

Muslim Guard at Brooklyn Jail Claims Post-September 11 Abuse

By [JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN](#), Staff Reporter of the Sun | October 17, 2006

<http://www.nysun.com/new-york/muslim-guard-at-brooklyn-jail-claims-post/41705/>

A Muslim correctional officer at the federal jail in Brooklyn was harassed by other guards following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, according to a federal lawsuit filed recently in federal court in Brooklyn.

The officer, Tarik Farag, claims his colleagues pelted him with insults, calling him "bin Laden" and accusing him of links to Al Qaeda, according to the legal complaint. The alleged harassment lasted through 2004.

Mr. Farag began working for the U.S. Bureau of Prisons in 1998, serving both as a technician for the inmate telephone system and as a correctional officer, according to the lawsuit. He quit in February, citing a hostile work environment and the discrimination he faced, according to the complaint.

Mr. Farag, a Muslim man who was born in Egypt, found some of the correctional officer training to be demeaning because it suggested a link between Muslim ritual and terrorist violence. Mr. Farag was humiliated by a training scenario that involved Muslim prisoners taking hostages and using prayer rugs for body armor, according to the complaint. The complaint also alleges that one counterterrorism instructor told correction officers "that the Muslims to watch out for" are the ones who "rigorously" wash their hands and feet.

The lawsuit was filed against Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and about a dozen officers at the Metropolitan Detention Center, as the jail in Brooklyn is called. The Department of Justice also faces several lawsuits from Muslim men who were rounded up and held in the Brooklyn jail under allegedly brutal conditions following the terrorist attacks.

Mr. Farag's allegations are unusual in that they come from a guard. He claims that his supervisors used their posts to degrade him and that he received undesirable job posts for longer amounts of time than non-Muslim, non-Arab, and non-Egyptian officers, according to the complaint.

Much of the harassment alleged in Mr. Farag's complaint consists of insults and invectives that colleagues uttered in his presence. Mr. Farag was also once made to sit beside an Arab prisoner in the back of a truck, the lawsuit alleges, adding that such an arrangement was not standard procedure.

Some of the insults Mr. Farag endured came from inmates. One inmate asked Mr. Farag if he was wearing a belt of explosives, according to the complaint.

A spokeswoman for the Bureau of Prisons in Washington, D.C., Felicia Ponce, said she has not reviewed the legal complaint and could not comment.

Mr. Farag's attorney, Omar Mohammedi, did not return a call for comment yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Farag claims that in addition to suffering from emotional distress, he developed shortness of breath and heart palpitations. He seeks monetary damages and a reinstatement to his former job.

