

SHUT DOWN GUANTÁNAMO

Twenty-one years ago, Guantánamo Bay prison opened. The U.S. government concluded that the island prison would be beyond the reach of U.S. and international law. Guantánamo was one of many secret “black sites” around the globe where prisoners the U.S. military and CIA believed were terrorists disappeared and were tortured. Secret Justice Department memoranda redefined the meaning of torture and the U.S.’s obligations under the Geneva Conventions to allow prisoners to be tortured and otherwise abused at these sites with impunity. For more than four years Guantánamo operated in secret, with no one knowing who was imprisoned there. It wasn’t until May 2006 that the prisoners’ names at Guantánamo were finally disclosed. And it wasn’t until April 2009 that the secret Justice Department memoranda were made public.

By then, 780 men and boys, all of them Muslim, had been imprisoned in Guantánamo Bay. The vast majority – 86 percent – were sold to the U.S. for a bounty, typically \$5,000. Currently, 35 men remain imprisoned at Guantánamo, 23 of which **have never been charged with any crime or offense and are held indefinitely**, in violation of international law. Adding to their injury, 20 of these **23 have been approved for release but are still held**.

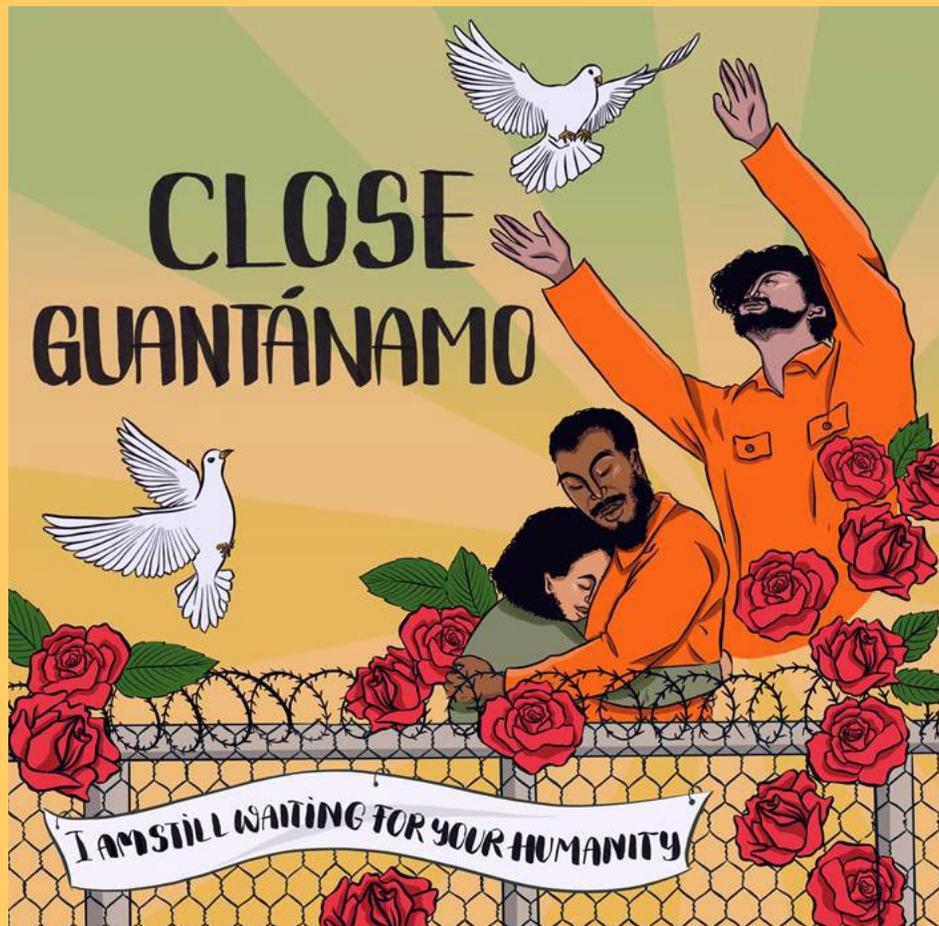
Secret prisons, torture, indefinite detention without charge, and secrecy are signs of a morally bankrupt nation. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said it plainly: “A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.” The prophet Isaiah long ago spoke of God’s requiring acts of justice to undo such moral bankruptcy:

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?(Is. 58:6-7)

We must make amends as a nation for the torture, killings, and many terrible wrongs we have done, and are still doing, to the prisoners held at Guantánamo. We vigil here today in solidarity with them, and call on our government and military to shutdown down Guantánamo.

Humiliated in the Shackles (excerpt)

To Allah I direct my grievance and my tears.
I am homesick and oppressed.
Mohammad, do not forget me.
Support the cause of your father, a God-fearing man.
I was humiliated in the shackles.
How can I now compose verses? How can I now write?
After the shackles and the nights and the suffering and the tears,
How can I write poetry?
My soul is like a roiling sea, stirred by anguish,
Violent with passion.
I am a captive, but the crimes are my captors'.
I am overwhelmed with apprehension.
Lord, unite me with my son Mohammad.
Lord, grant success to the righteous.
(by Sami al Hajj, imprisoned at Guantánamo 2002-2006 without charge)



For more information on Guantánamo, please go to:
<https://www.andyworthington.co.uk/tag/close-guantanamo/>
<https://www.nogitmos.org/> (flyer by Frank Panopoulos 12/3/2022)