

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1256-pressrelease-011122>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 2022

CONTACT: Rev. T.C. Morrow, tmorrow@nrcat.org and 202-547-1920

Twenty-Nine National Faith Groups Call on Congress and President Biden to Close the Prison at Guantanamo Bay

WASHINGTON, DC On Tuesday, Jan. 11, twenty-nine national faith groups sent a [letter](#) to President Biden and all Members of Congress calling on them to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and to ensure that all of the people held there are either released, agree to a plea deal, or receive a fair trial in a federal court.

Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, released the following statement:

For twenty years our country has held people without charge or trial in Guantanamo. Some of the people we still hold there were tortured by the U.S. after they were captured. Others have been cleared to leave Guantanamo yet remain imprisoned there, indefinitely detained without trial. Today, on the anniversary of the day the first detainees were sent to Guantanamo, a broad swath of the American faith community wrote to President Biden and to Congress to call on them to finally close the prison. Twenty years of Guantanamo is twenty years too long.

The letter is available in [PDF](#) and reads as follows:

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,

As members of the American faith community, we call on you to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and to ensure that all of the people held there are either released, agree to a plea deal, or receive a fair trial in a federal court.

The prison at Guantanamo was opened as part of an effort to hold suspected terrorists outside of the protections of U.S. law. This was wrong to begin with, however this immoral act was compounded by the decision to torture many of the prisoners. In the fullness of time we now know that many of the people sent to Guantanamo were never involved in terrorism in the first place.

Even today, 20 years after the prison was opened, most of the prisoners have never been tried or convicted of any crime. Guilty or innocent the right to a trial is a bedrock American value, yet it has been denied to those at Guantanamo. Allowing the government to claim a war-based authority to hold people for decades without charge or trial, in a conflict that has no clear end-state or conditions for victory, and for which the government does not recognize clear geographic boundaries, is an extraordinary and dangerous expansion of governmental authority.

While the sustained immorality of holding people without trial ought to be reason enough to close the prison, it is also unreasonably expensive costing more than half a billion dollars each year, or over \$13 million per prisoner per year. This is an utterly irrational figure to spend on a prison for only 39 people.

As our elected leaders, you are responsible for spending American tax dollars wisely. More importantly you are responsible for upholding American values. The prison at Guantanamo does neither. We pray that you will close it.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Union for Reform Judaism
The Episcopal Church
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Presbyterian Church, (USA)
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Franciscan Action Network
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
American Friends Service Committee

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Friends Committee on National Legislation
American Sikh Council
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Alliance of Baptists
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Pax Christi USA
American Baptist Churches USA
Center on Conscience and War
Armenian Church of America
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
National Council of Churches
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 300 religious organizations have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

###

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

PO Box 91820
Washington, DC 20090
(t) 202.547.1920
(f) 202.547.1921