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**DR. AAFIA SIDDIQUI: UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES AND SEEKING JUSTICE**- Aisha Adil<sup>1</sup>

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*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly”* — **Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from The Birmingham Jail**

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**Introduction:**

Human rights, as the bedrock of justice and equity in any civilized society, persistently challenge nations and governments across the globe. Upholding these rights is a fundamental responsibility, and it's a commitment that every nation, including the United States, strives to honor. However, the pursuit of human rights can be a complex journey, fraught with dilemmas and paradoxes.

This research paper delves into a case that embodies these complexities. Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, a name that resonates with controversy and questions, stands as a symbol of the intricate interplay between justice, security, and human rights within the broader context of the War on Terror. While this paper will explore the details of her case, the primary aim here is to introduce you to the enigma that is Dr. Aafia Siddiqui.

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Aafia Siddiqui is a distinguished Pakistani neuroscientist whose life took a dramatic turn, leading to her conviction in 2010 for the attempted murder of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan. Currently serving an 86-year sentence at the Federal Medical Center, Carswell, in Fort Worth, Texas, her story is a captivating narrative that has attracted international attention.

Her journey begins in Pakistan, enriched by educational pursuits at prestigious institutions like Brandeis University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her path mirrors the dreams of countless individuals, transcending geographical boundaries. However, her narrative is not one of linear progression; it's marked by a transformation catalyzed by the haunting echoes of the September 2001 attacks<sup>[1]</sup>. In 2003, she made the fateful decision to return to the USA, which led to her designation as a potential threat by U.S. federal authorities. This pivotal event profoundly impacted the trajectory of her life.

As we delve into this multifaceted narrative, we are compelled to explore the intricate dynamics of justice, human rights, and international relations, all converging around the central and vital issue of the alleged torture of Aafia Siddiqui. This paper will unfold the layers of her case, providing a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand and offering a platform for reflection, discourse, and further investigation.

In the following pages, we will navigate the complexities surrounding Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case, shedding light on the intricate interplay between national security interests and individual liberties in the context of the War on Terror. On one side, there are those fighting for the justice of Aafia, while on the other, there are those who find solace in the belief that the world is safer from terrorism now. This paper aims to provide a balanced perspective on these complex issues, inviting thoughtful consideration and constructive dialogue.

### **A Life of Education and Compassion:**

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's life before her involvement in extremism was marked by her dedication to education, commitment to her family, and a strong desire to positively impact the field of

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<sup>2</sup>Al Qaeda attack in US

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education. Born in Pakistan and spending her early years in Zambia, she embarked on an extraordinary educational journey.

After graduating from high school in Karachi, Pakistan, at the age of 17, her pursuit of knowledge took her to the United States, where she initially enrolled at the University of Houston, demonstrating her passion for higher education. She later transferred to the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she collaborated with Nobel laureate Professor Noam Chomsky, showcasing her dedication to education.

Her unwavering commitment to cognitive neuroscience and education eventually led her to Brandeis University in Massachusetts. Here, she entered a Ph.D. program while simultaneously pursuing a Master's degree, both in Cognitive Neuroscience. Her research focus at Brandeis

University delved into "HOW CHILDREN LEARN BY IMITATION," emphasizing her dedication to understanding and enhancing education.

Throughout her academic journey, Dr. Siddiqui embraced another significant role in her life, that of a mother. She gave birth to her children, Ahmad and Meriam, during this period, further underscoring her commitment to both her family and academic pursuits. Her primary concern was to assist dyslexic children and those with disabilities who encountered challenges in reading and writing. She firmly believed in their intelligence and potential and aimed to design an effective learning system to support them.

Deeply rooted in her strong Islamic faith as a *hafiza*<sup>3</sup>, she actively participated in the Muslim Students' Association during her academic journey. Her speeches within the association emphasized the avoidance of religious extremism, emphasizing a balanced and moderate approach to faith. She asserted that religious extremism contradicted the true teachings of Islam and emphasized her commitment to promoting understanding and unity within the Muslim community.

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<sup>3</sup> A woman who memorizes Quran

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Here, I quote some lines from her speech at the University of Houston that reflect her commitment to these ideals:

*"Allah does not like any transgression, any extreme... there are people who are guilty of burying their women alive. Yes, today, mentally burying alive, by telling them that they are inferior, third-class slaves of men. And may Allah forgive us, in the name of the Sunnah. May I ask, whose Sunnah are they following? This is not the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad... These extremes, brothers and sisters, have driven more people away from Islam than we would even like to believe. Not only women, men as well. Not only non-Muslims, but Muslims as well."*<sup>4</sup>

When war in Bosnia broke out, she took active steps to make a difference, as illustrated by her speech at a local mosque:

*"How many people in this room own more than one pair of boots? So, donate them to these Bosnians who are about to face a brutal winter!"*

While described as religious, Dr. Siddiqui was not considered a fundamentalist but rather a person who was "just nice and soft-spoken."

