

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Latvia: Acceptance of a former Guantánamo detainee a welcome step

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Amnesty International welcomes the step taken today by the Latvian government towards the closure of the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, after Latvian authorities accepted one former detainee.

Amnesty International commends the move by Latvian authorities to accept the former detainee, who could not return to his country of origin for fear of being subjected to torture or other serious human rights violations, and emphasizes the need for Latvian authorities and media to respect the privacy and security of the former detainee after his experience of prolonged detention at Guantánamo Bay.

Amnesty International welcomes the concrete step taken by Latvian authorities in line with the stated aims of the EU-US Joint Statement on the Closure of Guantánamo Bay, issued on 15 June 2009. Latvia joins Albania, Belgium, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, France, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Palau, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland in accepting and providing a safe haven to Guantánamo detainees unable to return to their countries.

Amnesty International calls on Latvian authorities to ensure the former detainee's access to appropriate integration and rehabilitation services, including medical and psychological treatment, language training and other forms of social support. Amnesty International has previously communicated with Latvian authorities on this issue.

Amnesty International reiterates that any Guantánamo detainee who is not charged and cannot lawfully be returned to his country of origin or habitual residence, for instance where he would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights violations, should be offered an opportunity to be released into the mainland USA.

While Amnesty International considers that the USA has the primary responsibility to end the Guantánamo detentions, the organization is also calling on other governments to offer humanitarian protection to such individuals in order to help end their ordeal and to facilitate the closure of the detention centre at Guantánamo Bay.

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