

Witness Against Torture

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

<https://witnessagainsttorture.com/2013/03/26/as-men-at-guantanamo-hunger-strike-human-rights-activists-respond-with-fast-and-demonstrations/>

Campaign and Advocacy

We save our lengthy posts for this site. If you want quicker, more frequent updates about our actions, along with photos and videos, please head over to our [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) pages.

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Witness Against Torture (www.witnesstorture.org)

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On Sunday, March 24 human rights activists throughout the United States began a seven day fast and series of actions in solidarity with the men currently on hunger strike at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Dozens of men, according to detainee lawyers, are entering their seventh week of a hunger strike to protest their indefinite detention and a new wave of alleged abuses. The U.S. Navy now reports that three hunger strikers have been hospitalized and that ten are being force fed a practice condemned by human rights organizations and used in efforts to break prior hunger strikes at Guantanamo. Attorneys also report that some hunger strikers have lost consciousness and are experiencing severe drops in body weight.

Already, Witness Against Torture (WAT) has demonstrated in locations large and small from New York City, to Chicago, to Perrysburg, Ohio. At least 80 people nationwide are participating in the fast, with more joining each day. Activists are also writing letters to the detainees and reaching out to the White House, U.S. Southern Command and the Department of Defense with newly urgent calls that the notorious prison close.

In New York City on Sunday, Witness Against Torture created dramatic images in front of the Times Square military recruiting station, juxtaposing the iconic orange clad, black hooded figures with the advertisements for the Navy and Marines.

It is tragic, says New York City WAT organizer Jeremy Varon, that the men at Guantanamo should have to risk death through hunger to protest the denial of their basic rights. The hunger strike signals the colossal failure of the Obama administration, which promised to close Guantanamo, and of Congress, which has placed enormous barriers to ever shuttering the prison. If the hunger strikers start dying, we know where the blame for their deaths lies.

In Chicago, protestors gathered on Sunday in front of President Obamas private home, reading the names of all 166 men still held at Guantanamo. Pat Bronte, an attorney for several detainees in Guantanamo, told the protesters how much it means to them to know that Americans are standing with them in their pursuit of justice.

Chicagos Jerica Arents, a teacher at DePaul University, says, Participating in the fast serves as a physical reminder to me that there are men languishing in Guantanamo, refusing food because it is the only means they have to protest their indefinite detention.

More than four years after President Obama promised to close Guantanamo, says WAT organizer Frida Berrigan, the U.S. government is investing tens of millions of new dollars in the prison facility. I can understand why the detained men feel so helpless about ever leaving Guantanamo and being reunited with their families. We have not forgotten them, and continue our struggle to close the prison.

Actions in New York, Illinois, California, Connecticut, Ohio, and other locations will continue throughout the week and can be viewed at www.witnesstorture.org/events/

166 men remain imprisoned at Guantanamo. 86 have been cleared for release. All are subject to indefinite detention and held at a cost to U.S taxpayers of \$800,000 per year per man.

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Witness Against Torture formed in 2005 when 25 Americans went to Guantanamo Bay to protest the detention facility. Since then, the group has organized vigils, marches, nonviolent direct actions, and educational events calling for the closure of Guantanamo, an end to U.S. torture, accountability for the torturers, and justice for the victims.