The events of September 11<sup>5</sup>, 2001, marked a significant turning point in the world, igniting the global war on terror. Pakistan, as a U.S. ally, cooperated extensively and withdrew its support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

An incident in 2002 holds particular relevance to Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's life. While on a camping trip with her then-husband, Amjad Khan, they purchased hunting gear and supplies in Boston, which later attracted the FBI's attention. A few weeks after this purchase, the FBI sought to question her. Amid these events, Dr. Siddiqui's father fell seriously ill, and she was six months pregnant, necessitating their departure for Pakistan. In 2003, the FBI issued an ALERT NOTICE seeking information about Dr. Aafia Siddiqui. Importantly, the notice clarified that they had no specific information linking her to any terrorist activities, but they aimed to locate and question her.

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<sup>4</sup>Muslim Student Association on *Women in Islam*

<sup>5</sup> George bush declare war on terrorism

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Subsequently, in 2003, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, along with her three children, mysteriously disappeared, marking a significant and enigmatic turning point in her life's trajectory. This disappearance led to a series of developments that form the backdrop of this research paper, investigating the case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui.

### **The Mysterious Disappearance and Subsequent Events:**

In March and April of 2003, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui mysteriously vanished in the midst of a tumultuous period in Pakistan's history. The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, attributed to Al Qaeda, set the stage for her disappearance as Pakistan joined the global war on terror.

Crucially, Pakistan's ISI Chief, in a significant meeting with the United States Deputy Secretary Armitage, pledged full support to the U.S. in their fight against terrorism, sparking the hunt for Dr. Aafia. Her interactions with the FBI, her divorce, and her return to Pakistan marked the beginning of this perplexing journey.

In March 2003, Dr. Aafia left her mother's house with her three children, supposedly to stay with her uncle. However, she never reached her uncle's home, and a **mysterious man wearing a motorbike helmet** warned her family not to inquire about her whereabouts<sup>6</sup>.

Imran Khan revealed this on a Pakistan TV talk show called "Off the Record," which aired on ARY Digital. He explained that in March 2003, during Dr. Aafia's disappearance, he offered to hold a press conference with the family to raise questions about her whereabouts and inquire with the Pakistan government. However, Dr. Aafia's mother, Ismat Siddiqui, was too terrified to proceed as security agencies were threatening the family, warning that any noise made could jeopardize her daughter's safety. The timeline of events took an intriguing turn when NBC Nightly News reported her custody in April 2003, only for U.S. officials to later express doubts about her location. In June 2003, during an FBI interview, Special Agent Barry Maddox displayed a lack of awareness about a Newsweek magazine cover story stating that Dr. Aafia was in custody in Pakistan, deepening the mystery. Pakistan's Ministry of Interior confirmed her

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<sup>6</sup>Ismat Siddiqui told BBC News reporters

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handover to the U.S. due to her American nationality, yet they couldn't establish direct links between her and Al Qaeda.

In 2004, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller sought the American public's help, underscoring Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's connection to individuals associated with Al Qaeda. These events collectively emphasize the enigmatic circumstances surrounding her disappearance and the subsequent unfolding of events.

Notably, Dr. Khan told Harpers Magazine that his "contacts in the agencies" informed him that Dr. Siddiqui had gone underground during this period, adding to the intrigue<sup>7</sup>.

Dr. Siddiqui's disappearance coincided with a flurry of arrests and disappearances in Pakistan, including that of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who claimed to mastermind 9/11 and was linked to numerous Al-Qaeda-related attacks, including the murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was subjected to **183 instances of waterboarding** by U.S.<sup>8</sup> authorities. Shortly after Dr. Siddiqui's disappearance, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's nephew, Ammar al-Baluchi [aka Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali], was arrested in connection with 9/11. The two men were taken to Guantánamo Bay and subsequently to various CIA-run secret prisons known as "**black sites**" for torture before their return to Guantánamo Bay, adding layers of complexity to this mysterious chain of events.

### **The Ghost of Bagram: Unraveling Lies and Truth:**

In 2005, a groundbreaking report by Washington Post staff writer Dana Priest exposed the existence of secret Central Intelligence Agency CIA prisons, referred to as "black sites," where key Al Qaeda captives were concealed and subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques." These covert prisons spanned eight countries, relying on foreign intelligence service cooperation and strict secrecy. The Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA torture revealed that these methods were brutal, far worse than what policymakers were informed of. Dr. Aafia mentioned her time at a secret prison during her trial. The Open Society Justice Initiative's report identified 54 countries participating in these operations, including Afghanistan.

