



CLOSE GITMO

END MILITARY COMMISSIONS

Write a Blog Post

Here is a sample blog post that you can use as a template to craft your own about the seven year anniversary of Guantánamo.

Seven Years Later

Seven years after the first prisoners were brought to Guantanamo Bay, President-elect Obama has the opportunity to bring this scarring chapter in American history to a close. He can begin repairing the damage on his first day in office – he can close the prison camp, shut down the unconstitutional military commissions and restore the American tradition of humane detention and interrogation practices by ending the use of torture and abuse. These actions would signify a bold departure from the unlawful practices of the Bush administration, and demonstrate Obama's commitment to restoring our justice system and regaining America's moral stature in the world.

The United States cannot reclaim the mantle of leadership on this front if it continues to insist on the legality of military commissions, which rely on confessions extracted by torture, on hearsay, and on secret evidence that a defendant cannot see or rebut. President-elect Obama has an opportunity on his first day to repudiate this conduct that has been a stain on America in the eyes of the world.

President-elect Obama should order his administration's Justice Department to conduct a comprehensive review of all detainee records to determine which prisoners have actually committed crimes. For prisoners who are alleged to have committed crimes, the time-tested U.S. federal courts are well-positioned to accommodate the government's legitimate national security interests without compromising the fundamental rights of defendants. Prisoners who aren't alleged to have committed crimes – and there are many such prisoners – should be repatriated to their home countries or, if there is a risk of torture or abuse there, transferred to other countries that will accept them.

Frighteningly, if President-elect Obama fails to suspend the military commission trials on Day One of his presidency, his administration could stumble into committing a major human rights violation that even the Bush administration won't have on its record – trying a former child soldier. The trial of Canadian Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen who was captured when he was 15 years old, is scheduled to begin on January 26, 2009. If Khadr's trial goes forward, the United States will become the first nation in recent history to prosecute someone for war crimes allegedly committed as a child. Also being prosecuted in the military commissions is Mohammed Jawad for acts allegedly committed when he, too, was a juvenile. A military judge has twice told the government it cannot use evidence against Jawad because it was obtained through torture, but the government appealing that decision and persisting in the prosecution. The ACLU is representing Jawad in a separate habeas case.

I am joining with the ACLU and other human rights organizations in calling on President-elect Obama to close Guantánamo, end the unconstitutional military commissions and restore our American values on his first day in office. I hope you will join me.



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