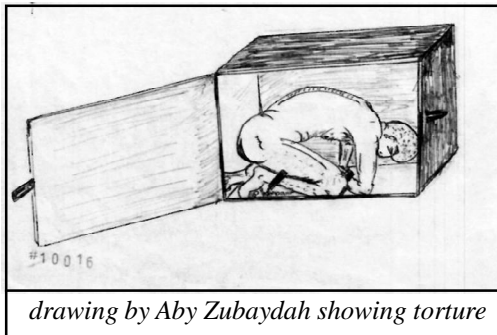
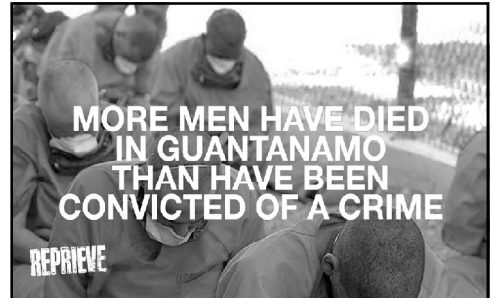


January 10,
2020

18 YEARS AND 8 CONVICTIONS: Time to Shut Guantánamo

January 11 marks exactly 18 years since the U.S. opened its notorious detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba in 2002. At one point, roughly 770 prisoners were held there. In 2020, 40 people remain in indefinite detention. In those 18 years, only eight people were ever convicted, of crimes— and three of those convictions were overturned (ACLU.org, May 2018).

Nearly all of the original detainees have been released, often after spending more than a decade in the detention facility, due to there being little to no evidence that they posed a threat or were linked with terrorism. About two thirds of those remaining are so-called “forever prisoners”: the U.S. doesn’t have enough evidence to bring them to court, but still considers them too dangerous to release. Some of these cases would fall apart at trial because much of the evidence against them was obtained in part through torture (NPR, November 14), which continued at Guantánamo in the form of the force feeding of hunger strikers. Nearly two thirds of those remaining (26 people) are considered “forever prisoners,” which means most have de facto life sentences without having faced trial (*Washington Post*, 12/21/17). Five of the 40 have been cleared for release, but President Donald Trump refuses to allow it (ABC, August 2). Nine detainees have died in custody (Reprive.org, 8/19/18).



drawing by Aby Zubaydah showing torture

Many of the torture techniques were confirmed in the 2014 Senate report on post-9/11 CIA “interrogations.” On December 4, the *New York Times* published drawings by inmate Abu Zubaydah showing violence inflicted upon him including waterboarding (which he was subjected to 83 times), having his head bashed against a wall (to “disorient” him), being handcuffed so he had to stand on his tip toes, being deprived of sleep and being put into cramped boxes. An art show at John Jay College in New York featuring paintings and other art by detainees at Guantánamo made headlines in 2017. Once the paintings became internationally recognized, the US declared no more art would be shared, and the detainees no longer legally owned them (*NYTimes*, 11/27/17). Zubaydah’s drawings made it out as “legal documents.”

Reprive notes: “The vast majority of detainees in Guantánamo (86%) were not captured by US forces. Instead the Government filled the prison with people they bought for bounties. The US flew planes over parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan offering \$5,000 for any ‘suspicious person.’ This amounted to approximately seven years’ average salary for most people in the area, encouraging them to turn over innocent men in exchange for a life-changing amount of money. Since then, it has turned out they got it wrong most of the time. It didn’t even take long for those in charge to see their mistake— as early as 2002, Guantánamo’s operational commander complained that he was being sent too many ‘Mickey Mouse’ detainees.”

Guantánamo has been referred to as “the most expensive prison on earth.” The *Miami Herald* reported in 2011 that it then cost \$800,000 per year per inmate, with that rate reported as \$13 million per person by the *NY Times* in 2019 (September 16). The *Times* says that in 2012 the per-prisoner cost at a “SuperMax” prison in Colorado was \$78,000 a year., and estimates running Guantánamo has cost \$7 billion since it opened. While this is a drop in the bucket of the \$6.4 trillion that the “War on Terror” has cost since 2001 (Common Dreams, November 13), it is a waste of taxpayer money and a blight on a country that claims to believe in the rule of law.

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.”

Tomorrow (Jan. 11, 2020) in Washington DC, Witness Against Torture, AI, CCR, CodePINK, and others are holding an early afternoon rally as part of a six-day long set of actions ([facebook.com/witnessagainsttorture](https://www.facebook.com/witnessagainsttorture)).

The US has only brought one prisoner from Guantánamo to the US for trial (the *Guardian*, 7/10/18). All the other inmates are being held indefinitely in an off-shore prison without prosecution. Holding detainees indefinitely without charge or trial at the detention facility is an unacceptable violation of human rights and only serves to inspire backlash against the United States in acts of so-called “terrorism.” Keeping the prison open is making us less safe, not more secure. It is far past time to shut Guantánamo down.

This flyer was prepared
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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is January 13.

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Contact us about our meetings!