



## Two Lives from Guantánamo: *Yes, in My Backyard*

Thursday, November 19, 2009  
Edwards Church, Northampton

*Presented by:*

Pioneer Valley No More Guantanamos

&

Pioneer Valley Coalition  
Against Secrecy and Torture

*Cosponsored by:*

American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts • American Friends Service Committee of Western Mass. • Arise for Social Justice • Civil Liberties and Public Policy, Hampshire College • First Congregational Church in Amherst, United Church of Christ • Grace Church Peace Fellowship • Granby/South Hadley Peace Committee • International Relations Club - UMass Amherst • Justice and Peace Committee of the Sisters of St Joseph of Springfield • Massachusetts Campaign Against Torture • Media Education Foundation • Northampton Committee to Stop the War in Iraq • Northampton Friends Meeting Peace, Justice and Witness Committee • Northampton Human Rights Commission • North Quabbin Women In Black • Out Now • Pax Christi Western Mass. • Rosenberg Fund for Children • St. Paul's Peace and Justice Initiative • Traprock Center for Peace and Justice • West Springfield Citizens for Peace • Western Mass. Code Pink

NOTE: This program is being recorded.

## The Two Prisoners whom Pioneer Valley No More Guantánamos Supports

**Ahmed Belbacha** fled his native of Algeria in 1999 after he received death threats from Islamic militants because he worked for a government-run oil company. He sought asylum in the U.K., where he lived and worked for two years. In June 2001, while his asylum appeal was still pending, he left for a holiday in Pakistan, where he was seized by locals and sold to U.S. forces for a bounty. He has been cleared for release since 2007, yet he remains at Guantánamo because the government has not found a country willing to take him.

**Ravil Mingazov** joined the Russian Army's ballet corps at age 19 and converted to Islam while in the Army. His efforts to remedy the Army's intolerance toward Muslim soldiers by talking to his superiors intensified their harassment, and the KGB ransacked and searched his house. Mingazov's search for a hospitable country where he and his wife and infant son could make their home led him through Afghanistan as war was breaking out, so he fled to Pakistan. A few days after he settled in a house for Muslim refugees, Pakistani police raided the house and arrested all the residents, including Ravil. The U.S. has never charged Mingazov with a crime, but he is still waiting for a habeas corpus hearing, which he hopes will clear him for release.

### *Why We Support No More Guantánamos: Our Members Speak*

Because the rule of law is an indispensable protection against tyranny. Guantánamo is a profound attack on the rule of law. To preserve democracy, we must close it and prevent its return in any form. — Bruce Miller

Because I need to do my part to ensure that America represents the same principles that drew my family here over 40 years ago. — Imran A. Siddiqui

Because we know firsthand what happens when fear triumphs over due process. The illegal separation of the Guantánamo detainees from their families is a human rights abuse that we can and must correct.

— Robby and Elli Meeropol

Because our government has demonized and silenced the prisoners at Guantánamo, but I still have free speech. — Nancy Talanian

Because as I learned what was happening to the men in Guantánamo, the capture and torture, and the denial of due process, I have protested this U.S. Government policy – criminal behavior and a blight on every human ideal. *No More Guantánamos* offers me and all of us in the Pioneer Valley the opportunity to organize, to educate, to protest, to creatively work to change these unjust policies. — Paki Wieland

Because hearing Boston Attorney Sabin Willett talk at Smith College and suppress a sob as he spoke about one of his Guantánamo clients, pulled us both in. The innocent prisoner had asked Willett to tell his wife not to wait for him any longer, but to move on with her life. — Mary McCarthy and Bob Hawley

Because I carry a pocket edition of the Bible in one pocket, and pocket edition of the US Constitution in the other. I don't think I need to say more. — (The Rev'd) A. Robert Hirschfeld

### Special Thanks to:

Edwards Church for its generous hospitality

Emily Lewis for designing the poster

Ed Russell, audio and recording engineer and producer of the program *Active Ingredients*, who is recording the program

Ernest Urvater, documentary filmmaker, who is videotaping this evening's program

Student volunteers from Northampton High School chapter of Amnesty International for volunteering to help put on this program

# Program Participants

## “Two Lives from Guantánamo” Monologues

DISCLAIMER: The monologues performed this evening were drawn from publicly available information about the two prisoners. Poetic license was necessary to bring the two portraits to the stage.

**Adelind Horan** (actor playing Ravil Mingazov) is a fourth-year student at Hampshire College, where she is creating a documentary drama one-woman show for her end-of-the-year thesis.

**Greg Josselyn** (director of Ravil Mingazov monologue) has worked and studied theatre at Hampshire College, Amherst College, Company One, the Huntington Theatre Company, and the American Repertory Theatre.

