

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1180-human-rights-activists-call-for-closure-of-guantanamo>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Coalition marks 15th anniversary of first detainees imprisoned at Guantnamo with rally at Supreme Court and march to Senate confirmation hearings

WASHINGTON, D.C. On January 11, a broad coalition of human rights organizations will mark 15 years since the first prisoners were brought to the U.S. detention facility in Guantnamo Bay, Cuba with a rally and march in Washington, D.C.

They will rally in front of the U.S. Supreme Court at 11:30 am and then march to the Senate Russell Building, where the confirmation hearing of Sen. Jeff Sessions for Attorney General is taking place.

The groups will call on President Obama to expedite releases from Guantnamo and to make public the full U.S. Senate Torture Report. They demand that President-elect Trump reject the use of torture, continue transferring men from Guantnamo, end indefinite detention, and reject national security or other measures that discriminate against Muslims.

The groups will speak to the nominations of Jeff Sessions for Attorney General and Mike Pompeo for CIA Director. Senator Sessions consistently voted to prevent the closure of Guantnamo and refused to strengthen legislative bans on the abuse of detainees. When in Congress, Pompeo opposed the release of any of the U.S. Senate Torture Report and misrepresented the reality at Guantnamo in efforts to keep the prison open.

Torture, discrimination, and indefinite detention are wrong. Any attempt by the Trump administration to bring back torture or to send new people to Guantnamo will be strongly opposed in the United States and throughout the world. Any effort to persecute Muslims or any other religious, racial, or ethnic group through special immigration or surveillance measures is unacceptable.

The Supreme Court rally will feature statements by representatives of Amnesty International USA, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, The National Religious Campaign Against Torture, September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, Witness Against Torture, and other groups. The march will include figures dressed in the iconic detainee uniform of orange jumpsuits and hoods and have signs addressing the incoming Trump administration.

Organizational Quotes

Eight years ago, President Obama began his presidency by pledging to close the detention camp at Guantnamo Bay. He should end his presidency by fulfilling that promise. Today, it remains a living symbol of U.S. human rights abuses. The vast majority of people who remain there have never been charged with, let alone tried for, any crime. President-elect Trump has indicated that, instead of closing Guantnamo, he would like to add to the population or attempt a return to large-scale, systematic torture. The urgency is clear: President Obama must not leave Guantnamo to Trump." ~ **Elizabeth Beavers, Senior Campaigner, Security with Human Rights, Amnesty International USA**

Indefinite detention without charge must never be normalized. As long as even a single man is held without charge at Guantnamo, indefinite detention will continue to corrupt our democracy and our very soul. We fear that its reach may expand to ensnare other vulnerable populations on our own soil. That is one reason why Trumps pledge to keep Guantnamo open is so dangerous. Witness Against Torture demands that the Guantnamo prison a powerful symbol of Islamophobia, racism, and lawlessness be immediately closed and its prisoners either tried or released. ~ **Josie Setzler, Witness Against Torture**

"Because President Obama failed to fulfill his campaign promise, Guantnamo enters its 16th year of operation today. The future of the prison and the fate of the remaining men is as perilous as ever. We are gathering in Washington, D.C. to bear witness to the suffering of our clients at Guantnamo, and to stand in solidarity with those throughout the world who are committed to seeing Guantnamo close and reject the use of torture under any circumstances. One thing is certain: we will persevere. Just as we have done with the last two administrations, we will hold the Trump administration and Congress accountable until the prison shuts and the U.S. ends its practice of detaining individuals indefinitely without charge or fair trials." ~ **Aliya Hussain, Advocacy Program Manager, Center for Constitutional Rights**

Fifteen years is far too long to leave a symbol of torture and detention without trial festering on the American soul. Guantnamo should never have been opened; it should have been closed 10 years ago when President Bush said it should be closed, and it should have been closed seven years ago when President Obama promised to close it. Now we ask President-elect Trump, will you be the one? Will you

finally close Guantanamo and close this wound on the American conscience? ~ **Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture**

Sadly, this year we have to send messages to both a president and a president-elect about the reasons why Guantanamo must be closed. President Obama knows all the reasons, as he has eloquently explained throughout his presidency, but now he needs to find the courage to do something extraordinary in his last week in office, and close the prison once and for all. This is necessary not just to fulfill his own promise to close it, made eight long years ago, but also to prevent Donald Trump from sending new prisoners there, and refusing to release any others, as he has threatened, as recently as last week. Mr. Obama, close it now! ~ **Andy Worthington, CloseGuantanamo.org**

The National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms continues to be deeply disturbed by the ongoing operation of Guantanamo Bay prison, a facility that exists to house an exclusively Muslim male population in the War on Terror. The prison exists as one of the most egregious manifestations of the War on Terror, demonstrating how the U.S. government has completely devalued and dehumanized Muslim life. We call on the U.S. government to immediately cede the practice of torture and to close Guantanamo Bay once and for all to rectify the damage inflicted on so many innocent lives. A country that prides itself on the protection of human rights and the upholding of the rule of law should follow no other course of action. ~ **Dr. Maha Hilal, Executive Director, National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms**

For fifteen years we as a nation have stood by and watched all too silently our government indefinitely detaining prisoners at Guantanamo without charge or trial. Our outgoing president has failed in his promise to close this prison and our incoming president does not view himself responsible for safeguarding the constitutional values which are meant to protect those in our custody from the abuses of indefinite detention and lack of due process. As Americans we must join together and loudly reject the injustice being committed in our names and speak out for those who cannot until justice is served. ~ **Robert S. McCaw, CAIR National Government Affairs Director**

Despite the promise of President Obama to close the prison at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, fifteen years after its opening the prison remains as an affront to the rule of law and basic human rights. President-elect Trump's vow to expand it now threatens to entrench its illegal premise: that the president may, by fiat, indefinitely detain any person, without trial, in military custody. If we fail to resist this entrenchment, the free citizenship essential to democracy will effectively disappear. ~ **Bruce Miller, president, and Nancy Talanian, director, No More Guantnamos**

It was outrageous enough when G.W. Bush threw 779 men into a torture camp without legal rights; insult was heaped upon injury when the Obama administration refused to hold any Bush era official accountable for those war crimes. But the incoming Trump regime threatens - and even jokes of - an even worse human rights emergency with its plans to put more people in Guantanamo and waterboard them. Close the U.S. prison in Guantanamo down now, in the name of humanity. ~ **Debra Sweet, Director, The World Can't Wait**

Fifteen years. Two administrations. President-elect Trump - Do what others were not willing or able: End torture in all its varied forms and pseudonyms. End indefinite detention and restore rule of law. Speed up the calendar for the 9-11 trial and others (four and a half years and counting ... disgraceful). End Gitmo. ~ **Colleen Kelly, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows**

The Guantanamo Bay Prison has been the site of horrendous torture including brutal beatings, sleep deprivation, solitary confinement, sexual humiliation and terrorizing prisoners with dogs. These torture methods have caused permanent physical and mental damage to prisoners and are a blight on the United States. As an organization that has served torture survivors for almost 20 years, TASSC calls on President Trump to follow in the footsteps of President Obama and make a commitment to close Guantanamo Bay forever. ~ **Gizachew Emiru, Esq., Executive Director, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)**

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