

# Prisoner's Self-Portraits of C.I.A. Torture Surface From Sealed Court Record

[nytimes.com/2024/12/18/us/politics/guantanamo-prisoner-drawings-torture.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/18/us/politics/guantanamo-prisoner-drawings-torture.html)

Carol Rosenberg

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Alone in his cell with only dark thoughts of desperate times, the prisoner put pencil to paper and drew detailed portraits of how American agents tortured him 20 years ago.

Some of it was self-administered therapy of sorts for the prisoner, a Malaysian man named Mohammed Farik Bin Amin. The United States held him for years in solitary confinement, starting in 2003 in a dungeonlike prison run by the C.I.A. in Afghanistan. The Guantánamo prison does not offer specific treatment for people who have been tortured.

Some of it was homework assigned by his lawyer, Christine Funk, who negotiated the plea deal that sent him home on Wednesday. Ms. Funk had asked Mr. Bin Amin to draw what happened to him, rather than find a way to discuss it.

“This is what his nightmares are all about,” Ms. Funk said. “This is what he lives with.”

Mr. Bin Amin’s lawyers showed his artwork to a military jury at his sentencing trial in January. He had pleaded guilty to war crimes and spoke of his remorse for helping a Southeast Asian extremist group called Jemaah Islamiyah, which carried out the 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, that killed 202 people. Mr. Bin Amin admitted to being an accessory to the attack, after the fact, by helping the main defendant elude capture.

Ms. Funk has been defending violent criminals since 1994 and has devoted years of her career to the interplay between forensic science and the law. So the idea of offering a forensic look at Mr. Bin Amin’s brutal treatment appealed to her as she was preparing for trial.

Mr. Bin Amin started his sketches about five years ago, and his legal team worked to get them declassified. Then on Jan. 25, without objection from government prosecutors, Ms. Funk showed them on an enormous screen above the witness stand, for both the public and his jury to see.

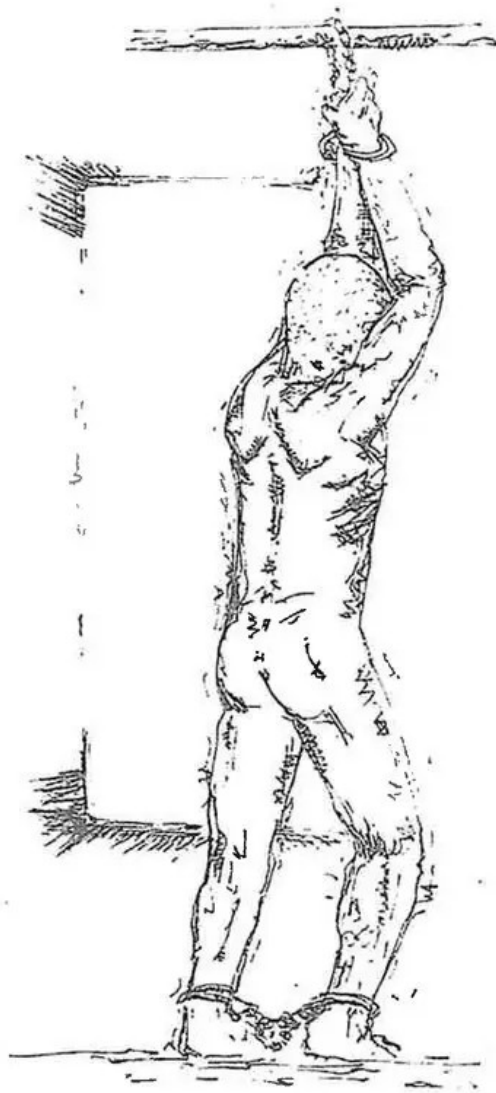
Other prisoners have drawn what they remember about being tortured in C.I.A. custody. But for the first time, a former C.I.A. prisoner’s version of what happened to him is now in the record of a trial at the post-9/11 war crimes court, which continues to grapple with the legacy of U.S. state-sponsored torture.

And for the first time since they were shown in court, they are being published for the public to see them, here.