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<sup>7</sup>Publish in November 2009

<sup>8</sup>Reported by *The Guardian* in 2009

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In 2006, President Bush acknowledged the existence of secret CIA prisons and the transfer of 14 key terrorist suspects for trial. Notably, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was moved out of CIA custody. Crucial revelations began to emerge. Syed Bilal revealed Dr. Aafia's abduction in March 2003. Imran Shauqat, the Superintendent of Police for Sindh, described her condition when she was handed over to the ISI and later American agencies.<sup>9</sup>

Journalist Yvonne Ridley conducted an investigation, uncovering credible evidence of a woman in US custody in Bagram, Afghanistan, referred to as the "*gray lady of Bagram*." Binyam Mohamed, held in US custody, confirmed witnessing "**Prisoner 650**," referring to her as a Pakistani spy educated in the USA. This account aligned with Moazzam Begg's testimony, further confirming that "Prisoner 650" was Dr. Aafia Siddiqui.

On July 11, 2008, Lt. Col. Rumi Nielson Green denied detaining any woman prisoner in Bagram. Yet, on July 17, 2008, Dr. Aafia was arrested by Afghan National Police near Ghazni Governor Compound, wearing a burka and accompanied by a child. On July 18, 2008, she was shot in an Afghan police headquarters in Ghazni while allegedly trying to attack U.S. soldiers and officials. The U.S. government denied her custody while admitting to holding a woman, Prisoner 650, in Bagram until 2005, claiming she was not Dr. Aafia.

In 2010, Dr. Aafia's missing daughter, Meriam<sup>10</sup>, was mysteriously found, confirming her identity. Contradictory statements by U.S. and Pakistani officials have fueled ongoing questions, necessitating the declassification of relevant information from 2003-2008 by U.S. agencies for a conclusive understanding of these events.

### **Charges, Detention, and Contradictions:**

After being mysteriously found on the streets of Ghazni, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was apprehended by Afghan National Police (ANP) officers. This paper offers a comprehensive overview of the case, delving into the perspectives of both the U.S. government and Dr. Siddiqui. It will illuminate the

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<sup>9</sup>International Justice Network, a US based NGO released a transcript which was a secretly recorded conversation between Syed Bilal a American citizens residing in Texas, with Imran Shauqat the superintended of police for Sindh, Pakistan

<sup>10</sup> Who was also disappear with her mother and two brother when she was approximately 4.

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charges brought against her, detail her detention, and discuss the ensuing legal proceedings. Furthermore, this paper will shed light on some contradictory statements made throughout the case.

#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AGAINST AAFIA SIDDIQUI<sup>11</sup>-

Special Agent Mehtab Syed, an FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) member, provided the following details:

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani national who had previously lived in the United States, was discovered by officers of the Ghazni Province Afghanistan National Police (ANP) on the evening of July 17, 2008, **outside the Ghazni governor's compound**<sup>12</sup>. ANP officers questioned Siddiqui in local dialects of Dari and Pashtu. She did not respond and appeared to only speak Urdu, indicating that she was a foreigner. ANP officers became suspicious and searched her handbag, where they found numerous **documents describing the creation of explosives, chemical weapons, and other weapons involving biological and radiological agents**. Her papers **included descriptions of various U.S. landmarks, particularly in New York City, details of U.S. military assets, excerpts from the "Anarchist's Arsenal,"** and a 1GB digital media storage device. Siddiqui was also in possession of various chemical substances in gel and liquid form sealed in bottles and glass jars.

On or about July 18, 2008, a group of U.S. personnel, including two FBI special agents, a U.S. Warrant Officer, a U.S. Army Captain, and U.S. military interpreters, arrived at the Afghan facility where Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was held. Upon entering a second-floor meeting room with a yellow curtain concealing part of the room, **they were unaware that Siddiqui was unsecured behind the curtain**<sup>13</sup>. During the meeting, **Siddiqui, holding the Warrant Officer's loaded M-4 rifle, emerged from behind the curtain, pointed the rifle at the captain, and made threatening statements**. The captain and interpreter 1 intervened as **Siddiqui fired the rifle** but no one was hit. Siddiqui yelled "Allahu Akbar," and despite being shot, she resisted arrest,

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<sup>11</sup>July 31,2008, Mehtab Syed, Special Agent of FBI filed a criminal complaint before a hon. Theodore H. Katz, US Magistrate Judge Southern District of New York.

