



ADOPT A PRISONER PROFILE: *RACHID RAMDA* PREPARED: Jan 2010

AGE	40
NATIONALITY	Algerian
COUNTRY HELD	France
SENTENCE	Life
PRISON	MA Fresnes **

(NO PHOTO SUPPLIED)

Personal Biography *

Rachid Ramda was born in Eastern Algeria in 1969, and is of Berber origin. Arabic is his main language; however he is fluent in other languages including French and English. He is from an educated family, his siblings being engineers and scientists, whilst his father owns and looks after the large family farm. He was involved in the primary movement for change in Algeria, a non-violent political party known as the Islamic salvation front (FIS). This movement won the first free election in Algeria, but was cruelly suppressed by the Algerian military who refused to transfer power. Many thousands died, with more tortured and imprisoned, in the brutal crackdown that followed a crackdown that continues today. He was forced to flee the country (notably leaving before the GIA was formed), where he assisted in many humanitarian charities before being given asylum in the United Kingdom. He was arrested by the request of the French Government (undoubtedly acting on a request by the Algerian government) in 1995.

Brief Details about his Case

Rachid was arrested after the French Government requested his extradition, claiming he was involved in a series of bomb attacks in France. Rachid has maintained for 14 years that he has been the victim of a miscarriage of justice. In the allegations of funding, even the UK police said “no bank accounts have been identified which could be associated with Ramda, or the other possible names used.” There were other erroneous claims made by the French prosecutor, most notably those that were made after subjecting one individual to torture in France, beating a confession out of the individual and thus should not have been admissible. Rachid spent 10 years in the High Security Unit in Belmarsh, a unit described as one of the most claustrophobic in Europe. He said that the closest example he could compare this experience to was Guantanamo, with the complete isolation from friends and family. He described the effect on him thus: *“I have constant pain in my joints, especially my knees, ankles, shoulders and even my elbows. My sight has been decreased because of the overuse of artificial light. Loss of memory sometimes and lack of concentration most of the time.”*

He continued to contest his extradition despite these conditions, because he was aware that the trial in France would be nothing but a show trial. Unfortunately after the climate of fear and vengeance that was created against Muslims in light of the London Bombings (an act which Rachid resolutely condemned), he was “fast-tracked” and extradited without the requirement of any evidence needing to be heard or tested in a British Court.

In France, he was paraded as a dangerous terrorist, all for the benefit of the cameras. He was then subjected to a show trial, in which he was convicted of funding a terrorism organisation despite a lack of evidence. He was mistreated by Prison Authorities from his arrival. The “case” against him was made after the authorities claimed to have wiretaps. These have never been heard in public, or by Rachid or his legal team. He believes that they do not exist and are a fabrication. The French authorities also claimed that he used a number of aliases, to which Rachid denies. He was found guilty of conspiracy with a terrorist organisation in a first trial and sentenced to a maximum sentence of 10 years. The French appetite for persecuting Muslims was not however whetted, and he was sentenced to life in prison on essentially the same charges, minimum 22 years, in a new trial a year later.

Why Should I Adopt Rachid?

Rachid is recognised by any brother he comes into contact with in prison (or outside) as one of the best brothers they have met. Anyone who writes to him will also come away with that opinion. Here are some quotes from brothers he has been imprisoned with (and some of whom feature on this site):-

“Rachid is the patient person, the calm, the tranquil, the cool, the tolerant, the peaceful, the open-minded, the quiet, the cheerful, the generous, the loving-hearted and the warm-hearted. Rachid is my mentor and my counsellor. May Allah (swt) guard and protect him, and grant him success in every good deed. Ameen Ameen Ameen.”

“To me, Rachid is a beacon of strength, hope, steadfastness and patience. He is loved by all who know him, Muslim or non-Muslim. When describing him, a verse from Al-Quran comes to mind, where Allah (swt) describes the believers: *“They believe in Allah and Last Day, they enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong and hasten to do good deeds. And these are among the righteous.”*(3:114). It saddens me to see someone who possesses the qualities of those whom Allah praises, be among those who are defamed in society”

“Our brother Rachid is loved by all and the love in our hearts for him is the result of Allah’s love for him, for Allah loves the patient ones as he loves those that abstain from the world. Rachid greets his brothers with love and compassion which was the basis of the character of our beloved Messenger (peace be upon him). While I grieve over Rachid’s misfortune, I also take a lesson from him that such qualities are essential for us to adopt in order to become better individuals and be part of a better society.”

“I first met Rachid in April 2004 at Muslim prayers which take place on Fridays. The first thing that struck me most about Rachid was the way he greeted me and the new Muslim arrivals, three hugs and a huge smile. He made me feel as if I had known him for years, such a warm personality and character, making everyone feel wanted and important, as if you are his best friend.”

“When I was asked to write a few words as a gesture to remember my brother, Rachid Ramda, I was bewildered ... where do I start or where do I stop? I could write for ever and I would never, ever do him credit.”

I personally can testify that all that they say of Rachid is true, and that many other quotes I was not able to post simply because of space limitations. I think one item that has forgot to be mentioned is his eloquence and way with words, his poerty is all over the internet. One letter from him will make you feel that you have been a fool to delay writing to him in the past.

MAILING ADDRESS

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* Disclaimer : This biography is written through availability of primary, secondary and tertiary sources and though efforts have been made to ensure its accuracy, this does not mean that it is free from error. As such, this item should not be referred to in newspaper reports, publications or court documents.

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