

PUBLIC

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UA 191/05 Legal concern/health concern/torture

USA Unknown number of Guantánamo detainees

An unknown number of detainees at the US prison camp in Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba, have reportedly been on hunger strike since around 7 July, in protest at the conditions in the camp, which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and the fact that they cannot challenge their detention through the courts. Amnesty International considers the detention of all the inmates at Guantánamo Bay to be unlawful and arbitrary.

A Pentagon spokesman, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Flex Plexico, told Associated Press on 20 July that he was unaware of a hunger strike at Guantánamo Bay but would inquire.

According to information received from detainees in Guantánamo Bay they are held in solitary confinement for long periods, denied adequate medical care, and suffer violations of their religious rights by the prison guards, such as making loudspeaker announcements during the call to prayer, talking and laughing during prayers, and desecration of the Koran. According to one of the detainees, the hunger strike is an attempt to make the US authorities "treat us like humans, or let us die in peace." If their demands are not met, they say they will starve themselves to death. Another prisoner also cited the lack of contact with families, dirty drinking water and inedible food as some of the reasons for the strike. According to one of the detainees, "All the food is canned, often expired, and inedible, and we are not given enough food. The water is often dirty and tastes contaminated, and we are not given bottled or clean water like the guards.... sometimes the guards will bring in a bottle of water and dump it out in front of the detainees."

Some reports suggest that the protest was sparked by disparities in the way that detainees are treated in the different camps which make up the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay. Camp V, according to the Department of Defense, is reserved for "high-value intelligence assets" though reports suggest that detainees who are "uncooperative" are held there, and the hunger strike appears to be centred there. Modelled on harsh "supermaximum" security prisons on the US mainland, detainees in Camp V are held in concrete isolation cells with 24-hour lighting and large, loud fans designed to prevent detainees talking with each other. Amnesty International received reports of detainees being confined to these cells for up to 24 hours a day, only being allowed out to exercise once a week or every two weeks. When they are allowed out to exercise it is often in the middle of the night, so that detainees go for months without seeing the sun.

Consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment have come out of Guantánamo Bay from a variety of sources, including FBI reports and internal Department of Defense material obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union under freedom of information legislation, and statements by the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as from detainees. Most recently evidence emerged of the torture of Mohamed C., a Chadian national who was taken into US custody when he was 15 years old. He was reportedly hung from hooks and beaten, for up to eight hours at a time. He was also subjected to sleep deprivation, extreme heat and cold, and prolonged periods of solitary confinement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Detainees held as part of the "War on terror" began to be held in Guantánamo Bay on 11 January 2002. More than 750 people have since been detained there, of whom about 500, of some 35 nationalities, remain in the base. None of the Guantánamo detainees has had the lawfulness of their detention subjected to judicial review, a year after the US Supreme court ruled that the US courts have jurisdiction to hear appeals

from them. See the May 2005 report, *Guantánamo and beyond: The continuing pursuit of unchecked executive power*, AMR 51/063/2005, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGAMR510632005>.

Cruel. Inhuman. Degrades us all.

Stop torture and ill-treatment in the "war on terror"

For more information on AI's campaign see <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/stoptorture-index-eng>

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language, in your own words:

- expressing concern at reports that detainees in Guantánamo Bay have gone on hunger strike in protest at the conditions they are held in, and the fact that they are not allowed to challenge the legality of their detention;
- expressing concern over the harsh conditions in Camp V, and calling for detainees to be allowed adequate time to exercise in daylight, and provided with adequate medical care, regular contact with their families, clean water and adequate food;
- calling for the detainees to be released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried in full accordance with international standards for fair trial;
- calling for an independent investigation into allegations that detainees have been tortured and subjected to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in US custody in Guantánamo Bay;
- calling for the Guantánamo facility to be closed, and for all US "war on terror" detentions to be opened up to external independent scrutiny.

APPEALS TO:

President George W. Bush, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20500, USA

E-mail: **president@whitehouse.gov**

Fax: **+ 1 202 456 2461**

Salutation: **Dear President Bush**

Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington DC 20301, USA

Fax: **+ 1 703 697 8339**

Salutation: **Dear Secretary of Defense**

Matthew Waxman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Detainee Affairs

2500 Defense Pentagon 5E420, Washington, DC 2031, USA

Fax: **+ 1 703 697 6166**

Salutation: **Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense**

COPIES TO:

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State, Department of State, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington DC 20520, USA.

Fax: **+ 1 202 261 8577**

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 September 2005.