight Amendment of which reads: .

“Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.”

The right to visitation was also confirmed in the Supreme Court, which though conceding that some restrictions may be permitted, held that it was not permitted to restrict this in totality. The Supreme Court stated that “We do not hold, and we do not imply, that any right to intimate association is altogether terminated by incarceration.”

I trust that you will immediately end these draconian restrictions on Dr Siddiqui's right to visitation and contact with her family, friends and supporters.

I look forward to your prompt and considered response.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]