

# Terrorist Subjectivities: Sentencing Hearings as spaces of Self Re-making and Ideological Contestation



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In this paper, I will examine the speech of men convicted of terrorism through the space of the sentencing hearing. The chronology of the sentencing hearing is such that it serves as the legal finale of the trial, and yet it is also the first instance in which the court provides the convicted (a subject already determined by the law) with a space, in theory, to speak for 'himself.' For many of the men convicted of terrorism, however, the decision to address the court and its public(s) is not just about speaking for and about themselves. The sentencing hearing might be understood as a space for redemption, recuperation and even nostalgia, in which convicted men offer challenges to the foundational discourse of the war on terror, counter what they claim are misconceptions about Islam, and speak to and against the categories of 'guilt' and 'innocence' as analytics as well as claims.

In this paper, I will therefore examine the form and content of sentencing hearings in the context of terrorism trials: the simultaneous interiority and exteriority of the sentencing hearing as a space that is situated within the structure of the law, and yet also provides a space for the articulation of ideas and claims that 'exceed' the law (or at least legal recognition). Does this simultaneous interiority and exteriority render sentencing hearings the most effective or ineffective "site" for the reproduction AND reconstitution of terrorism discourse? How and why do these sentencing hearings seem to matter?

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