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US Settles ACLU Lawsuit Challenging Post-9/11 Arrests of Muslim Men

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW YORK – The American Civil Liberties Union announced a settlement in a major test case challenging the U.S. government's post-9/11 practice of imprisoning Muslim men as material witnesses without any basis for holding them. As part of the settlement, the federal government offered its regrets and agreed to compensate U.S. citizen Abdullah al-Kidd over his arrest and detention as a material witness in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001.

"I am pleased the government has finally acknowledged the trouble it put me through and has compensated me for that trouble. I hope no one else has to go through what I went through," said al-Kidd, a Kansas-born American citizen, father, and graduate of the University of Idaho where he was a star football player.

Al-Kidd was arrested by the FBI in 2003 ostensibly so he would testify as a material witness in the trial of a student who was facing visa fraud charges. He was imprisoned for 16 days, moved to three separate federal detention facilities in three different states, and was sometimes held naked and shackled hand and foot. He was never ultimately called to testify.

The ACLU sued on his behalf in a case that has spanned a decade and included one trip to the U.S. Supreme Court and two trips to the federal court of appeals. In a Jan. 15 letter to al-Kidd, federal officials wrote: "The government acknowledges that your arrest and detention as a witness was a difficult experience for you and regrets any hardship or disruption to your life that may have resulted from your arrest and detention."

The U.S. government and an individual FBI agent named as a defendant also agreed to pay al-Kidd a total of \$385,000 as part of the settlement.

"The government systematically abused the material witness process after September 11," said Lee Gelernt, *deputy director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project*. "This settlement and the court opinions detailing the government's unlawful actions will hopefully deter future such abuses."

ACLU cooperating attorney Michael Wishnie of Yale Law School served as co-counsel, with additional counsel from the ACLU of Idaho, the Law Offices of Cynthia J. Wooley, and Roark Law Firm.

More information is at: <https://www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights-national-security/abdullah-al-kidd-v-united-states-et-al>



Abdullah al-Kidd v. United States, et al.

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