

Witness Against Torture

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

<https://witnessagainsttorture.com/2014/06/27/wat-delivers-letters-to-senators-john-mccain-kelly-ayotte/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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.

Today, Witness Against Torture will deliver letters to Senators John McCain and Kelly Ayotte. Please Read the full text below. If you are willing and able please print and send the letters to the Senators on your own.

Honorable Senator John McCain
241 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

To the Honorable Senator John McCain:

We are members of Witness Against Torture, a group dedicated to closing the prison at Guantanamo and ending US torture. June 26 is designated by the United Nations as International Day in Support of Survivors and Victims of Torture. We are here in Washington, with torture survivors from across the world, to voice our opposition to torture and to demand that the United States take the lead in ending this barbaric practice.

We appeal to you today as a survivor of torture, an outspoken critic of Guantanamo, and a voice of reason in your party with respect to detention policies to resist congressional efforts to block the closing of Guantanamo. We specifically ask that you: a) oppose the proposed amendment by Senator Kelly Ayotte, which would make closing Guantanamo impossible through its onerous restrictions on transfers from the prison, and b) quash any thought from Ted Cruz or other Senators to legislate even more severe restrictions of the release of men from Guantanamo.

The indefinite detention without charge or trial of men at Guantanamo all of whom have suffered cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment is immoral and un-American. It inflames Americas enemies and angers its allies. It degrades our Constitution and the principles it enshrines. Guantanamo must close, regardless of who is president.

We know that you know this. You led efforts to pass the Detainee Treatment Act, which sought to guarantee the humane treatment of all those held in US custody. You campaigned for president on a platform of closing Guantanamo. Just last June, you issued with Senator Feinstein a statement in which you restated your belief that it is in our national interest to end detention at Guantanamo. You also took the extraordinary step of calling on President Obama to end the forced-feeding of men at Guantanamo, which medical authorities and human rights bodies describe as torture.

We can only imagine how your own ordeal of being tortured has shaped your views on Guantanamo. We honor your experience and praise your voice on this difficult issue.

We are also aware of how the exchange of Bowe Bergdahl for Guantanamo prisoners has inflamed passions and led to renewed calls to keep the prison open for the foreseeable future. Even you tweeted after the capture of the Benghazi suspect Ahmed Abu Khattala that Guantanamo is where we put terrorists . . . where else can you take him to?

Such words make no sense, especially coming from you. Seventy-eight of the men at Guantanamo have been cleared for transfer by the US military and intelligence agencies. Some among them were captured wholly in error and have no business being in US custody let alone tortured, torn from their families, and condemned to a living grave. The Bergdahl-Taliban prisoner exchange should have no impact, whatsoever, on their fate. Others at Guantanamo are held on flimsy bases, and all the men there deserve human rights and due process. Adding to the population at Guantanamo, which your tweet proposes, would be a catastrophic step backward for a nation eager to recommit to the rule of law and find its moral compass.

We both hope and insist that you will set political games aside and re-dedicate yourself to closing Guantanamo. History smiles on those who find the courage to do what is right. May you find this courage. Your office may issue a response to this letter to: witnesstorture@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Witness Against Torture June 27, 2014

Honorable Senator Kelly Ayotte
144 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington DC 20510

To the Honorable Senator Kelly Ayotte:

We are members of Witness Against Torture, a group dedicated to closing the prison at Guantanamo and ending US torture. June 26 is designated by the United Nations as International Day in Support of Survivors and Victims of Torture. We are here in Washington, with torture survivors from across the world, to voice our opposition to torture and to demand that the United States take the lead in ending this barbaric practice.

We have come to your office today to express in person our firm opposition to your efforts to keep the detention camp at Guantanamo open indefinitely by introducing legislative barriers to the transfer of men from the prison.

Restoring a blanket-ban on all transfers of prisoners to Yemen is an irrational and draconian measure. It punishes men by simple virtue of their national origin and irrespective of the particulars of their cases. Prisoners can be safely repatriated to Yemen, and should be done so without legislative obstacle. We urge you to reconsider your position on the Yemeni prisoners and renounce your leadership role in dooming them to a miserable, open-ended detention.

Your proposed amendment further restricting transfers is especially disturbing. By barring transfers to any country in which a released detainee has subsequently committed terrorist acts, the amendment would make it effectively impossible to release most prisoners in the camp. Seventy-eight men are currently at Guantanamo, we may remind you, have been cleared for transfer by the US government itself. Some among them were captured wholly in error and pose zero threat to the United States. Standing in the way of their release is unworthy of your office. And all the men at Guantanamo deserve human rights and due process.

The indefinite detention without charge or trial of men at Guantanamo all of whom have been tortured, in body or mind is immoral and un-American. It inflames Americas enemies and angers its allies. It degrades our Constitution and the principles it enshrines. Guantanamo must close, regardless of who is president.

Last year, a bipartisan effort led to the revision of the NDAA, lessening restrictions on the transfer of detainees and granting the Executive greater flexibility in resolving the fate of individual prisoners. We urge you to honor that effort and abide by the current NDAA with respect to transfer provisions.

We recognize the controversy the exchange of Bowe Bergdahl for Guantanamo prisoners has sparked and understand the desire of Americans to be kept safe. But nothing about the prisoner exchange makes Guantanamo any less wrong and its closure any less urgent. Using overblown claims of security risks and a broader politics of fear to take America backwards on Guantanamo is unacceptable.

Your office may issue a response to this letter to: witnesstorture@gmail.com.

Respectfully,

Witness Against Torture