

## What is Omar Khadr's Story?

- Omar Khadr was born in Scarborough, Ontario in 1986. Throughout his childhood, his family moved between Canada and Pakistan, due to his father's work with a humanitarian organization (Human Concern International).
- At age 15, Omar, who knew many languages, was left by his father to act as a translator in a compound near Khost, Afghanistan.
- On July 27 2002, U.S. forces bombed the compound with the intention of killing all occupants. After the battle Omar, blinded by shrapnel and seriously wounded, was found lying under the rubble and shot twice in the back by a U.S. soldier. Shooting a wounded person and shooting after battle are both war crimes under International Law.



**Because Omar was only 15 and a minor when these crimes were committed against him, the United Nations determined he was a child soldier and entitled to protection provided by International Law - including immediate return to Canada.**

## What Happened Next?

- Omar was denied all rights and medical care. Instead, he was taken to a U.S. military detention facility in Bagram, Afghanistan where he was tortured for months in order to obtain a confession for killing the U.S. soldier who had died in the firefight.
- In October 2002, Omar was transferred to another infamous prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where he met with more torture and interrogation. During the 10 years spent in Guantanamo, Omar was subjected to techniques including: *waterboarding, sleep deprivation, solitary confinement with no belongings in a windowless cell, extreme temperatures, deafening music and blinding lights, prolonged stress positions.*

**All of these techniques are against International Law and a direct violation of Omar's human rights. For a long time Omar was denied access to a lawyer.**

## The Only Way Out

- After 8 years of abuse, Omar's lawyers advised him that the only way to leave Guantanamo Bay and return to Canada was to plead guilty to the charges, even though the U.S. military did not have any evidence against him.
- In 2010 he signed a plea deal requiring him to spend one more year in Guantanamo before being repatriated to Canada to spend an additional 7 years in prison.

**Because Guantanamo Bay military tribunals are not proper trials, they are considered illegal by legal institutions and governments all over the world. Canada should never have allowed Omar Khadr to face a U.S. military tribunal.**

## What Role Did Our Government Play?

- All other Western governments repatriated their citizens from Guantanamo Bay, to avoid torture and abuse. Canada was the only government that abandoned its citizen. In fact, government officials were sent to interrogate Omar (even though it was known that he had been tortured and deprived of sleep to 'soften him up' for those interviews) and turned the information over to his American prosecutors.
- In 2009 and 2010, both the Federal and Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Omar be returned to Canada

immediately, that the Canadian government had been complicit in his torture and had violated his constitutional and Charter rights. Yet our government chose to ignore the Courts and did nothing to help Omar.

**Under the Canadian constitution, all citizens have the right to a fair trial and protection from torture and forced confessions. The Canadian government violated these terms when it participated in the mistreatment of Omar Khadr.**

## What is Happening Today?

- On September 29, 2012, after 10 years, Omar was brought home to Canada and immediately placed in solitary confinement at an Ontario maximum security prison.
- Although Omar remains wrongfully imprisoned (now in an Alberta medium security prison), he is awaiting the judge's decision on his recent (March 25, 2015) bail application. If successful, he will be welcomed into the family home of his lawyer, Dennis Edney, who has defended Omar without charge throughout his long ordeal.
- In November 2013 lawyers for Omar applied to the U.S. Military Commission for an appeal of his 'conviction' and dismissal of 'charges' which were not recognized offences either internationally or under laws of war. Recent victories by other former Guantanamo prisoners resulted in their guilty pleas being set aside and all charges dismissed. Lawyers are optimistic a similar ruling will result in Omar's freedom.
- Omar has a civil suit against the government for its role in his Guantanamo Bay torture.
- With help from a team of volunteer university professors, Omar is focusing on his academic studies and will soon have the required credits to complete secondary school. Once freed he has been invited to continue his studies at King's College University in Edmonton.
- Omar's future goals include work in the medical field so that he can help others.
- The Canadian government continues to tell Canadians that Omar is a dangerous terrorist, though there is no credible evidence against him.

***"The light of goodness outshines shadows that might be. There are too many good things in this life (as hard as it might be) to worry or even care about the bad things."* - Omar Khadr**

## What Are People Saying About Omar Khadr?

- After Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke by telephone with Omar in July 2014, he stated *"It is unconscionable that Omar Khadr, following a travesty of a trial, where he was treated as an adult in a vicious kangaroo court, should be languishing in jail...This is an example of a horrible miscarriage of justice and that in a modern democratic state. The Canadian authorities would do their stature much good if they released him immediately."*
- Dr. Arlette Zinck, Associate Professor in English at King's University says: *"...Omar is an enthusiastic and hardworking student despite adverse learning conditions. Through our studies of Canadian literature he demonstrates the quality of his person. Omar consistently produces readings that are marked by compassionate insight and intelligent clarity."*
- Dennis Edney, Omar's lawyer: *"...Omar says he wishes to be a doctor, and when I ask him why, he says, "because I never want people to be abused like me"... I think that if anyone had ever hurt me like Omar was hurt, I'd be bitter to have lost such a big part of my life. But Omar has no bitterness; he has nothing but forgiveness. He would be such a contribution to Canadian society."*

## What Can You Do?

- Visit [www.freeomar.ca](http://www.freeomar.ca) to learn more
- Get a group together and watch informative videos [www.freeomar.ca/videos/](http://www.freeomar.ca/videos/)
- Sign the petition to free Omar [www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/free-omar-khadr](http://www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/free-omar-khadr)
- Write to Omar - Send your letter on plain paper to: Omar Khadr, Bowden Institution, Unit #3 Highway #2, PO Box 6000, Innisfail, Alberta T4G 1V1