

Activists plan to widen campaign to close Guantanamo

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Jan. 28, 2011 NCR Today

Just days after completing an eleven-day fast calling for the closure of the U.S. military detention facility in Guantanamo, Cuba, a group of anti-torture activists announced Wednesday plans to widen their campaign.

The online announcement by the group Witness Against Torture included an important summary of the current state of affairs for those detained in U.S. military facilities.

Following is a portion of the activists' announcement:

In the State of the Union Address, President Obama did not mention Guantanamo. We offer here our own "State of Guantanamo...and other Obama / Bush continuity." We do not think that Presidents Obama and Bush are precisely the same. But as the gap between rhetoric and reality becomes a chasm, we must acknowledge some harsh facts, and plan how to continue and grow our resistance.

STATE OF GUANTANAMO:

- Guantanamo remains open.
- There have been very few repatriations or resettlements, despite Obama's pledge to free those who will not be tried.
- There is a blanket ban on releasing the largest group of remaining men (Yemenis) who face no charges but may never see freedom.
- The Justice Department has appealed most (if not all) habeas victories, preventing due process and/or release.
- Resettlements and even the transfer of men to stand trial in the US have been legally blocked by the Congress.
- Bagram is a new "legal black hole" and largely off limits to even minimal oversight.
- Anyone operating under the "enhanced interrogation" protocols is a priori excluded from prosecution.
- The Justice Department overrode the conclusion of an accountability investigation initiated under Bush, effectively exonerating those who "authorized" torture.
- There is no adequate criminal inquiry into torture.
- The government has blocked every effort at legal redress for the Guantanamo detainees and other victims of torture.
- Civilian trials have been essentially abandoned.
- Military commissions at Guantanamo will be re-initiated to provide a lower threshold of evidence and permit easier prosecution of victims of torture and easier use of evidence derived from torture.
- A formal system of indefinite detention without charge or trial is being devised.

The State of Our Community

We find hope in the community that gathered in Washington DC from Jan 11-22 (visit witnessstorture.org [1] for re-caps of and reflections of their daily activities). We find hope in the men who remain in Guantanamo, whose protest within the prison walls on January 22 (the anniversary of Obama's broken promise) is both haunting and challenging.

Building on this hope, and faced with Guantanamo's tenth year as the shame of the nation, we begin planning... We now know for certain that the president has no plans to shutter Guantanamo before next January 11, so we have no plans to shut down our operations. Another Witness presence in Washington DC will come in June, and we plan to launch a mass education and recruitment drive, reaching parishes, congregations, and college campuses across the nation. When we return to Washington next January 11, we will number in the thousands - marching and witnessing and lobbying and processing and speaking out and being silent and haranguing and incommoding - until the people in power get the message: No Torture, No Bagram, No GTMO, No More

To read the entire statement go [here](#) [2].

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Links:

[1] <http://witnessstorture.org>

[2] <http://witnessstorture.org/sites/witnessstorture.org/files/email/blast-01-26-11.html>