# Standing Sleep Deprivation

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Image



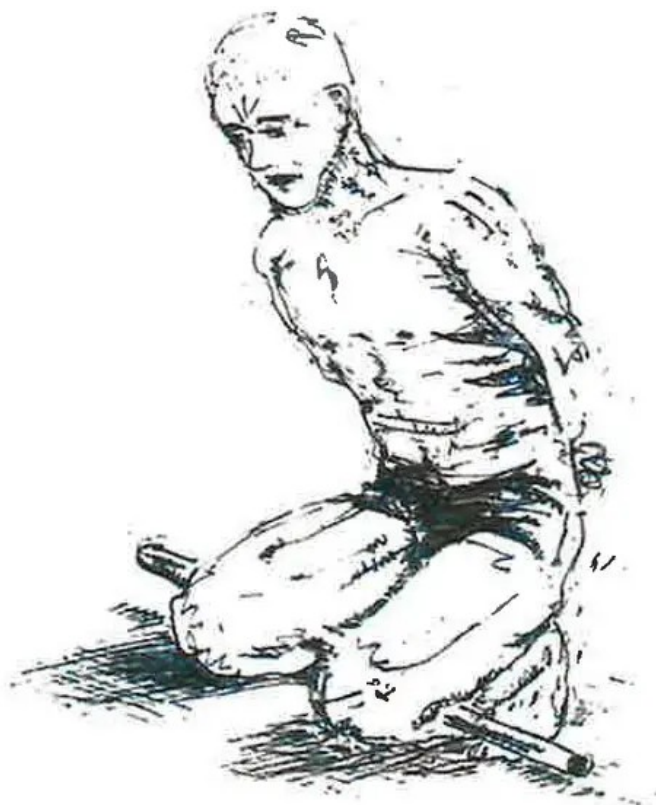
Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

Detainees have said that C.I.A. interrogators shackled them with their arms raised above their head to deprive them of sleep and to break their will to resist questioning. But words have never been quite able to help people conjure an image of the technique. Here, Mr. Bin Amin shows himself nude, shaved from head to toe and shifting his weight from one leg to the other to try to relieve the pain.

## Stress Position With Broomstick

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Image



Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

In this self-portrait, Mr. Bin Amin's arms are shackled behind his back as he is forced to squat with a broomstick behind his knees, an unauthorized technique that so troubled other interrogators that they reported the abuse to C.I.A. headquarters. Mr. Bin Amin is also naked in this drawing but uses shadows to shield his genitals from view.

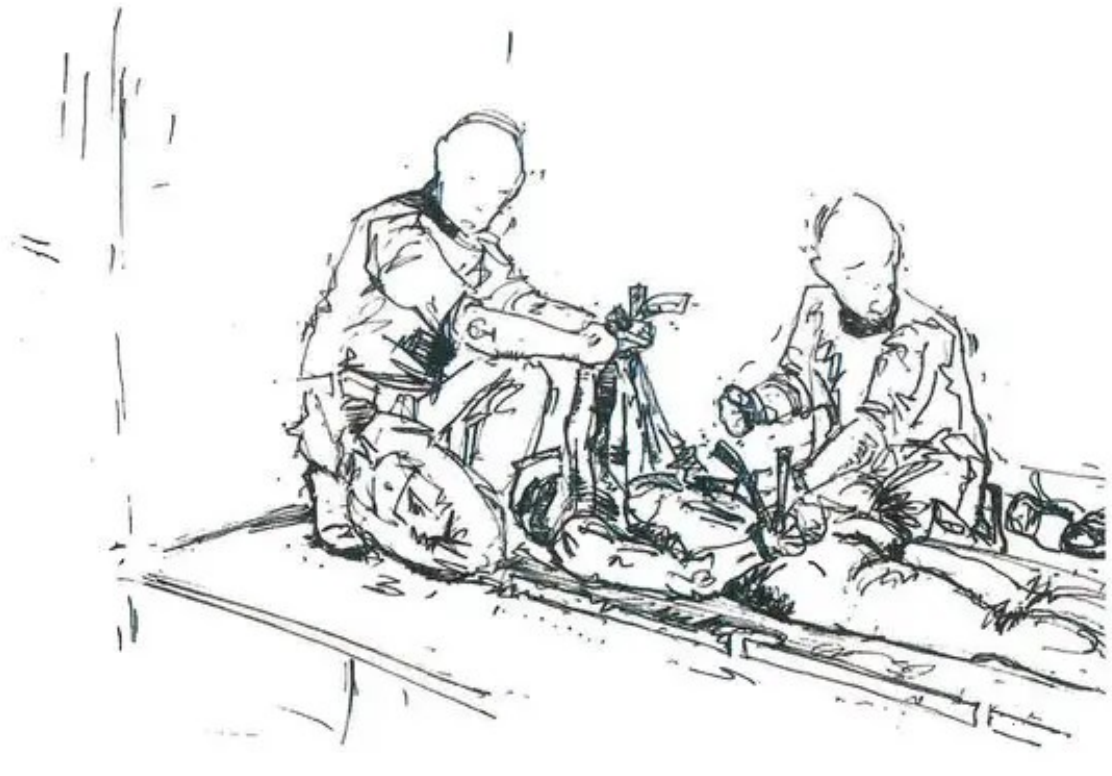
In 2004, the C.I.A.'s chief interrogator was relieved of his job in the agency's secret overseas prisons after using the broomstick technique and teaching it to new interrogators, according to testimony at Guantánamo in 2020 from James E. Mitchell, a

psychologist who helped the C.I.A. devise the so-called enhanced interrogation techniques. The chief interrogator, known in court as NX2, had been told the technique was forbidden and continued to use it anyway, Dr. Mitchell testified.