<sup>12</sup> The boldly marked sentences are a few contradictory statements made in complaint and trial by US officials

<sup>13</sup>This will contradict by the US official statement in trial

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striking and kicking officers while expressing hostile intentions. **The Warrant Officer then returned fire, hitting Siddiqui at least once.** Afterward, the agents and officers provided medical assistance to Siddiqui.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CASE VERSION AT TRIAL-

On July 17, 2008, a woman, later identified as Aafia Siddiqui, was apprehended by Afghan National Police (ANP) officers **near Ghazni Governor Compound<sup>14</sup>** and subsequently taken to the Ghazni National Police headquarters. She was arrested **while wearing a burka and was accompanied by a young boy.** The ANP transferred her to the Afghan counterterrorism department for questioning. During the interrogation, Bashir, an interpreter who spoke Urdu, questioned her. She had with her documents in English and Urdu **that appeared to contain information on bomb-making, along with various items.**

In the course of the interrogation, the woman **identified herself as Dr. Ali and claimed to have limited education, up to the 8th grade.** When asked to write in Dari, she could only manage a few lines. She mentioned distributing copies of these documents to individuals in different provinces, expressing opposition to foreigners while asserting she had no issue with Afghan authorities. At one point, during the interrogation, the woman attempted to escape, threatening to detonate a bottle she claimed to have. This led to a physical struggle with Bashir, during which she bit him, and the young boy joined in. Eventually, they managed to restrain her using a scarf since they lacked handcuffs in their office.

The situation escalated as Ghazni Governor Usman contacted Captain Threadcraft, who was serving as a liaison officer with the Afghan National Security forces. Governor Usman presented the documents and contents **found in the woman's possession, which included references to a "dirty bomb" and a place resembling a mosque.** He also handed over a thumb drive containing unknown data, raising concerns about a potential threat.

US authorities requested custody, and Governor Usman initially gave permission, but the Police Chief insisted they needed specific approval from the Minister of Interior (MOI). They were

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<sup>14</sup> Complaint states that they found her outside the governor compound.

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allowed to interview her, take fingerprints, and collect DNA samples. US authorities, including two FBI agents, a Chief Warrant Officer, and an interpreter, traveled to the ANP headquarters to discuss the woman's custody. In a crowded room, **the Chief Warrant Officer noticed a curtain behind which he found no one but blankets on a bed<sup>15</sup>.**

After a sudden disturbance, **Dr. Aafia seized the warrant officer's M-4 rifle from his back and fired two shots. In response, the warrant officers shot Aafia with their pistols, resulting in Dr. Aafia being shot.** She suffered injuries and was subsequently provided with medical care. After medical assessment, she was officially identified as Dr. Aafia Siddiqui.

US authorities, recognizing the need for more appropriate medical facilities, made the decision to transfer Dr. Aafia to a better-equipped medical unit at Orgun-E, where she underwent necessary surgery to address her injuries. Furthermore, Dr. Aafia's personal belongings, notably her purse, were handed over to the FBI for further examination and analysis.

At Bagram Medical Facility, Special Agents maintained security in shifts lasting 12 hours each to ensure her safety and compliance during her stay. **Special Agent Angela Sercer conducted interviews with Dr. Aafia and collected her fingerprints as part of the identification process.**

Dr. Aafia, during her conversations with Angela Sercer, disclosed details about her **whereabouts in the four to five years preceding** her arrest in Ghazni. She explained that she had been in **hiding, frequently changing her location. And she also mentions taking shooting class at MIT<sup>16</sup>.** At one point, she got married to alter her name and identity. She was aware of being sought for questioning by the US government, particularly the FBI.

#### DR. AAFIA SIDDIQUI'S TESTIMONY-

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, in her testimony, asserted her willingness to speak the truth despite unusual events on July 18, 2008. She began her recollection with the concern that had been a part of her daily life: the whereabouts of her missing children.

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<sup>15</sup> A contradictory statement

<sup>16</sup> Despite taking shooting classes, she misses the shot TWICE in crowded small room as no one got hurt, not even walls except dr. Aafia,

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On the night of July 17, 2008, she described being inspected by Americans at the ANP police headquarters in a room where some individuals were in uniform, while others were not. She endured ill-treatment, including physical abuse, by some of them. She claimed that Indians were also present. Dr. Aafia implored the Afghan authorities not to hand her over, fearing the consequences<sup>17</sup>. Her pleas continued through the night and into the morning.

On July 18, 2008, a press conference took place in a room where many people gathered, although she was reluctant to engage with the media. Dr. Aafia denied any moral alignment with the events of that afternoon. She detailed her physical condition, with her hands and feet becoming swollen and discolored. Her insistence on being untied was met, as they did not want her to lose her hands. A curtain partitioned the room, and she overheard both American and Afghan voices, although she couldn't see what was happening. Sensing an intention to transfer her, she decided to move closer to the curtain, hoping to seize an opportunity to escape the situation. However, her actions were detected, leading to her being shot. Subsequent gunshots followed, and she lost consciousness.

