



www.icujp.org

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES DEMAND THE CLOSING OF GUANTANAMO BAY

Conditions at Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp can be summed up in one word: torture.

Four hundred and sixty detainees remain, many of whom have been held four and a half years without charges. Of the 747 who have been held since the opening of the prison, only 10 have been brought to trial. None have been convicted. Reports of prisoner abuse have repeatedly surfaced, and despite official denials, human rights organizations have not been allowed access. As many as 131 prisoners have engaged in hunger strikes over the last two years. Suicide attempts have been numerous, more are inevitable, some are likely to succeed.

Yes, torture. Detainees have been cut off from their families, systematically stripped of dignity and identity, and kept in legal limbo with no end in sight. People of faith, such as Nobel laureates Elie Wiesel and President Jimmy Carter, and Muslim Affairs Council leader Maher Hathout, have signed with numerous others the following outcry (Printed as an advertisement on the editorial page of the New York Times under the auspices of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.) :

Torture is a moral issue. Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions, in their highest ideals, hold dear. It degrades everyone involved – policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation’s most cherished values. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now – without exceptions.

In a statement dated February 24, 2006, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (ICUJP) issued a call to religious communities to speak out against torture. In issuing this call, ICUJP has joined the United Nations Committee Against Torture, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, together with many other nongovernmental and faith-based organizations in saying an absolute *no* to torture. The ICUJP statement demanded that Guantanamo detainees either be released or charged in US courts with specific crimes and afforded due process. The statement also demanded that Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp be closed immediately. We now reiterate these imperatives.

We make these demands in the wake of three tragic suicides. We make these demands in the context of the ongoing suffering of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and US detention centers in the Middle East and around the world. We make these demands in concert with world opinion that has turned against U.S. conduct of the war on terrorism. This conduct is riddled with policies and actions that contradict and mock the claim of fighting for the great cause of freedom and democracy.

As people of faith, we hear God calling across the ages, “Let my people go.”

Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace appeals to individuals and communities of faith and conscience to communicate boldly and persistently with President Bush and congressional representatives to stop the illegal detentions and stop them now. Free those without charges and free them now. Close Guantanamo Bay and close it now.