

## Justice for Aafia US Tour Diary: Day 7 - Dallas

Contributed by Yvonne Ridley  
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IT'S FRIDAY, so it must be Dallas! No need to adjust your television sets, I'm not talking about the hit TV soap based on the oil-rich Ewing family.

I am, in fact, referring to my port of entry in to the State of Texas ... the so-called buckle of the Bible Belt and home to nearly 25 million people.

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Many there represented the elite of the Dallas Muslim community and probably one of the best informed groups when it comes to the plight of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.

A large number of those present still have close ties to Pakistan and while Dr Aafia was not far from their thoughts, the focus of the night soon moved to the state of the troubled tribal areas, Swat and Waziristan.

"Who is the Pakistan Taliban?" was one of the most frequently asked questions. I had asked the same question earlier this month when I met Imran Khan, leader of Tehreek e-Insaf and so I responded with the answer he gave me during this interview for Press TV (<http://www.presstv.ir/programs/detail.aspx?sectionid=3510531&id=108750#108750>)

I told them how a drone attack in Waziristan in September 2004 had caused the deaths of scores of innocent people. The indiscriminate bombing provoked anger which was reflected in the 3000-strong turnout the following day for the funeral. Imran told me how another drone interrupted the mourning killing scores more.

And that was the moment the Pakistan Taliban was born. Those present at the Dallas event listened in silence while a few nodded knowingly and others shook their heads in despair and disbelief.

Pakistan is a country I love dearly and so I share their concerns for its future while sharing their anger at its constant demonisation in the media.

Of course the demonisation is deliberate and calculated because you can't bomb nice people, can you? Just as in the same way you can't convict or prosecute innocent people.

And so we can draw parallels here with Dr Aafia's case because anytime soon there is going to be a concerted effort by US intelligence services to try and demonise the Karachi-born mother-of-three whose only crime is her Faith.

They will do this by trying to plant nonsense stories about her in the media, but I hope that journalists - especially from America - will not be hoodwinked as easily as they were during the grim period which led up to the Abu Ghraib scandal.

With the exception of the Baltimore Sun, most US newspapers tried to ignore the scandal when it finally broke and then had to play the embarrassing game of catch up with the rest of the world's media when the then US President, George W Bush, was forced to make a public statement.

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Talking of Dubya, I'm sure it has not been lost on any of you that I currently writing this blog from his backyard - well I know Texas is a vast state and Crawford, where his ranch is situated is several hours drive from my location in Dallas so perhaps that was a bit of an exaggeration.

But I thought I'd share some news with you which may raise a smile if not a snigger.

As we drove from the Dallas-Fort Worth airport I noticed one of the highways was called President George Bush and wondered out loud what his son's legacy would be. The answer came back very quickly - a library, yes a library in the name of the president with the lowest IQ ever to sit in the White House!

The George W. Bush Presidential Library will be the nation's 13th presidential library, and will eventually be located on

the campus of the Southern Methodist University here in Dallas.

Some quick research revealed that Dubya's reading house will hold millions of pages of official records documenting his two-term administration (2001-2009) as the 43rd US President. In addition to these textual records, I have discovered the library will also boast millions of electronic records as well as an extensive audiovisual collection containing photographs and videotapes.

I wonder if these will include the infamous torture archives the new US President Barack Obama doesn't want us to see ... pictures of prisoner abuse, interrogation, torture including those carried out against Aafia in Bagram, Afghanistan?

Now there's a thought - may be we will get some transparency from those dark years of the Bush War on Terror after all.

\* Tomorrow Yvonne will be writing her blog from Houston as she nears the end of her six State tour of the US.