Dr. Aafia remembered being transported by helicopter and receiving a blood transfusion against her will. She expressed that she had never seen an M4 rifle before and believed that she was a victim of a cover-up. She denied aiming an M4 rifle at anyone on July 18, 2008, finding the situation unbelievable. Dr. Aafia expressed her willingness to forgive those involved. She struggled to recall whether her son was with her at the time and didn't want to provide false testimony.

She was unable to confirm the contents of her bag, explaining that she didn't prepare it, and the purse was given to her. She denied creating the documents found in her possession, including the drawings. Dr. Aafia explained that she hadn't taken any pistol courses at the Braintree Rifle & Pistol Club during her time at MIT.

She asserted that she was unaware that the Americans wanted to question her and believed that they didn't wish to do so since 2002. She noted that she received treatment at Bagram Hospital, remembered suffering severe injuries, and described her stay at Craig Joint Theater Hospital.

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<sup>17</sup> Afraid of being sent back to secret prison

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Dr. Aafia Siddiqui also described distressing experiences with an individual referred to as Agent Bruce. He subjected her to psychological and emotional torture, often being present during intimate moments like when nurses attended to her wounds or when she needed to use the bathroom. Dr. Aafia found Agent Bruce's behavior deeply unsettling and it severely affected her ability to sleep, leaving her feeling anxious and sleep-deprived. She reported Agent Bruce's actions to Agent Angela Sercer, expressing her concern about the treatment she was enduring and the threats both agents made, suggesting that she might be transferred to a group of "bad boys" if she didn't cooperate with them. Dr. Aafia shared that Agent Bruce imposed himself in her room, often coming in at night when he wasn't supposed to. During these nighttime visits, she was unable to sleep, and she couldn't find comfort lying down, so she would sit up in bed, pretending to read<sup>18</sup>.

Although she provided her family's phone number, she never got to speak to her family and didn't receive visits from the Pakistani government. She felt that she had no rights, and her past experiences in secret prisons fueled her fear. Despite discussing her family and background with Agent Sercer and providing her home address and telephone number, her primary concern was her missing children.

She experienced difficulty eating and the medical staff's efforts to ensure she didn't starve. Dr. Aafia shared her interaction with Agent Hurley, in which she suggested she could help the US end the war, but her plea seemed to be dismissed.

She also spoke of a group of individuals who, in her view, were perpetrating misconduct in the name of America, contributing to the continuation of wars. She believed she had insights that could end the conflict but was not given the opportunity to share them with those she referred to as "war makers."

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui recognized some of the documents as possibly handwritten by her and claimed her research was aimed at safeguarding the people of Pakistan<sup>19</sup>. She inquired about the potential legal consequences for attempted murder and expressed her view that shooting at U.S.

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<sup>18</sup>Intimating behaviors of Special Agent Bruce Kareman

<sup>19</sup>According to dr. fowzia Siddiqui, Aafia's sister, Aafia was working for an education system of Islam  
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soldiers was a negative act. Special Agent Bruce Kamerman documented her statements, including her pistol training at MIT and her intent to use the rifle she picked up during the shooting incident to frighten her captors and escape.

### **Investigating the Alleged Shooting Incident:**

On July 18, 2008, an incident occurred where Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was accused of seizing an M4 rifle and discharging it in a room. Witnesses alleged that she fired at least three shots, resulting in bullet holes in the walls.

Later that day, FBI Agent Hurley and Special Agent Michael Moorehead were tasked with investigating the incident. They meticulously collected evidence at the scene, captured photographs, and measured the room. In the process, they identified several holes in the walls that might have been the result of gunfire. However, definitive confirmation proved challenging without further analysis.

During their investigation, they discovered a nine-millimeter cartridge on the floor. Additionally, an Afghan police officer provided them with a cartridge found in the room after the incident. They also secured the M4 rifle, albeit missing its flashlight and laser equipment, along with an M9 semiautomatic pistol.

Carlo J. Rosati, a firearm and toolmark examiner, conducted tests and concluded that a nine-millimeter bullet was discharged from the M9 pistol<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, examination of the M4 rifle was hindered by the absence of bullets, bullet fragments, or cartridge cases.