**Ellen Kaplan** (playwright of Ravil Mingazov monologue) is professor of acting and directing at Smith College, and teaches acting, directing, radio drama, and performance seminars.

**Trenda Loftin** (actor playing Ahmed Belbacha) is a firm believer in the power of raising awareness and promoting justice through theatre.

**Jeffrey Stingerstein** (producer of the monologues and playwright and director Ahmed Belbacha monologue) is an MFA playwriting student at Smith College.

## Our Speakers: Attorneys for the Prisoners

**Zachary Katznelson** (*keynote speaker*) has represented more than 50 Guantánamo Bay prisoners, including Ahmed Belbacha, and has visited the base more than 15 times in his role as Legal Director of the British charity Reprieve. He left that position on October 15 to move to New York, where he will continue to work on Guantánamo cases. Before joining Reprieve, Zachary worked on the cases of women who had been convicted of killing their batterers without being allowed to introduce evidence of the abuse at trial. He has litigated to improve prison conditions, represented prisoners in habeas actions to enforce parole-related due process rights, and investigated death penalty cases in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. After graduation from law school, Zachary clerked for Chief Judge Marilyn Patel

of the Northern District of California. Zachary has also served on the staff of U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler, writing legislation and speeches and advising the Congressman on various matters.

**Gary Thompson** (*special guest*) is a partner in the law firm Reed Smith in Washington, DC. He has a practice representing and advising policyholders against insurance companies. He has won many verdicts against insurers, including a recent \$28 million jury verdict, and settled many cases. Gary also has a plaintiff-side civil rights practice, all on a pro bono basis. Gary has a steadfast commitment to pro bono and community service, and has won several awards for his achievements. Gary's pro bono work includes serving on the legal team for Guantánamo detainee Ravil Mingazov. Two other detainee clients have returned to their homes.

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Join us for the next meeting of Pioneer Valley No More Guantánamos,  
Wednesday, December 2, 7:30 p.m. at Edwards Church.

More info: (413) 665-1150 or [ntalanian@nogitmos.org](mailto:ntalanian@nogitmos.org)

On the web at <http://www.nogitmos.org>

## What You Can Do:

### Support a Resolution:

- If you live in Northampton, support a City Council resolution by collecting petition signatures and talking to friends about the resolution. Download the petition at <http://www.nogitmos.org> or contact us.
- If you live outside Northampton, let us know if you would like to introduce a resolution in your town, or download a petition here: <http://www.nogitmos.org/welcomepetition>
- Come to our next meeting on Wednesday, December 2, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at Edwards Church.
- Invite a member of our group to speak to your organization or religious body.
- Contact information: [ntalanian@nogitmos.org](mailto:ntalanian@nogitmos.org) or (413) 665-1150.

### Contact your Legislators:

Ask them to sponsor legislation to lift the ban on resettling cleared detainees in the U.S. on a blanket basis.

- Congressman Richard Neal, (413) 785-0325, 300 State Street, Suite 200, Springfield, MA 01105
- Congressman John Olver, (413) 532-7010, 57 Suffolk Street, Holyoke, MA 01040
- Senator John Kerry, (413) 785-4610, Springfield Federal Building, 1550 Main Street, Suite 304, Springfield, MA 01103-1427
- Senator Paul Kirk, Jr., (202) 224-4543, 317 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

### Write to the Detainees:

Ahmed Belbacha  
ISN 290  
Camp Delta  
Guantanamo Bay  
P.O. Box 166  
Washington, DC 20355

Ravil Mingazov  
ISN 702  
Camp Delta  
U.S. Naval Base  
Guantanamo Bay, Cuba  
Washington, DC 20355

### Draft Northampton Resolution to Assist in Safe Resettlement of Cleared Guantánamo Detainees

WHEREAS, President Obama has vowed to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base by January 2010; and

WHEREAS, many detainees at Guantánamo have been cleared by our government of wrongdoing and have been determined to pose no threat to the United States; and

WHEREAS, many of these detainees cannot be repatriated because they are either stateless or fear the harm awaiting them if returned to their home country; and

WHEREAS, our government has asked other countries to accept cleared detainees but has banned their settlement in the United States; and

WHEREAS, these detainees have suffered unjust imprisonment for many years; and

WHEREAS, the Pioneer Valley has many resources to help such detainees with trauma from their imprisonment; and

WHEREAS, the Pioneer Valley has welcomed in the past many refugees from a variety of traumatic experiences in other countries,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton City Council:

- 1) Urges Congress to repeal the ban on releasing cleared detainees into the United States and
- 2) Welcomes such cleared detainees into our community as soon as the ban is lifted.

And BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be sent to the President and Attorney General of the United States, the United States Senators for Massachusetts, and the United States Representative for Massachusetts' Second District.