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AFP

Afghan ex-detainee tells court of US custody 'nightmare'

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COPENHAGEN - A former Afghan detainee testified to a Danish court Wednesday about his ordeal at the hands of US troops after Danish soldiers handed him over in 2002, describing it as a "nightmare."

"I blame Denmark a lot because it is responsible for the suffering that I went through during my four days of detention. It was a nightmare I can't forget," Ghousouallah Tarin testified in court on the second day of the case.

"I would have preferred to die than to live what I experienced," he added.

Tarin, 31, is demanding damages of 50,000 kroners (6,700 euros, \$9,100) from the Danish state.

He was taken into custody in March 2002 when Danish soldiers serving with the NATO-led operation fighting Taliban militants arrested 31 Afghans including Tarin at an Islamic school, mistaking them for Taliban.

The Afghans were then transferred to US troops in Kandahar. They were released on March 21 after being put through what Tarin's lawyer Tyge Trier described as "inhumane and degrading treatment."

The Danish troops "did not allow me to ask a single question to their chief to explain that we were a militia working for the Afghan government, therefore their allies," Tarin told the court.

At the US base, he "was thrown down on a gravel floor, hooded, my feet and hands tied and violently beaten twice," and kept in that position for two to three hours, he said.

Soldiers tore off his clothes, left him naked, and shaved off his beard and hair which is considered an insult in the Islamic tradition.

He and the other inmates were then put into "two iron cages where (they) could hardly move" and were deprived of sleep due to loud continuous noise and being constantly rounded up by troops.

At one point during his imprisonment Tarin said he was forced to wear two hoods "to the point of suffocating, while being forced to remain on my knees with my hands tied behind my hand."

"They had to drag me to the interrogation room because I had trouble walking," he added.

The former detainees recounted their ordeal in "The Secret War", a Danish documentary which was broadcast on Denmark's public television in December 2006.

Tarin's lawyer said the central question in the trial was what the Danish government knew about the US treatment of Afghan prisoners, which his client alleges was in violation of the Geneva Conventions on prisoners of war.