D.J. Fife, a forensic examiner, scrutinized the M4 rifle and its sights for fingerprints but did not find any of value. Bill Tobin, an expert in material science and metallurgy, expressed the opinion that the bullet holes in the wall did not align with high-velocity bullets fired from an M4 rifle. He also noted that gunshot residue from an M4 rifle would disperse over a greater distance compared to that from an M9 pistol. This raised questions about the nature of the incident

### **Dr. Aafia's Competency Evaluation: An In-Depth Analysis:**

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<sup>20</sup> The secondary weapon of Chief Warrant Officer

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During the trial hearings, the central issue revolved around Dr. Aafia's mental competency. Both the prosecution and the defense enlisted their own mental health professionals for psychiatric evaluations.

Attorney Elizabeth Fink was appointed by the court to represent Dr. Aafia. Fink expressed grave concerns about Dr. Aafia's medical care, as she had sustained two gunshot wounds to the abdomen and was experiencing excruciating pain, all while being denied access to antibiotics and painkillers. The dire situation was exacerbated by the absence of a female physician to attend to her medical needs. Around September 2, 2008, an indictment was filed against Dr. Aafia. Fink described the harsh treatment Dr. Aafia endured when meeting with Pakistani authorities, including degrading strip searches and one end of the MDC to the other end without wheelchair. Over time, Dr. Aafia's mental state deteriorated, and she began refusing visits due to the distressing **strip searches**. On September 4, 2008, Judge Berman held a status conference, but Dr. Aafia did not appear. Fink requested an arraignment without strip searches, emphasizing Dr. Aafia's extreme anxiety concerning the well-being of her children.

In response to the concerns raised by Attorney Elizabeth Fink, the court ordered a medical examination and psychological support for Dr. Aafia. This decision was driven by her deteriorating physical and mental health, particularly her need for a female doctor's examination and psychological assistance.

Prosecution attorney Mr. LaVigne informed the court that a female doctor from the Federal Correctional Center in Otisville had traveled to the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) to examine Dr. Aafia. However, despite extensive efforts, Dr. Aafia refused the examination. On September 9, 2008, MDC Psychiatrist Diane McLean, M.D., conducted a psychological examination of Dr. Aafia, revealing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and ruminative thoughts. Dr. Aafia didn't express a desire to be examined and declined psychotropic medications.

A subsequent psychiatric evaluation on September 9, 2008, resulted in a diagnosis of Depressive Type Psychosis. Dr. McLean conducted the interviews with Dr. Aafia, who spoke through a blanket covering her face. Her resistance and lack of cooperation, coupled with her expression of feeling abandoned, indicated her deteriorating psychological condition.

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The government then requested a competency hearing, citing the necessity of the Dusky test, which assesses the defendant's ability to consult with their lawyer and understand the legal proceedings. Dr. Aafia's non-cooperation raised significant concerns about her competency.

Fink argued that Dr. Aafia was not competent, underscoring her erratic behavior, screaming episodes, and her refusal to leave her cell. She also highlighted a distressing incident in which Dr. Aafia expressed fear of a video of her being placed on the internet<sup>21</sup>, further underscoring her worsening psychological state.

Judge Berman ultimately ruled that Dr. Aafia's non-appearance at the hearing was voluntary, allowing the court to enter a "not guilty" plea on her behalf. Fink vehemently objected to this finding, emphasizing the urgent need for Dr. Aafia to receive treatment due to her deteriorating mental state. Subsequently, Dr. Aafia was transferred to FMC Carswell, where a psychological evaluation was conducted. There, she displayed erratic behavior, refused disrobing for a search, and expressed fear of cameras. She reported auditory hallucinations, including seeing her baby and believing he was not being fed properly.

Dr. Leslie Powers, a forensic psychologist, initially concluded that Dr. Aafia was incompetent due to Major Depressive Disorder with Psychotic Features and recommended psychotropic medication. The government also retained psychiatrists Gregory B. Saathoff and Sally C. Johnson, who both found Dr. Aafia competent, suggesting her lack of cooperation **might not be a sign of mental illness but possibly malingering**.

Saathoff concluded that Dr. Aafia was not suffering from a major mental illness but might be malingering, given her resistance during the psychiatric evaluations. He believed she could understand legal proceedings and assist her lawyers, thus deeming her competent. Sally Johnson found Dr. Aafia uncooperative during the evaluation process. She exhibited selective cooperation and awareness of her circumstances.

However, Leslie Powers **revised her assessment** over time, suggesting that Dr. Aafia's initial behavior was a reaction to facing prosecution. Her emotional responses appeared consistent with

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<sup>21</sup> According to Dr. Aafia, her video was taken during strip search and was threatened to put on the internet.  
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her legal situation rather than a mental illness, leading Powers to conclude that Dr. Aafia might be malingering and was currently competent for trial.