## Stripped and Restrained

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Image



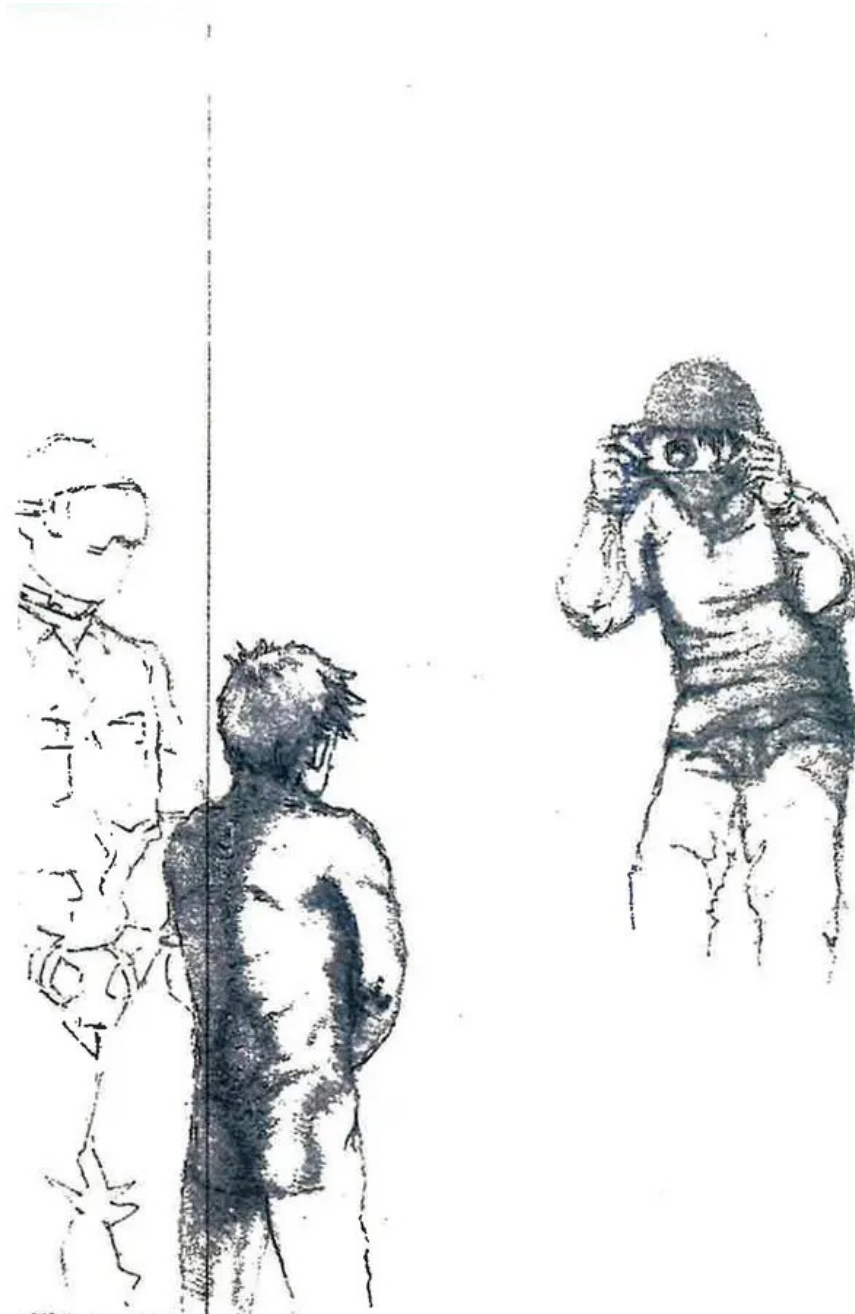
Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

Guards in paramilitary attire cut off Mr. Bin Amin's clothing on the day he was captured in Thailand in 2003 and restrained his wrists behind his back with zip ties. At his sentencing hearing, Mr. Bin Amin said he was held naked "all the time" during the "couple of weeks" he was detained in Thailand.

