

Tampa Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

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Friends call on Attorney General Gonzales to be just

For more than 350 years, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has worked for peace, justice, and the alleviation of suffering.

For many years here in our own community, the Tampa Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) has observed with concern the cases of Sami Al-Arian and other Muslim men who have been held by federal authorities on terrorism-related charges. It is clear to us that these persons have not received equal treatment under the law and have been subject to harsh, at times abusive, treatment while incarcerated by federal authorities.

In December 2005, a Tampa jury acquitted Sami Al-Arian on eight of the most serious terrorism-related charges and did not reach a verdict on the nine remaining charges. In February 2006, the plea agreement was accepted in which Sami Al-Arian pled guilty to a single minor charge.

Of grave concern to us now is Sami Al-Arian, who has been on a hunger strike since January 22, 2007.

- On that date, a federal judge in Virginia held him in contempt for refusing to testify before a grand jury there.
- Before being called before the Virginia grand jury, he was serving the last few months of a 57-month sentence under a plea agreement reached with the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida on February 28, 2006.
- U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales approved the plea agreement which specifically excluded a cooperation clause which stipulates that Sami Al-Arian will not be involved in proceedings for any other charges. The plea agreement also stipulates that Sami Al-Arian is not guilty of any crimes of violence.
- The time held in contempt extends his sentence.
- Sami Al-Arian continues to be kept in solitary confinement, as he has for the most of the past four years.
- As one recent example of abusive treatment, while moving him from Atlanta to the Virginia jail by bus during severe winter conditions, he was only allowed to wear a tee shirt, under shorts, and disposable paper pants. The guards wore overcoats and gloves and some were verbally abusive.

From our concerns, we, the Tampa Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), call upon these persons to act in the interests of justice for all:

1. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales:

- Be true to your word and to the rule of law: Honor the plea agreement made in the case of Sami Al-Arian in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida on February 28, 2006.
- Guarantee humane treatment for Sami Al-Arian while he remains in federal custody.
- Release Sami Al-Arian within the time frame specified in the plea agreement.

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2. Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives:
 - Request that Attorney General Gonzales explain why he has violated the plea agreement in the case of Sami Al-Arian in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida on February 28, 2006.
 - Request that Attorney General Gonzales explain why he has failed to provide humane treatment of Sami Al-Arian during incarceration.
3. Members of the world wide fellowship of the Religious Society of Friends and to our sisters and brothers of all faiths:
 - Join us in calling for justice and humane treatment for Sami Al-Arian.