On June 20, 2009, Dr. L. Thomas Kucharski, a defense-retained Mental Health Professional, conducted a forensic psychological evaluation of Dr. Aafia. During the interview, Dr. Aafia exhibited resistance and a reluctance to be examined, along with tangential thinking and a belief in various conspiracies involving Jews, Israel, India, and the United States. She also expressed a fear of being poisoned. Dr. Kucharski observed that Dr. Aafia suffered from a Delusional Disorder of the Paranoid Type and significant depression. Her denial of mental illness and avoidance of mental health professionals indicated she was not malingering. Dr. Aafia's guardedness about discussing past trauma was inconsistent with malingering, and her symptom presentation strongly suggested genuine mental health issues, a conclusion supported by Dr. Kucharski's evaluation.

On July 6, 2009, a competency hearing took place with Dr. Aafia present. The court reviewed forensic evaluation reports from three psychiatrists. The government argued that she was malingering and competent, while the defense contended that she was not competent due to a delusional disorder and tangential thinking. After carefully assessing the evidence and the demeanor of the witnesses, the court ruled that **Dr. Aafia was indeed competent to stand trial, meeting the criteria of the Dusky test.**

### **The Verdict and Sentencing of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui: A Landmark Moment:**

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case reached a pivotal moment with a momentous verdict and subsequent sentencing. On February 3, 2010, the jury rendered its decision, finding Dr. Aafia Siddiqui guilty on multiple charges related to an incident involving the attempted murder of U.S. personnel in Afghanistan<sup>22</sup>. The charges included attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, and firearms violations. However, the jury's verdict did not establish premeditation in the commission of these crimes. During the sentencing hearing, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui made a powerful statement in her own defense.

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<sup>22</sup> No charges of terrorism

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The sentencing hearing, held on September 23, 2010, was marked by Judge Berman's acknowledgment of the complexities surrounding the trial. He emphasized security issues, disruptive incidents, and the ongoing debate about Dr. Aafia's presence in the courtroom. Despite these challenges, Judge Berman ensured Dr. Aafia's participation throughout the trial.

During the hearing, Judge Berman noted the *absence of conclusive evidence regarding Dr. Aafia's whereabouts between 2003 and 2008*, leaving room for various speculations about her actions in Afghanistan. Regarding her sentencing, Judge Berman conducted a thorough analysis and ultimately imposed a total sentence of **86 years of incarceration**. He recommended her placement at FMC Carswell in Texas, periodic mental health assessments, and necessary follow-up treatments.

### **Message of Resilience, Forgiveness, and Peace:**

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's message during the sentencing hearing conveyed a profound sense of resilience and forgiveness. She spoke of her unwavering faith, stating that when it was written for her to be released from prison, it would happen. Despite years in a secret prison, where people believed she was dead, she expressed gratitude and contentment, attributing her survival to a higher purpose.

Dr. Aafia drew inspiration from the forgiveness exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) towards his personal enemies. She appealed to Muslims to forgive everyone connected to her case, including the two soldiers who had shot her. Her message resonated with a call for a more just and peaceful world.

While Dr. Aafia acknowledged that she had faced mistreatment during her time at MDC, she refrained from blaming the institution itself. She highlighted the attempts made to harm her and the psychological impact of her experiences. Dr. Aafia expressed gratitude for the global support she had received and her willingness to share valuable information with the FBI. She disassociated herself from any animosity toward any nation or people and stressed the presence of a larger, intricate game at play.

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She spoke of her disagreement with the charges against her, emphasizing her social work background and experiences in Afghanistan. Dr. Aafia underscored the importance of preventing wars and hinted at her views on certain global conflicts. Refuting claims of mental illness, she advocated for addressing domestic issues in the United States. She revealed her desire to communicate with the FBI, offering information about potential threats against the U.S. and conveyed her fervent wish for peace.

Dr. Aafia's parting words included advice to Muslims not to resort to violence, emphasizing prayer and peaceful dissemination of the message of Islam. She underscored the significance of educating people about Islam, portraying the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) as a beacon of mercy for all of humanity.

### **Voices in Defense of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui: A Plea for Justice and the Untold Horrors<sup>23</sup>:**

Prominent figures and individuals have raised their voices in defense of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui, shedding light on the injustices she has faced. Their statements emphasize the urgency of seeking justice in her case.

**Mark Gravel and Senator's Appeal:** Former U.S. Presidential candidate Mark Gravel and two-time U.S. Senator echoed the sentiment that while there is injustice worldwide, it becomes morally imperative to stand up for individuals who have endured extreme injustice. They called for a fair resolution concerning Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case.

**Ramsey Clark's Defense:** Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark firmly asserted that Dr. Aafia Siddiqui is innocent and has been victimized by international politics driven by power. He expressed his astonishment at the level of injustice he witnessed, marking it as a grave injustice in his entire career.

