

Guantánamo: conditions getting worse

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A new facility at Guantánamo Bay is creating even harsher conditions of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation for detainees, according to a new Amnesty International (AI) report.

Conditions at Camp 6, which opened in December 2006, are described as "cruel and inhuman". Detainees are confined for 22 hours a day to individual, steel cells with no natural light and minimal human contact. No activities are provided, with detainees subjected to 24-hour lighting and constant observation by guards.

According to the Pentagon, 165 men had been transferred to Camp 6 within a month of its opening. Many were previously held in Camp 4, where detainees lived communally in barracks with access to a range of recreational activities. Camp 4 is now reported to house just 35 detainees, down from 180 in May 2006.

Despite the US authorities describing Camp 6 as a "state-of-the-art modern facility" that is "more comfortable" for detainees, the conditions appear more severe than the most restrictive levels of "super-maximum" custody in the US. There is growing concern they could have a serious adverse effect on the psychological and physical health of many of the detainees.

A further 100 detainees are held in solitary confinement at Camp 5, while there may be as many as 20 on Camp Echo, a facility set aside from the others where conditions have been described as "extremely harsh". In all it appears that 80 per cent of detainees are held in isolation.

AI is calling for Guantánamo to be closed and for detainees to be brought to fair trial, or else released. In the meantime, the US government must take immediate steps to improve conditions in the camp.

For the full report, see **USA: Cruel and inhuman – Conditions of isolation for detainees in Guantánamo Bay**

For more information about AI's campaign to Close Guantánamo, visit www.amnesty.org/closeguantanamo