

*Start date: 11/01/06*

### **Guantánamo detainees: 4 years without justice**

Four years ago, the USA transferred their first "war on terror" detainees – hooded and shackled - to the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba. **Write to President Bush** demanding that he close the camp and either charge or release detainees.

Four years ago, the USA transferred the first "war on terror" detainees – hooded and shackled - to the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba.

As the detention regime at Guantánamo Bay enters its fifth year, around 500 people from 35 countries continue to be held without charge or trial. Denied their rights under international law, there are mounting allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees at the camp.

Detainees effectively remain in a legal black hole, many with no access to any court, legal counsel, or family visits. Many are subjected to confinement in small cells for up to 24 hours a day with minimal opportunity for exercise. Detainees are often kept in isolation, sometimes for months, as punishment for the infraction of strict camp rules. Several of the detainees have attempted suicide. Most recently Bahraini Jumah al Dossari attempted suicide, reportedly for the tenth time. Other detainees have in desperation embarked on hunger strikes, being kept alive, sometimes against their will, through painful force feeding procedures.

Appalling conditions, allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, detention of individuals in Guantánamo for up to four years without justice: these are alarming violations of human rights. US plans to try detainees by military commission will bring even more injustice. These commissions are not independent and allow statements extracted under torture or coercion, and hearsay evidence.

Guantánamo detainees must be released, unless charged with recognizable criminal offences and brought to fair trial.

### **Call for action**

Write to US President George W. Bush demanding that he close down the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, and either charge and try the detainees in line with international standards, or release them.

### **Sample letter**

Dear Mr President,

It is now four years since the first detainees were transferred to the detention facility at the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Detainees in Guantánamo Bay are held in prolonged indefinite detention, which violates a fundamental legal principle: that anyone detained has the right to be promptly brought before an independent judicial officer to challenge the lawfulness of their detention. You have repeatedly asserted that the USA strives to "defend and extend a vision of human dignity" and "uphold the rule of law". For the detainees at Guantánamo Bay these words ring hollow.

I call on you to close the detention facility and to ensure that all those held in Guantánamo are immediately released if they are not to be charged and brought to trial in line with standards of fairness. The military commissions violate several provisions of international treaties to which the USA is a state party and cannot provide fair trials in line with international standards. They are fundamentally flawed and should be abandoned immediately.

Many detainees in Guantánamo come from countries which the US government itself has condemned for human rights violations. I therefore call on you to ensure that the USA will not transfer them to a country where they may face further human rights violations.

Yours sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

**The President**

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington DC 20500

USA

**Fax:** +1 202 456 2461

**E-mail:** [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)\*

E-mail page: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/webmail>

**Salutation: Dear Mr President**

\* Please note that this address has been responding erratically and is occasionally unavailable.

**Detainee rests inside his cell, Camp Delta, Guantanamo Bay US Naval Base, Cuba.**

© AP GraphicsBank

\*\*\*\*\*