

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

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

https://www.cair.com/op_ed/a-prayer-to-close-guantanamo/

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Yesterday, I had the honor and privilege to open the 16th Anniversary Prayer Vigil that demanded the closure of the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. When a colleague asked me if I wanted to give the prayer remarks, I was excited and immediately said yes.

I remembered participating in a mock-trial in my high school government class and hearing the various Islamophobic sentiment during our debate on Guantanamo. I credit that class for nudging me to discover my passion for political advocacy and engagement. Some of my classmates made comments like, they don't need to be given their human rights and it is okay to torture them because they are Muslims who are trying to kill us. The experience of debating about Guantanamo provided me with the determination to help educate others about Islam and Muslims, and to ensure that we have a seat at the decision-making table. I desired to take action to help those imprisoned in Guantanamo, and was grateful that in the following years, I am able to participate in such efforts.

The existence and management of Guantanamo prison is a violation of the U.S. Constitution's due process laws and robs the people imprisoned of their human dignity. Many of the detainees are people who have not been charged with a crime and been cleared for release for years. The U.S. Supreme Court has made three major rulings regarding Guantanamo that emphasize the level of dehumanization and constitutional violations occurring in this U.S. military prison. In 2004, in *Rasul v. Bush*, the court granted the illegally-held prisoners habeas corpus rights, which is the opportunity to have their cases heard in a fair and just trial. In 2006, in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, the court again ruled in favor of the prisoners due to the military commission trial system at Guantanamo not having the power to proceed because its structures and procedures violate both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the four Geneva Conventions signed in 1949. In 2008, in *Boumediene v. Bush*, the justices decided that those entrapped in Guantanamo had constitutionally guaranteed habeas corpus rights that entitled them to be heard by an impartial judge. For all these reasons and more, I am an advocate for closing down the Guantanamo prison.

Below is the transcript of the prayer I gave at the Guantanamo Prayer Vigil on January 11, 2018:

Bismillahi Al Rahman Al Raheem

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,

May His peace and blessings be upon his prophets and messengers, and all those who follow in their footsteps, ameen.

We gather here today heartbroken that our government is guilty of having a prison where it tortures and brutalizes 41 people who have not been charged or convicted of any crime; grieving that our government leaders neglect to uphold and implement the human rights and decency granted in our nation's Constitution.

May we remember the core tenants of respect, dignity, and justice for all that this country was founded upon.

As Thomas Jefferson declared in 1779

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

These core tenants of fairness and human dignity are reflected in what has been labeled as one of the greatest expressions of justice in history, verse 135 of Surah Al Nisa or the chapter honoring women in the Quran.

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the desires of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, indeed Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do

We ask God to help us speak the truth and implement justice regardless of who is the victim and who is the perpetrator.

We ask Allah never to let our personal grudges, bad experiences or personal agendas prevent us from giving every human being the honor, dignity and respect entitled to them by their Creator.

The Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: {O people! Your God is one and your forefather (Adam) is one. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a white person is not better than a black person and a black person is not better than a white person, except in what they may have of piety.}

We ask you, O Allah, to give us the strength and wisdom to not let prejudice and racism define and dictate how we treat one another.

We ask You to give us the ability to realize that while we today are not the targets of torture and dehumanization, that we tomorrow can

become the objects of that same treatment.

We ask You to guide us to recognize truth as truth and bless us to implement it and falsehood as falsehood and bless us to avoid it.

That when we do not rise and call for the exercise of human rights we know to be true from the moral conscience youve instilled in us and the U.S. constitution, we set a precedent of allowing the whims and agenda of whoever is in power to dictate who deserves their human rights and who doesnt.

We ask you to give each one of us the strength to fight for the rights of all people who are detained illegally and protect their right to fulfill their dreams, aspirations and promises made with their children and loved ones.

We know that we are not the ones to judge who should have freedom, dignity and respect and who should not.

With that we pray to you, the One God of Ibrahim, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad and us all for the true implementation of our American values of freedom and justice for all.

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