

# ABU WA'EL DHIAB AND FIVE OTHERS RELEASED TO URUGUAY

Abu Wa'el Dhiab, the Gitmo prisoner at the center of an ongoing force-feeding controversy, has been released to Uruguay along with five others.

Dhiab's Reprieve lawyer, Cori Crider, said this in a statement.

Cori Crider, a Director at Reprieve and a lawyer for Mr Dhiab, said: "We are grateful to the government of Uruguay – and President Mujica in particular – for this historic stand. Very few people can truly comprehend what the cleared men in Guantánamo suffer every day, but I believe Mr. Mujica is one of them. Like President Mujica, Mr Dhiab spent over a dozen years as a political prisoner. Mr Dhiab was never charged, never tried. President Mujica spent two years at the bottom of a well; for most of the past two years, Mr Dhiab has had a team of US soldiers truss him up like an animal, haul him to a restraint chair, and force-feed him through a tube in his nose. The President's compassion has ended that torture.

"Despite years of suffering, Mr Dhiab is focused on building a positive future for himself in Uruguay. He looks forward to being reunited with his family and beginning his life again. Let's not forget that Mr Dhiab and the others freed today leave behind many men just like them: cleared prisoners warehoused in Guantánamo for years. Reprieve hopes that other countries will follow the positive example set by the Uruguayan government today, and help President Obama close this shameful prison."

Carol Rosenberg has [more background](#) on the transfer, which has been held up for months even as Dhiab fought over whether he has to be tortured to eat.

The roots of Sunday's transfer were planted in January when Sloan, the State Department special envoy for Guantánamo closure, traveled to Uruguay to pitch the idea, according to Obama administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk about it.

He found the nation's now 79-year-old president, Mujica, sympathetic as a former 14-year political prisoner who spent much of his captivity in solitary confinement for his guerrilla activities with the Tupamaro revolutionary movement.

In February, Montevideo sent a delegation to the U.S. Navy base in Cuba to interview detainees. They chose six for resettlement, among them Dhiab, a 6-foot-5-inch sickly man whose lawyers said refused to eat not to die but to protest his indefinite detention despite notice that he could leave once a nation agreed to take him.

While some quarters of the U.S. government were pleased with the deal, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was slow to approve it. It sat on his desk for months, awaiting his signature, while intelligence analysts evaluated it. Before he signed it, the White House ordered the truly [clandestine transfer](#) of five Taliban prisoners to Qatar in a trade for POW Bowe Bergdahl on May 31 – drawing [protest](#) on Capitol Hill that Congress had not been informed in advance.

Hagel finally approved the Uruguay release in July and sent the required

30-day notice to Congress.

By then, however, the disclosure had stirred domestic debate in Uruguay in the midst of the presidential campaign to pick Mujica's successor.

I honestly wasn't sure Dhiab would survive long enough to be able to take this transfer. I worried that he, like Adnan Latif before him, would be suicided while he waited. And it sounds like his health is still pretty dodgy.

I wish him and his family the best of luck in Uruguay.