

January 9, 2024

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are a diverse group of US-based and international non-governmental organizations working on a range of issues including international human rights, immigrants' rights, racial justice, and combatting anti-Muslim discrimination. We write to express our deep concern about how little progress your administration has made over the last year towards responsibly closing the Guantánamo detention center, including rejecting the only realistic opportunity to end the case against those alleged to be most responsible for 9/11, in a way that achieves a modicum of justice and closure for 9/11 family members—and finally to wind down the failed military commission system. Guantánamo has now been open for twenty-two years. Your administration needs to do more, and do it now, to close the facility, and to end indefinite military detention.

The Guantánamo detention center – created exclusively to detain Muslim men and boys – was designed specifically to evade legal constraints. It enabled the Bush administration to torture and abuse those held there, and to hide the fact that it tortured and abused men held elsewhere before being sent to Guantánamo. Nearly eight hundred men and boys were detained at Guantánamo after 2002, all but a handful without any charges against them and none with access to a fair trial. Thirty men remain today. Of those, sixteen have been cleared for transfer out – by unanimous agreement of all executive branch agencies with a significant national security function – but they continue to languish in Guantánamo. At the astronomical cost of over \$500 million per year, it is the most expensive prison in the world. Guantánamo continues to be a site and symbol of Islamophobia, torture, and impunity.

The political decision to keep Guantánamo open has devastating consequences. Detention with no end in sight continues to cause escalating and profound damage to the aging and increasingly ill men who remain, and has shattered many of their families and communities. There is no reasonable prospect of judicial resolution in the 9/11 military commissions case, which, after two decades, has not even gone to trial. Your administration has chosen not to use its authority to encourage a resolution of the case which would provide justice to 9/11 family members—a resolution that even your own military commission chief prosecutor supports.

Whether Guantánamo and its injustices continue or – as you promised – end, will be a defining part of your legacy and this pivotal year of your presidency may be the last chance at closing it. It is long past time for a meaningful reckoning with the full scope of damage caused by US policies in response to 9/11 and through the so-called “War on Terror.” Closing Guantánamo, ending indefinite military detention of those held there, and never again using the military base for unlawful mass detention of any group of people are necessary steps towards those ends—and to combatting dehumanizing and Islamophobic narratives. We urge you to act without delay, and in a just manner that considers the harm done to the men who have been imprisoned without charge or fair trials for over two decades.

Sincerely,

18 Million Rising

Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) Belgium

ACAT Germany

ACAT Switzerland

Action Center on Race & the Economy

Adalah Justice Project

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow

African Human Rights Coalition

Alliance of Baptists

American Civil Liberties Union

American Friends Service Committee

American Muslim Bar Association

Amnesty International Kent Network

Amnesty International USA

Birmingham Islamic Society

Black Alliance for Just Immigration

CAGE

Campaign for Peace Disarmament and Common Security

Center for Constitutional Rights

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Victims of Torture

Center on Conscience and War

Charity & Security Network

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Close Guantanamo

Coalition for Civil Freedoms

CODEPINK

Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Defending Rights & Dissent

Demand Progress Education Fund

DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving

Episcopal Peace Fellowship

Federal Association of Vietnamese Refugees in the Federal Republic of Germany

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends of Human Rights

Friends of Matènwa

Government Information Watch

Guantanamo Justice Campaign

Hawaii Peace and Justice

Human Rights First

Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
Immigrant Defenders Law Center
Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti
Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
Just Foreign Policy
Lewes Amnesty International Group
Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church Chicago
LSE SU Amnesty International
MADRE
Malu 'Aina
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Missionary Oblates US Province
MPower Change Action Fund
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Counterpublics Lab
Muslim Solidarity Committee, Albany NY
Muslims for Just Futures
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Immigration Project
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
No More Guantánamos
North Carolina Stop Torture Now
Out Against War
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Action New York State
Presbyterian Church USA, Office of Public Witness
Project on Government Oversight
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Reprieve
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Justice Team
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Tea Project
Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG)
UK Guantanamo Network
United Against Inhumanity
United Church of Christ
United for Peace and Justice
Veterans For Peace, Chapter 113 - Hawaii
Washington Office on Latin America
Western States Legal Foundation

Win Without War

Witness Against Torture

World Can't Wait Hawai`i

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

CC: The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, United States Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Antony Blinken, United States Secretary of State
The Honorable Merrick B. Garland, United States Attorney General