

Jan. 10,
2025

Guantánamo: 15 People Remain After 23 Years. Close the “Detention Center” Now!

On January 11, 2025 it will be exactly 23 years since the U.S. opened its infamous detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Early on after the start of the “war on terror,” about 770 prisoners were held there. As of January 7, only 15 people remain in indefinite detention. Six have never been charged, and only two are there following convictions. The other seven face charges for attacks that took place in 2000, 2001 and 2002 (Associated Press, January 7).



President Biden signed the latest National Defense Authorization Act into law in December, which includes a prohibition on using money to transfer people to US soil or to shut the camp down. Yet he released three prisoners in December and one on New Year’s Day 2025— before releasing eleven more on January 7.

Now, over 98% of the detainees have been released, often after spending a decade or more in the detention facility, due to there being little or no evidence that they posed a threat or were linked with terrorism. Some of those facing charges will likely not be convicted because much of the evidence against them was obtained through torture (NPR, 11/14/19). Inhumane treatment has also included force feeding hunger strikers. At least nine detainees have died in custody (Reprieve.org, 8/19/18). The US had to build wheelchair ramps for the aging inmates, the oldest of whom, Saifullah Paracha, was released in 2022 at age 75.

Torture techniques were confirmed in the 2014 Senate report on post-9/11 CIA “interrogations.” The group Reprieve noted in 2018: “The vast majority of detainees in Guantánamo (86%) were not captured by US forces. Instead the Government filled the prison with people they bought for bounties,” with an offer of \$5000 for people in Afghanistan and Pakistan to identify “suspicious” people. “This amounted to approximately seven years’ average salary for most people in the area, encouraging them to turn over innocent men in exchange for a life-changing amount of money. It turned out they got it wrong most of the time. As early as 2002, Guantánamo’s operational commander complained that he was being sent too many ‘Mickey Mouse’ detainees.” On January 9, 2025, the *New York Times* reported that one reason the CIA does not want more prisoners released is they fear information on the torture and torturers can be used by other countries against the US.

The prison has become subject to politics over human rights. President Obama promised to close it as he entered office in 2009 but never did so. In his first term, President Trump pledged to “fill Guantánamo up with bad guys.” Nobody was added to the prison, but he released one person. Biden seems to be working on releasing as many people as possible before Trump takes office again on January 20. Even if to make a point about “terrorism,” it’s not clear why anyone concerned about government spending would agree to keep the detention center open after that.

Guantánamo has been referred to as “the most expensive prison on earth.” In recent years, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) estimated the prison cost \$540 million per year to operate. The *Times* wrote on January 9 that with only 15 people left, that will amount to over \$36 million per detainee. In September, 2019 the *Times* said the 2012 per-prisoner cost at a “SuperMax” prison in Colorado was \$78,000 a year, and estimated running Guantánamo cost \$7 billion since it opened. While miniscule compared to the cost of the “War on Terror” since 2001 of \$8 trillion (Watson Institute, September, 2021), it is a waste of taxpayer money and a blight on a country that claims to believe in the rule of law.

Amnesty International (AI), the Center for Constitutional Rights, and others continue to call for the prison to be shut down. AI notes that “the existence of an offshore prison for Muslim men who are denied due process of law is a blatant example and encouragement of Islamophobia and racism.”

On Jan. 11, 2025, at noon eastern time, Witness Against Torture, AI, Center for Victims of Torture, and others will hold a rally at the White House calling to shut Guantanamo down.

The US has only brought one prisoner from Guantánamo to the US for trial (the *Guardian*, 7/10/18). Other inmates are being held with no end in sight on the island of Cuba without prosecution. Holding detainees indefinitely without charge or trial is an unacceptable violation of human rights and only serves to inspire backlash against the United States in acts of violence which might be considered terrorism. Keeping the prison open is making us less safe, not more secure. Close the “detention center” now! No more forever prisoners!!!

Local groups organizing the January 10, 2025 Portland action include the Peace and Justice Works (PJW) Iraq Affinity Group and Amnesty International Group 48 (Portland).

This flyer was prepared
in January, 2025 by the

Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

**PO Box 42456
Portland, OR 97242
(503) 236-3065**

Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 5 PM; next one is January 13.

**iraq@pjw.info
www.pjw.info/Iraq.html**
Contact us about our meetings!