

April 30, 2013

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing existence of the Guantanamo Bay detention center and the indefinite detention without trial of many of the people imprisoned there. As representatives of U.S. faith groups, we oppose torture and indefinite detention without trial because they are contrary to the inherent dignity of the human person. As the nation's most visible and painful symbol of torture and indefinite detention, Guantanamo Bay is a constant reminder of a deep moral wound that will heal only when it is permanently closed.

In 2008, both major party candidates, you and John McCain, promised to close the prison at Guantanamo. Two days after your inauguration, you issued an executive order mandating that Guantanamo be shuttered within a year.

Unfortunately, more than four years later, our government has not kept its commitment to close Guantanamo. Congress passed, and you signed, legislation placing restrictions on transferring detainees out of Guantanamo. This year, the Department of State shut down the office responsible for closing the prison. More recently, reports indicate that the military has requested almost \$196 million to upgrade facilities at Guantanamo.

In this time of austerity, instead of spending nearly \$200 million to upgrade facilities at Guantanamo, our leaders should move forward with transferring detainees and closing the prison there. It is particularly troubling that the 86 cleared detainees remain imprisoned there – in many cases for years after they were cleared. The desperation and hopelessness felt by many of the detainees has recently sparked a hunger strike that is spreading among the detainees – highlighting the growing human tragedy of the detention center.

Guantanamo Bay is a place where our government tortured prisoners, and it continues to be a place where many are detained indefinitely without trial. We believe that our government has a moral obligation to close the prison at Guantanamo. We hope that you share this belief and that you will act expeditiously to close Guantanamo.

Sincerely,

Rev. Richard Killmer
Executive Director, National Religious
Campaign Against Torture

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA

Rabbi David Saperstein
Commission on Social Action of Reformed
Judaism

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Archbisop Vicken Ayzakian
Legate
Armenian Church of America

Rev. Geoffrey Black
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Rev. Joel Boot
Executive Director, Christian Reformed
Church in North America

Sr. Simone Campbell
Executive Director, NETWORK: A Catholic
Social Justice Lobby

Sr. Patricia J. Chappell
Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Rev. Richard Cizik
President, New Evangelical Partnership for
the Common Good

Shan Cretin
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos
Metropolis of Chicago
Greek Orthodox Church in America

Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey
Minister for Partnership Relations
Alliance of Baptists

Rabbi Robert Dobrusin
Co-Chair
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Very Rev. John Edmunds, S.T.
President
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Rabbi Rachel Goldenburg
Co-Chair
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Rabbi Jill Jacobs
Executive Director
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Bruce Knotts
Executive Director
Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

Kathryn Lohre
President
National Council of Churches

Kathy McNeely
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Rev. Peter Morales
President
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Diane Randall
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Kavneet Singh
General Secretary
World Sikh Council - America Region

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed
National Director of Interfaith & Community
Alliances, Islamic Society of North America

Jim Winkler
General Secretary
United Methodist General Board of Church
and Society

Rev. Scott Anderson
Executive Director
Wisconsin Council of Churches

Rev. Peg Chamberlin
Executive Director
Minnesota Council of Churches

Rev. Steve Copley
Director
Arkansas Interfaith Alliance

Rev. Brenda Lynn Kneece
Executive Minister
South Carolina Christian Action Council

David Leslie
Executive Director
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Leslie Manning
President
Maine Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Russ Meyer
Executive Director
Florida Council of Churches

Rev. J. George Reed
Executive Director
North Carolina Council of Churches

Linda Lee Snyder
Interim Executive Director
New Hampshire Council of Churches

Rev. Sandra L. Strauss
Director of Public Advocacy
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Robert White
Interim Executive Director
New York Council of Churches