

# Human Rights First

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

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/after-20-years-guantanamo-must-be-closed>

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**WASHINGTON** Today, on the 20th anniversary of the first detainees arriving at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, Human Rights First reiterates its call to end military commissions and close the facility.

After twenty years of operation, the Guantanamo experiment long ago tarnished the United States reputation as a global leader on human rights, said **Michael Breen, President and CEP of Human Rights First**. Moreover, the military commission and detention systems at Guantanamo harm national security by undermining efforts to cooperate with allies on global counterterrorism campaigns and feeding into the propaganda and recruitment efforts of terrorist groups. Guantanamo has proven itself to be a costly moral and strategic failure; after two disastrous and detrimental decades, it must finally be closed.

In the two decades since its opening, almost all of the nearly 800 men who have passed through the prison have been held without charge or trial, and many of the detainees were subjected to torture. Guantanamo costs \$540 million per year more than \$13 million per detainee for the 39 men who remain. Thirteen of those detainees have already been cleared for transfer.

Bipartisan calls for closing Guantanamo have ranged from [President Bush](#) to [President Obama](#). Among the [former government officials](#) who support closure are five Secretaries of Defense, eight Secretaries of State, six national Security Advisors, five Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and dozens of retired generals and admirals.

President Biden and officials in his administration have been among those who agree it is past time to close the prison. On the campaign trail, then-candidate Biden [stated](#) that the prison undermines American national security by fueling terrorist recruitment and is at odds with our values as a country.

Once [Biden took office](#), Press Secretary Jen Psaki made clear that the administration's goal and intention is to close the prison by the end of President Biden's administration, and Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin believes Guantanamo Bay should be closed. He fully supports the administration's desire to do that, and he fully expects to be a partner in the inter-agency process and discussion as that moves forward.

Despite these helpful statements, President Biden has made disappointingly little progress towards closing the prison during his first year in office. The administration has [transferred](#) only one detainee, cleared for transfer since 2016. While there is no perfect solution, the Biden administration can close the prison, even without the help of Congress, and should act swiftly to do so.

Closing the prison would not only end the unconscionable, counterproductive morass at Guantanamo that has gone on two decades too long, but it would also signify that the United States is trying to turn the page on a dark chapter in its history in which it too often ignored the rule of law and respect for human rights in the name of national security and counterterrorism.

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