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05 April 2011

USA: U-turn on trial forum for 9/11 suspects betrays human rights

US Attorney General Eric Holder announced yesterday that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other detainees held at the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba and accused in connection with the attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001 will be tried by a military commission rather than in an ordinary federal court.

The Obama administration's attempts to bring the accused to trial before ordinary civilian courts have been blocked by Congress, which has sought to further entrench a legal doctrine of pervasive and perpetual "war" as the primary basis for US counter-terrorism efforts.

"The announcement that the USA will again resort to military tribunals to try individuals accused of terrorism, when civilian courts could clearly be used, is a betrayal of international fair trial standards", Rob Freer, Amnesty International's US researcher.

"It will send a signal to other governments that the USA is willing to ignore human rights standards when it finds them inconvenient, making this a victory only for the politics of fear".

For more information:

USA: Digging a deeper hole. Administration and Congress entrenching human rights failure on Guantánamo detentions, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/016/2011/en>

USA: Double standards or international standards? Crucial decision on 9/11 trial forum 'weeks' away, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/034/2010/en>

USA: Trials in error: Third go at misconceived military commission experiment, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/083/2009/en>