

## ***Binyam Mohamed et al. v. Jeppesen Dataplan, Inc.***

### Biography of Plaintiff Abou Elkassim Britel

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CONTACT: [media@aclu.org](mailto:media@aclu.org)

NEW YORK - Abou Elkassim Britel is a 40-year-old Italian citizen who was taken illegally by United States officials and flown on a Gulfstream V aircraft registered with the FAA as N379P and for which Jeppesen Dataplan, Inc. provided flight and logistical support services to ensure its safe passage from Lahore, Pakistan to Rabat, Morocco. For eight months, Britel was detained by Moroccan intelligence services. During this time, he was held incommunicado and interrogated under torture before being released without charge. On his way back to his home in Italy Britel was re-arrested by Moroccan authorities. Britel remains incarcerated at the Ain Bourja prison in Casablanca.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Britel immigrated to Italy from Morocco in 1989 and in October 1995 married an Italian woman, Anna Lucia Pighizzini. He became an Italian citizen in 1999. In 2000, Britel and his wife began translating Islamic books and texts from Arabic to Italian. They set up a webpage [Islamiqra](#), on which they published these translations as well as topical commentaries aimed at supporting the understanding and spread of Islam.

On June 17, 2001, Britel traveled on a visa from his home in Bergamo, Italy to Iran in order to seek financing to support his and his wife's translation work and to further his research on Islamic issues. From there, Britel traveled to Pakistan, for the same professional reasons. On March 10, 2002, Britel was apprehended by Pakistani police in Lahore, Pakistan.

Britel was tortured throughout his detention and interrogation in Pakistan. His interrogators beat him with a cricket bat and accused him of being a "terrorist fighter." His hands and feet were bound, he was hung from the walls or ceiling of his cell for extensive periods of time and his interrogators threatened to rape the women in his family.

After two months of interrogation, during which time his repeated requests to speak with the Italian consulate were denied, he was turned over to CIA agents who stripped him, dressed him in a t-shirt, blindfolded him, shackled his hands and feet and flew him to Rabat, Morocco. Flight records show that on May 23, 2002, a Gulfstream V aircraft, registered then with the FAA as N379P, departed from Washington D.C. on May 23,

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2002 at 12.45 a.m. It made interim stops in Frankfurt, Germany and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. At 9.05 a.m. the next day, May 24, the same aircraft departed from Islamabad, Pakistan and arrived in Rabat, Morocco at 7.03 a.m. the following day. Less than an hour later, at 7.58 a.m. the aircraft departed Rabat for Porto, Portugal, where it remained overnight before returning to for Washington D.C. The originator code on these flight records shows that Jeppesen submitted the flight plan for this itinerary.

Following his arrival in Rabat, U.S. officials transferred Britel to the custody of agents of the Moroccan intelligence services who took him to the notorious Témara prison. At the Témara prison, Britel was cut off entirely from the world for nearly eight and a half months. He was denied access to family, friends, counsel and the Italian consulate. Not once was he permitted outside the four walls of the prison. He was held in total isolation in a tiny cell, deprived of both sleep and adequate food. He was forced to undergo intensive interrogations about his private life and the people he associated with in Italy and pressured to act as an informant. While being interrogated, Britel was subjected to brutal forms of physical torture, including repeated, severe beatings, and threats against his own life and those of his family as well as “bottle torture”— a technique commonly used by Moroccan intelligence services whereby a bottle is forced into the detainee’s anus.

From the moment of his disappearance, Britel’s family had no idea of his whereabouts. It was not until January 2003 that his family realized he might be detained in Morocco. In February 2003, Britel was released without charges by Moroccan intelligence. His wife arrived in Morocco shortly thereafter and met with him for the first time in over 18 months. Britel exhibited both physical and psychological signs of his torture: he suffered from dizziness and chronic diarrhea; his left eye and ear were permanently damaged; and large portions of his skin had turned black and blue and no hair grew in these areas.

In May 2003, when Britel was traveling through Morocco on his way back to his wife and family in Italy, he was arrested by Moroccan authorities on suspicion of his involvement in the Casablanca bombings on May 16. Once again, he was detained incommunicado at Témara. For four months he was held at this facility in the same inhumane conditions. Eventually, under duress, Britel signed a confession that he was never permitted to read. Following a trial that an Italian government observer noted failed to comport with universally recognized fair trial standards, Britel was sentenced to 15 years in prison. On appeal, his sentence was subsequently reduced to nine years.

Presently, Britel is incarcerated at the Ain Bourja prison in Casablanca.

On September 29, 2006, following a six-year criminal investigation in Italy into Britel’s suspected involvement in terrorist activities, the examining judge dismissed the prosecution case, finding a complete lack of any evidence linking Britel with any criminal, let alone terrorist-related, activity. Eighty-seven members of the Italian Parliament have also petitioned the President of Morocco to have Britel pardoned, released from prison and immediately returned to Italy. To date, however, these diplomatic efforts have proved unsuccessful.