

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/news-events/press-releases/111-ngos-call-biden-close-guant%C3%A1namo-end-indefinite-detention>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

February 2, 2021, Washington, D.C. Today, more than a hundred non-governmental organizations joined a letter led by the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Center for Victims of Torture, urging President Joe Biden to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and end indefinite military detention. The letter is signed by organizations ranging from those working to end anti-Muslim discrimination and torture to immigrant rights organizations and organizations working broadly on civil rights, civil liberties, and racial justice at the national and local level. It emphasizes the devastating and ongoing consequences of the prison, including the effect of a post-9/11 national security framework on domestic racial justice struggles and efforts to end police violence. The letter reads, in part:

Guantanamo embodies the fact that, for nearly two decades following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States government has viewed communities of color citizens and non-citizens alike through a security threat lens, to devastating consequences. This is not a problem of the past. Guantanamo continues to cause escalating and profound damage to the men who still languish there, and the approach it exemplifies continues to fuel and justify bigotry, stereotyping, and stigma. Guantanamo entrenches racial divisions and racism more broadly, and risks facilitating additional rights violations.

The president has supported closing Guantanamo since his days as a senator, and now he has the power to do it, said [Scott Roehm](#), Washington director at the Center for Victims of Torture. This isn't an intractable problem, but it's also not one that lends itself to perfect solutions. If the president is determined to close the prison, he can, and in relatively short order. Unless and until he does, Guantanamo's corrosive impact both literally and for what it represents will continue to deepen and spread.

Last September, a group of advocates, including Mr. Roehm and [Wells Dixon](#) from the Center for Constitutional Rights, published a road map for closing Guantanamo swiftly, responsibly, and consistent with U.S. human rights obligations. It can be [found here](#).

That so many groups are calling for an end to the indefinite detention of Muslim men without charge or fair trial at Guantanamo, and see it as part of a broader movement to uphold human rights, demand accountability for U.S.-sanctioned torture and violence, and fundamentally change the flawed criminal legal system, is significant, said [Aliya Hussain](#), a Center for Constitutional Rights Advocacy Program Manager. There is wide-ranging public support for President Biden to close Guantanamo. He must take bold and decisive action, and we will hold him accountable until he does.

The NGO letter, signed by 111 organizations, comes as those who have worked to close the prison throughout its 19-year existence mount a renewed push. Other signatories include Amnesty International USA, Detention Watch Network, MADRE, Refugee Council USA, and September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows.

Nearly eight hundred Muslim men and boys were held at Guantanamo after 2002, all but a handful without charge or trial. Forty remain, at the cost of \$540 million per year, making Guantanamo the most expensive prison in the world. Closing Guantanamo and ending indefinite detention of those held there is a necessary step in a meaningful reckoning with the full scope of damage that the post-9/11 approach has caused.

In a related effort, *The New York Review of Books* published an open letter from Mansoor Adayfi, Moazzam Begg, Mohamedou Ould Salahi, Lakhdar Boumediani, Sami Al Hajj, and Moussa Zemmouri, and Ahmed Errachidi, men formerly detained at Guantanamo, calling for the closure of the prison. Their letter, published Friday, can be [found here](#).

[Read the NGO letter sent to President Biden today.](#)

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Founded in 1985, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) is the oldest and largest U.S.-based torture survivor rehabilitation center. Through programs operating in the U.S., the Middle East, and Africa involving psychologists, social workers, physical therapists, physicians, psychiatrists, and nurses CVT annually rebuilds the lives of nearly 30,000 primary and secondary survivors. CVT also provides training and technical assistance to torture treatment centers, and engages in legal and policy advocacy that leverages the expertise of five stakeholder groups: survivors, clinicians, human rights lawyers, operational and humanitarian aid providers, and foreign policy experts. In June 2019, CVT and Physicians for Human Rights issued [Deprivation and Despair: The Crisis of Medical Care at Guantanamo](#). CVT has filed friend of the court briefs in several of the Center for Constitutional Rights Guantanamo cases, including [Al Bihani v. Trump](#) and [United States v. Majid Khan](#). Visit www.cvt.org.

The Center for Constitutional Rights works with communities under threat to fight for justice and liberation through litigation, advocacy, and strategic communications. Since 1966, the Center for Constitutional Rights has taken on oppressive systems of power, including structural racism, gender oppression, economic inequity, and governmental overreach. Learn more at ccrjustice.org. We have

led the legal battle over Guantanamo for more than 19 years representing clients in two Supreme Court cases and organizing and coordinating hundreds of pro bono lawyers across the country, ensuring that all the men detained at Guantanamo have had the option of legal representation. The Center for Constitutional Rights is responsible for many Guantanamo cases in many venues, representing men in their habeas cases in federal court and before the military commissions and Periodic Review Boards, the families of men who died at Guantanamo, and men who have been released and are seeking accountability in international courts. Follow the Center for Constitutional Rights on social media: [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) on Facebook, [@theCCR](#) on Twitter, and [ccrjustice](#) on Instagram.

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