

Toolkit for Sanctuary City

Offer Sanctuary for Prisoners Cleared for Release

Members of a co-sponsorship team commit a few months of their time to prepare for the refugee's arrival and to help him get settled. When co-sponsoring innocent Guantánamo prisoners, coalition members also need to prepare their community—and possibly their state—for the prisoners' arrival to overcome fear and misunderstandings related to the stigma of the men's imprisonment as "terrorists" and "the worst of the worst." Because of what the prisoners have been through, communities that are willing to accept former prisoners should consider accepting at least two, so that the prisoners can support one another through the process of healing.

No More Guantánamos and agencies familiar with the needs of refugees are here to help you. This toolkit outlines the basic stages and steps, with links to supporting documents and websites. Excellent additional resources include:

- [Tallahassee Uyghur Resettlement Plan](#) [1]
- [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service's resources](#) [2]

You should always feel free to [contact us](#) [3].

Have additional suggestions? Share them with us!

Basic steps:

1. [Form a committee and build a coalition within your community](#)
2. [Determine what you need to provide in volunteers and donated items](#)
3. [Find the right prisoners for release in your community and learn about them](#)
4. [Build community support and involvement](#)
5. [Form teams, prepare for refugees' arrival, and help the men settle in](#)

1. Form a committee and build a coalition within your community

Make a list of potential members and local entities that may be willing to support sanctuary for former prisoners in your community. Include:

- Local religious bodies and interfaith coalitions. Some churches, synagogues and mosques have social justice committees that may be helpful. Some may have relevant experience from the sanctuary movement of the 1980s. See sample [clergy statement](#) [4] and [sermon](#) [5] from Tallahassee, Florida.
- Human rights and anti-war coalitions
- Veterans groups

- Lawyers
- Physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists
- Social workers
- Local government's human rights commission and others in government likely to be supportive

Choose the best person among you to contact them. Then set up a meeting.

2. Determine what your community needs to provide in volunteers and donated items

Start by assessing your community's fitness for refugees from Guantánamo:

- Culture and languages: NMG will try hard to place former prisoners in communities where there are people who share their culture and language. If your community has immigrants who share the culture and/or language of prisoners cleared for release, who are willing to help the former prisoner get settled, let us know
- Mosques
- English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs and job training
- Public transportation or an area where housing, employment and groceries are within walking distance
- Friendly attitude toward immigrants

If your community is a good fit for prisoners, teams of community members would take responsibility for different aspects, such as:

- Collect donations of household goods, clothing and food
- Raise funds for first few months (if the U.S. government does not)
- Greet the refugees at the airport and take them to their apartment
- Finding housing (preferably housing that's convenient for a job, grocery shopping and a mosque)
- Health care
- Education and language
- Employment
- Mentoring and cultural orientation

3. Learn about the prisoners who will be coming and let them know about you

Your coalition will want to know at least something about the refugees you will be cosponsoring before their arrival, so that you can help meet their needs and inform your community.

- Suggestions for researching the men's story, including resources and an outline, are [here](#) [6].
- NMG, its colleague organizations, and attorneys for the prisoners may be able to give you

additional information you may find helpful or to answer your questions.

- If the men's attorneys will be going to Guantánamo, you may be able to send them welcoming letters to deliver to the prisoners you will be co-sponsoring. If the prisoners can't read English, have them translated.

4. Build community support and involvement

Some people in your community may oppose your coalition's plan to bring former prisoners to your community. That is understandable, given the misleading information they may have heard and read. It is important for you to correct these misunderstandings and overcome their objections **before** the men's arrival. Here are some suggestions:

- Meet with local groups, including religious organizations or interfaith clergy, to talk about your plan and the detainees you've chosen.
- Consider a resolution or a petition. In Amherst, Massachusetts, elected town meeting members (the town's governing body) overwhelmingly passed a [resolution](#) [7] to welcome cleared detainees.
- Use our [frequently asked questions page](#) [8] and information you have gathered about the prisoners to give your community accurate information about the men who will be coming and what they have gone through.
- At a coalition meeting, discuss the following approaches and use the ones that make sense for your community:
 - Opinion editorials and letters to the editor
 - Public forum with featured speakers such as local government representatives and lawyers for the prisoners
 - Invite religious leaders to give sermons relating the needs of the men for sanctuary and the need for the community to have compassion, to pursue justice, and to offer hospitality. Find general suggestions [here](#) [9]; find a sample sermon [here](#) [10]; and find a clergy statement [here](#) [4].
 - [Put together a video](#) [11] about the men to show locally, on public access cable, and on YouTube.
 - Hold a press conference
 - Do interviews on local radio and television stations
- When you have general acceptance, hold a drive for volunteers and for contributions of money, household goods needed, clothing and food.

5. Form teams and prepare for refugees' arrival

The [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service \(LIRS\)](#) [12] has excellent resources to prepare host communities for the arrival of refugees.

Source URL: <http://www.nogitmos.org/toolkitsanctuarycity>

Links:

[1] <http://www.nogitmos.org/tallahasseeuyghurresettlementplan0>

[2] http://www.lirs.org/site/c.nhLPJ0PMKuG/b.5607705/k.7CD2/Be_Informed.htm

[3] <mailto:info@nogitmos.org>

[4] <http://www.nogitmos.org/clergystatementuyghurparolees>



[5] <http://www.nogitmos.org/sermonbrantscopelanduyghurs>

[6] <http://www.nogitmos.org/toolkithrchampion#story>

[7] <http://www.nogitmos.org/resolutiontownamherstmaassistsafere settlementclearedguantánamodetainees>

[8] <http://www.nogitmos.org/faq>

[9]

http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18&Itemid=47

[10] <http://www.nogitmos.org/sermonuyghursbrantscopeland>

[11] <http://www.nogitmos.org/toolkitmakingdetaineevideo>

[12] <http://www.lirs.org/>