



REUTERS/BOB STRONG

The exterior of Camp Delta is seen at the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, March 6, 2013. The facility is operated by the Joint Task Force Guantanamo and holds prisoners who have been captured in the war in Afghanistan and elsewhere since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

A national day of action to close the Guantanamo prison

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Some anniversaries are occasions for joy, some for remembrance, some for sorrow. May 23 represents an anniversary that should, rightly, be devoted to outrage. For more than a decade hundreds of prisoners have been held in an American prison, without charge, without due process, without trial. While this prison is not technically on American soil, it is an American prison. As such, it should be recognized by every person reading this that we embarrass ourselves as a country, we shame ourselves as a people, and we make a laughingstock of the notion of "American justice" every minute that Guantanamo remains open.

Flying directly in the face of the principle of being innocent until proven guilty, the continued holding of hostages by the U.S. military represents a smear on the armed forces' honor and violates a host of international and American laws. The Geneva Conventions, the United Nations Convention against Torture, the United States Constitution. All of these are being actively violated, today, right now, by our own military forces.

If this is not enough to upset you, the reader, then consider this: a large number of the men being held in Guantanamo prison are specifically considered to pose no threat, to be cleared for release by the government. Yet, they languish, completely cut off from their families, their friends, their entire lives. These men are still being held, unlawfully, by this country — the

supposed, "leader of the free world."

May 23 is the anniversary of President Barack Obama's speech in which he repeated his intention to close Guantanamo prison. To quote Mr. Obama, "the original premise for opening Gitmo, that detainees would not be able to challenge their detention, was found unconstitutional five [now six] years ago. Meanwhile Gitmo has become a symbol, around the world, for an America that flouts the rule of law ... during a time of budget cuts we spend a \$150 Million each year to imprison 166 people ... once we commit to a process of closing Gitmo, I am confident that this legacy problem can be resolved, consistent with our commitment to the rule of law..." (As a side note, Mr. Obama understates the monetary price, and indicates later in his speech that it's actually closer to \$2.7 million per person, per year.)

The men being held in Guantanamo prison, their families, and those of us who witness this disastrous behavior have waited long enough. While another year passes, those of us with our freedom are able to enjoy the simple pleasures of growing vegetables, eating with our families, basking in the embrace of a loved one. Meanwhile, these men have no choice but to watch their lives slipping away from them; unconnected, abused, and treated without the least bit of decency or regard. This is being done in our name and it is time for it to stop. Now.

No More Guantánamos is a coalition of concerned individuals, communities, organizations, and attorneys who are working to ensure justice for the prisoners

at Guantánamo Bay, and other offshore prison sites maintained by the CIA and the Pentagon around the world. Nancy Talanian, director of No More Guantánamos, puts it well. "President Obama's speech last May proves that he has enough good reasons for closing a facility that should have never have been opened, and the Pentagon's leadership has provided sufficient backing for closing the prison and for releasing inmates to silence criticism. On the anniversary of the President's speech and beyond, No More Guantánamos members in several cities will be on the streets building support for the president to provide leadership, not more empty promises."

"The existence and continued use of the 'gulag' of Guantanamo is grotesque," said S. Brian Willson, member of the Portland chapter of Veterans for Peace. "The fact that Americans tolerate the long imprisonment and torture of other human beings without due process means we need to take a serious look at the level of apathy in our culture."

We don't have to accept this insult to the face of human rights. Raise your voice. Tell those people close to you that you have a problem with this. Let your elected representatives know how you feel and demand that they take a stand against torture and degradation, and for human rights and respect for the law. Don't be afraid to say, "This has gone on long enough."

Visit closegitmo.net for up to date information.



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