

Center for the Victims of Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<http://www.cvt.org/blog/healing-and-human-rights/it%E2%80%99s-time-close-ugly-chapter-america%E2%80%99s-history>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Reflecting on a [recent visit to Guantanamo Bay](#), the BBC's Gordon Corera spoke to PRIs Marco Werman: One of the detainees got hold of a picture and held it up very deliberately. It was a picture of a question mark with a padlock for the punctuation mark. Clearly the implication being: What is happening? Whats going happen to me? Whats going to happen to this place?

Fifteen years ago today, the first detainees arrived at Guantanamo Bay prison. These prisoners of the so-called war on terror were initially housed in open air cages while the prison camps were constructed. In its decade and a half existence, the prison has held 779 detainees. The prison population now stands at 55 with the vast majority never having been charged with a crime. In fact, 19 men have been cleared for transfer by the top defense and intelligence officials.



A shameful practice and one totally inconsistent with the rule of law, indefinite detention without charge or trial creates a forced hopelessness and despair in those languishing. Indefinite detention takes a great physical and psychological toll on a human being. This physical and psychological harm can amount to [cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment](#). It is a form of punishment that does not fit with American values of fairness and justice or with international human rights standards which the U.S. is a state party to, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the [Geneva Conventions](#), and the [UN Convention](#) against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

Treatment or Punishment.

Both the Bush and Obama administrations reduced the numbers of detainees held at Guantanamo Bay. Towards the end of his second term, President Bush transferred 532 detainees. President Obama continued this effort, transferring nearly 200. We at [CVT](#) fear that the incoming administration may reverse these efforts: President-elect Trump vowed to send more detainees to Guantanamo Bay, [saying](#) We're gonna load it up with some bad dudes. Trump's nominee for the Director of the CIA, Congressman Mike Pompeo (R-KS), said America would not be safer and it would be no more moral if we closed Guantanamo and released the folks who were there.

I disagree. Americans are not safer when adversaries have the example of Guantanamo as justification for illegal acts of their own. And to the moral question, there's nothing moral about deliberately subjecting someone to the severe, prolonged and harmful health and mental health problems which arise from this form of torture: chronic anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and enduring personality changes. We risk eroding our own human rights values while also provoking, even inspiring, similar detentions in other countries.

The financial costs are also very high. As of 2015, each detainee - including those who have been cleared - costs American taxpayers an average of [\\$7.58 million](#) per year to hold. Some of these men have been held without charge or trial for more than a decade. The remaining prisoners should be charged and tried, or released.

CVT rejects this inhumane practice. 2017 will find us doubling our efforts to end U.S. policies or practices of indefinite detention without charge or trial. In Washington, D.C., we're regularly meeting with policy makers to educate them on the serious medical consequences of prolonged indefinite detention, advocate against its use and offer recommendations to end it. This dark chapter that opened in the days following 9/11 must finally come to a close and with it, the detentions of those being held without end.

We **heal victims** of torture through unique services and professional care worldwide.

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We **strengthen partners** who heal torture survivors and work to prevent torture.

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We **advocate** for the protection & care of torture survivors and an end to torture.

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877.265.8775 cvt [at] cvt.org

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