

15 Years of Human Rights Abuses at Guantánamo-SHUT IT DOWN!

January 11,
2017

January 11 marks exactly 15 years since the U.S. facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba opened as an indefinite detention facility. Although the government has released hundreds of prisoners, as of January 5, **55 people still languish in a facility that undermines the rule of law that supposedly separates our country from chaos.** Most are being held without trial and over a third (19) have been cleared for release (CNN, 1/5/17). 10 await trial, and **26 are considered “forever prisoners”** which means most have life sentences without having faced trial (*Miami Herald*, 12/12/16). Only three who are there were convicted of crimes (Human Rights First, 11/16/15). Many have been exposed to harsh conditions that have been described as torture, including the force feeding of hunger strikers. Many of these techniques were confirmed in the 2014 Senate report on post-9/11 CIA “interrogations.”



2013 protest at the White House
(from PopularResistance.org)

While President Obama pledged to close the prison at the beginning of his first term in 2009, Congress repeatedly blocked funding to shut down the site. **Guantánamo has brought international condemnation upon the US**, once considered by many as an example of democracy and the rule of law. This issue is of even more importance as the US has begun to normalize relations with Cuba, and incoming President Donald Trump pledged to “load [Guantánamo] up with bad dudes.”

In January 2015, the *New York Times* reported that “President Obama’s goal ... is to deplete the Guantánamo prison to the point where it houses 60 to 80 people and keeping it open no longer makes economic sense.” **Guantánamo has been referred to as “the most expensive prison on earth,”** with the *Miami Herald* reporting in 2011 that it then cost \$800,000 per year per inmate, climbing to an estimated \$2.6 million per person in 2014 (Politifact, 12/21/14). Overall, the cumulative costs from 2002 to today are well over \$3 billion.

Amnesty International (AI), the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), and others continue to call for the prison to be shut down, with CCR noting in 2014 that the (supposed) end of combat operations in Afghanistan “should guide the closing of the prison and bring a swift end to years of indefinite detention without charge or trial.” Amnesty is conducting a campaign to get President Obama to close the prison before he leaves office: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/CloseGuantanamo>.

In Portland, the Portland Close Guantánamo Coalition is working to ask City Council to welcome released Guantánamo prisoners who have no host country to return to. For more information see: <http://www.nogitmos.org/portlandcloseguantanamo>

Today in Washington, DC, AI, CCR, Code Pink, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms and others had a mid-day rally (<http://www.witnessagainsttorture.com/2017/01/04/january-11th-call-action>). Rally promotional materials state that “Guantánamo remains a living symbol of US torture and other human rights abuses, and a place of misery for the 59 men it still houses.”

In 2012 on the 10th anniversary, this call to action was made, which is still valid:

Close Guantánamo and end abuses of detainees everywhere; end indefinite detention and military commissions; charge and fairly try detained men in federal court or release them; ensure accountability for torture and other serious abuses; fully investigate, prosecute and provide remedy for victims; counter Islamophobia underpinning Guantánamo and US detention policies more broadly; and ensure security with human rights.

Continuing to hold people in an off-shore prison without prosecution is an unacceptable violation of human rights, which is inspiring people to take action against the United States in acts of so-called “terrorism.” **It is far past time to shut it down.**

Local groups organizing today’s action include the Peace and Justice Works (PJW) Iraq Affinity Group, Amnesty International Group 48, the Portland Close Guantánamo Coalition, Jewish Voice for Peace-PDX, Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights, Veterans for Peace Chapter 72 (Portland), Occupy Portland Elder Caucus and others.

This flyer was prepared
in January, 2017 by the
Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is February 13.

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Contact us about our meetings !