

GUANTÁNAMO: Serving Injustice for 16 Long Years

January 11, 2018

January 11 marks exactly 16 years since the U.S. opened its notorious detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Although at one point roughly 770 prisoners were held, **just 41 people remain in indefinite detention in this legal no-man's land** (Politico, 10/12/17). 26—nearly two thirds—are considered “forever prisoners” which means most have life sentences without having faced trial (*Washington Post*, 12/21/17). Five of the 41 have been cleared for release, but President Donald Trump refuses to allow it (closeguantanamo.org/Prisoners). 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.”



Untitled by Muhammad Ansi

As President-Elect, Trump pledged to “load [Guantánamo] up with bad dudes.” In November, he suggested the man who killed eight people by driving into them with his truck in New York should be put there as an “enemy combatant” even though he wasn’t captured on a field of battle (BBC, 11/1/17).

One of the most compelling developments has been an art show at John Jay College in New York, featuring paintings and other art by detainees at Guantánamo. Many of the paintings were based around the ocean, despite many of the prisoners never having seen the ocean. When a hurricane came in 2014, the guards temporarily took down tarps that had been blocking their views (*New York Times*, 9/15/17). Once the paintings became internationally recognized, the US declared no more art would be shared, and the detainees no longer legally owned them (*NY Times*, 11/27/17).



Untitled (binoculars) by Ahmed Rabbani

In December, Defense Secretary James Mattis visited the troops stationed in Guantánamo to give them a pep talk about being ready for war (perhaps with North Korea?). His was the first such visit since 2002, and he made no mention about the fate of the prisoners (Associated Press, 12/21/17).

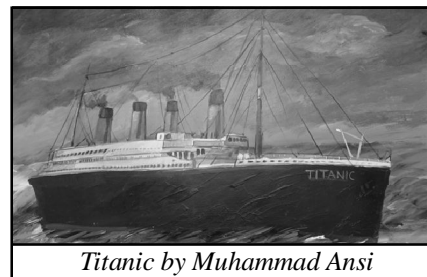
Guantánamo has been referred to as “the most expensive prison on earth,” with the Miami Herald reporting in 2011 that it then cost \$800,000 per year per inmate, climbing to an estimated \$2.6 million per person in 2014 (Politifact, 12/21/14). Overall, the cumulative costs from 2002 to today are well 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.*”



Giant by Moath Al Alwi

Today (Jan. 11) in Washington DC, AI, CCR, Code Pink, Witness Against Torture and others had a mid-day rally. Rally promotional materials say the goals are: “*to close the prison, end indefinite detention, dismantle Islamophobia, and call for the immediate transfer of the cleared detainees.*”



Titanic by Muhammad Ansi

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 making us less safe, not more secure.

If we want to “make America great again,” it is far past time to shut Guantánamo prison down.

Local groups organizing today’s action include the Peace and Justice Works (PJW) Iraq Affinity Group, the Portland Close Guantánamo Coalition, Veterans For Peace Chapter 72 (Portland), and Amnesty International Group 48 (Portland).

This flyer was prepared
in January, 2018 by the
Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is February 12.

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Contact us about our meetings !