

November 18, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate

Dear Senator,

The undersigned leaders of various faith backgrounds ask you to support sections 1031, 1032, and 1033 of the Senate Armed Services Committee's version of S. 1197 (the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act). These provisions, while still restrictive, would allow our government to take practical steps toward drawing down the prisoner population in Guantanamo Bay and eventually closing the detention center.

Although we are of many faiths, we share common convictions which lead us to support closing Guantanamo. First, we believe that torture is morally wrong. Second, both as people of faith and as Americans, we believe that indefinite detention without charge or trial is contrary to the founding values of our country. Guantanamo is a place where prisoners were tortured and where the vast majority of the detainees continue to be held indefinitely without charge or trial. Closing it is the right thing to do.

More than half of the prisoners in Guantanamo have been held there for years despite having been cleared for transfer. Section 1031 would simplify the process of transferring detainees if they are not a threat to the United States or if their transfer is in the national security interest of the United States. It also provides a process for transferring prisoners who, in the future, are determined to no longer pose any threat to the United States. These are reasonable changes and should be supported.

Many of the detainees in Guantanamo face serious threats to their health. Section 1032 allows for temporary transfers for medical treatment when that treatment is necessary to prevent death or imminent significant injury or harm, and it would be excessively costly to treat the detainee in Guantanamo. This is an important humanitarian provision that will also save our country money and should be supported.

The right to a trial is a core American value. Many of the detainees in Guantanamo have been there for over a decade, yet still have no real prospect of facing trial or justice. So far, military commissions have encountered seemingly endless delays and have produced seven convictions at a cost of nearly \$600 million. Section 1033 gives the government the option of trying detainees in federal courts when doing so is in the national security interest of the United States.

This is a reasonable provision that may finally lead to the trial of many Guantanamo detainees. It should be supported.

Though limited, these are practical, common sense provisions which place our great nation on the path toward solving the seemingly intractable problems posed by Guantanamo. In an era of austerity, they also provide good stewardship of taxpayer dollars by helping to eliminate wasteful spending. More importantly, they begin to address a serious moral dilemma – our nation cannot be a beacon of liberty and justice while continuing to operate an offshore prison which disregards the rule of law. It is time for us to end this moral crisis.

Please support Sections 1031, 1032, and 1033 of the Senate Armed Services Committee version of S. 1197.

Sincerely,

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner  
President, The Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley  
General Secretary  
American Baptist Churches USA

Kavneet Singh  
General Secretary  
World Sikh Council - America Region

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Legate  
Armenian Church of America

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins  
General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Joel Boot  
Executive Director  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Rev. Peter Morales  
President  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Stanley J. Noffsinger  
General Secretary  
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Dr. Tom De Vries  
General Secretary  
Reformed Church in America

Rabbi Jill Jacobs  
Executive Director  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed  
National Director of Interfaith & Community Alliances  
Islamic Society of North America

Rev. Dr. William F. Schulz  
President and CEO  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. Richard Killmer  
Executive Director  
National Religious Campaign Against  
Torture

Sandy Sorensen  
Director of Washington Office  
United Church of Christ, Justice and  
Witness Ministries

Sr. Patricia J. Chappell  
Executive Director  
Pax Christi USA

Rabbi Robert Dobrusin  
Co-Chair, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for  
Human Rights

Patrick Carolan  
Executive Director  
Franciscan Action Network

Rev. Laura Everett  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Council of Churches

Rev. Steve Copley  
Director  
Arkansas Interfaith Alliance

Adrian Miller  
Executive Director  
Colorado Council of Churches

Rev. Scott Anderson  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Council of Churches

Jim Winkler  
General Secretary, United Methodist  
General Board of Church and Society

Barbara Weinstein  
Director  
Commission on Social Action of Reform  
Judaism

Sr. Simone Campbell  
Executive Director  
NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice  
Lobby

Shan Cretin  
General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee

Very Rev. John Edmunds, S.T.  
President  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Dr. Craig M. Watts  
Co-Moderator  
Disciples Peace Fellowship

Gerry Lee  
Director  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Rev. J. George Reed  
Executive Director  
North Carolina Council of Churches

David Leslie  
Executive Director  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Rev. Dr. Russ Meyer  
Executive Director  
Florida Council of Churches

Linda Lee Snyder  
Interim Executive Director  
New Hampshire Council of Churches

Rev. William Barter  
Executive Director  
Maine Council of Churches

Joan Diefenbach  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Council of Churches

Rev. Brian McLaren  
Author/Speaker

Rev. Dr. Jerry D. Campbell  
President  
Claremont Lincoln University

Rev. Sandra L. Strauss  
Director of Public Advocacy  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Rev. Canon Peg Chamberlin  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Council of Churches

Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College