**Victoria Brittain:** Victoria Brittain's account, featured in Counterpunch on February 14, 2011, sheds light on the harrowing experiences of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's two elder children, who hold crucial parts of the story of the missing five years. These children, who are U.S. citizens, re-emerged in Pakistan separately and were subsequently reunited with their family in Karachi, where Dr. Siddiqui's mother and sister, Fowzia, a Harvard-trained child psychiatrist and neurologist, welcomed them. While the full extent of their experiences remains undisclosed, the little information available hints at the family's ordeal.

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<sup>2323</sup>Many more can be found on book name- Dr. Aafia Siddiqui other voices

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The elder child, Ahmed, who was 12 at the time, disclosed that he only met his mother the day after her apprehension in Ghazni, emphasizing that he could hardly recognize her after five years of separation<sup>24</sup>. Fuzzy film footage of their reunion, captured during a press conference the morning before the shooting incident, has circulated on the internet. Ahmed's recollections are limited beyond this point, but he remembered an encounter with a U.S. consular official in Afghanistan who informed him of his U.S. citizenship and the tragic news of his brother Suleman's death<sup>25</sup>.

Ahmed's memories include being removed from a taxi in which he was with his mother and siblings five years earlier. Before losing consciousness, he witnessed his six-month-old brother<sup>26</sup>, Suleman, lying on the road, bleeding<sup>27</sup>. Ahmed revealed that he had been referred to by different names while in custody, and when he was informed that his name was now Ahmed, he understood that he was about to be relocated. Initially, it was reported that Ahmed was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and required extensive psychological assistance.

Despite the family home being under constant guard by armed Pakistani police, there was an attempted kidnapping of the children. Two armed men, carrying large sacks, were discovered behind the children's bedroom door by their grandmother. They fled upon her screams and were driven away by a waiting car nearby before the police guards could apprehend them.

The article raises questions about whether Dr. Siddiqui will ever be able to recount the full story of her five-year ordeal. It emphasizes the immense challenges of recovering from such severe personal and family trauma, which isolated her from any solid connection to her past identity.

**Cindy Sheehan:** Cindy Sheehan, in her statement from October 2010 as reported by Al Jazeera, draws attention to the questionable nature of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case. She reflects on her own experience as a defendant in multiple trials after being arrested for protesting the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations, emphasizing her belief that the police can be dishonest.

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<sup>24</sup>The US and Afghanistan authorities do mention the Dr. Aafia and her son declined having any relations with each other.

<sup>25</sup>According to Ahmed, he was also in Afghanistan by US officials

<sup>26</sup> The youngest child of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui. 6 months old during the disappearance

<sup>27</sup> The tragic memory of abduction

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Cindy Sheehan points out that Dr. Aafia Siddiqui was convicted and sentenced to 86 years despite the absence of evidence that she had fired any weapon, and the jury found no premeditation. She highlights the Feds' decision not to pursue "terrorist" charges against Dr. Siddiqui, indicating their awareness that the evidence against her was obtained through torture, notably from Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM).

She then presents a thought experiment, suggesting that if a similar case were being tried in Pakistan involving an American woman who had been captured, repeatedly tortured, and raped by the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), that woman would likely be hailed as a hero in the United States if she had shot at her captors. Instead, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui is demonized and separated from her life and children.

Cindy Sheehan concludes by asserting her belief that Dr. Aafia Siddiqui is a political prisoner and has become a symbolic figure targeted by two U.S. regimes.

### **The Quest for Justice and Peace:**

In 2003, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's mysterious disappearance began a troubling five-year chapter, where she was dubbed the "Mata Hari of al-Qaida" or the "Grey Lady of Bagram." While her New York court case focuses on the circumstances of her capture, it doesn't address the broader context of her disappearance, leaving many questions unanswered about her treatment.

The fundamental legal principle of "innocent until proven guilty" emphasizes the unforgettable nature of her case, with unproven allegations due to the absence of a trial. Additionally, the lack of investigation into her whereabouts from 2003 to 2008 and her denial of the right to choose her lawyer point to grave human rights and due process violations.

Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's case serves as a stark reminder of the importance of upholding justice, human rights, and the presumption of innocence, especially in complex cases. Incarcerating individuals without concrete evidence of their involvement in terrorism raises profound concerns about justice, human rights, and peace.

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Global peace relies on adherence to principles of justice and human rights. Neglecting cases like Dr. Siddiqui's can breed animosity and instability. Thorough investigations, public examination of evidence, and a reevaluation of her conviction are necessary steps.

In a world pursuing peace and harmony, our unwavering commitment to these principles is vital. Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's story urges us to address these challenges, promoting a more just and peaceful society for all.

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