## Photographed Nude

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Image



Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

Former C.I.A. prisoners said they were routinely photographed without clothes. Here, a guard with his features obscured stands beside Mr. Bin Amin while another guard takes a photo of him, naked, upon his transfer from Thailand to a particularly brutal C.I.A. prison in Afghanistan. Guards had yet to shave off all of his hair. Mr. Bin Amin said in court that he had never before been photographed naked, and that he tried to cover his genitals. The masked guard slapped his hand away, he said.

Ms. Funk: Did you feel humiliation?

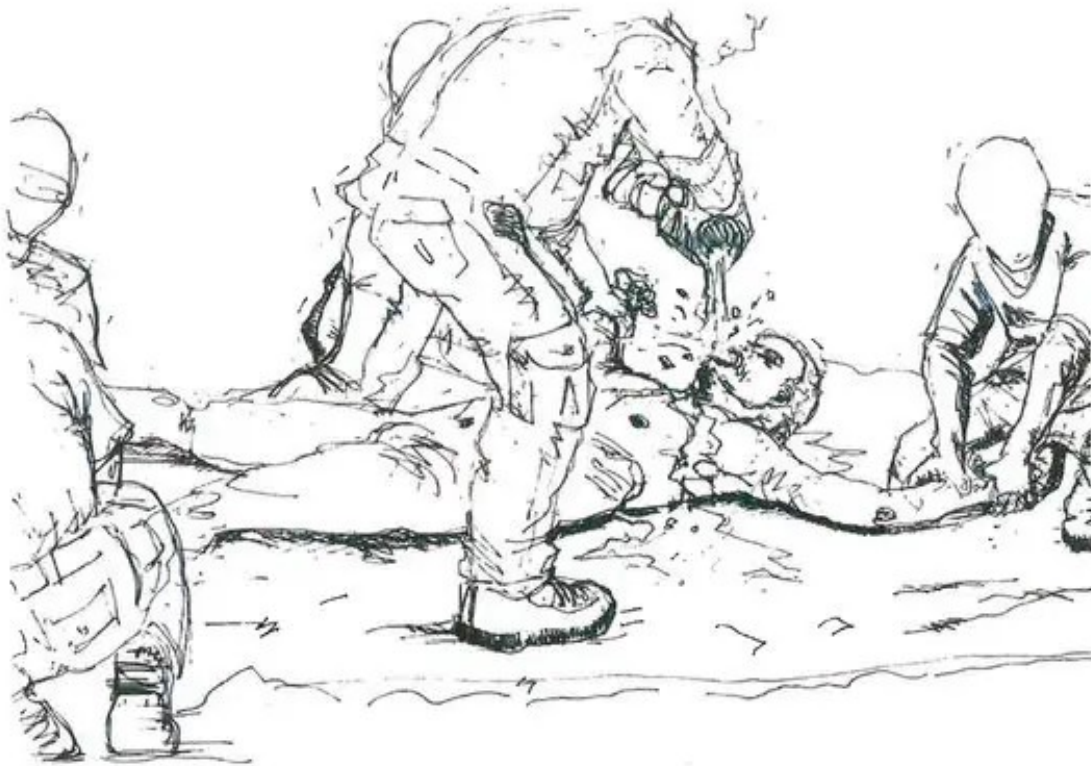
Mr. Bin Amin: Of course.

Ms. Funk: Of course.

## Mock Waterboarding

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Image



Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

Here, his drawing shows four guards, some in masks called balaclavas, holding his limbs to the floor while a fifth C.I.A. employee straddles him and pours water on his body and face. The cell was cold, Mr. Bin Amin testified, and so was the water. He said the guards were questioning him and “punching my face” in the midst of the water torture.

The C.I.A. has never acknowledged that it waterboarded Mr. Bin Amin.

The technique used on him is sometimes called “water dousing.” Mr. Bin Amin said he was put on a plastic tarp on the floor, rather than on the medical-style gurney that C.I.A. interrogators used for the three prisoners whom the agency acknowledges it waterboarded. The distinction appears to be that the gurney could be tilted 90 degrees to let a prisoner vomit or expel water before drowning.

Ms. Funk: Did you think you might drown?

Mr. Bin Amin: Yes.

## Hooded Solitary Confinement

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Prisoners reported that they were held in solitary confinement for long stretches. Mr. Bin Amin shows how he experienced it: naked and hooded on the floor of a cell with his wrists shackled behind his back and his ankles chained together with his legs extended. Hooding was routine, he said. So was white noise, intensifying his isolation.

## Darkened Dungeon

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Image



Credit...Mohammed Farik Bin Amin

Mr. Bin Amin shows his right arm outstretched and chained to a bolt on his cell wall. He said he was held in darkness and found this “stress position,” which left abrasions and blisters on his right hand and both feet, particularly painful to his back and shoulder.

Sometimes he was left chained up so long he would urinate and defecate on himself, he said.