

Rights Groups Send An Open Letter to President Obama and Ashton Carter: Free the 57 Guantánamo Prisoners Approved for Transfer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 19, 2015. Together the undersigned organizations call for the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to be closed, and we ask President Obama and Defense Secretary Ashton Carter to swiftly transfer the 57 prisoners at Guantánamo who have already been cleared for transfer—the majority for over five years—and release or charge in a federal court those who have not been cleared for transfer.

May 23 marks the second anniversary of President Obama's promise to resume releasing prisoners from Guantánamo, after Congress raised legislative obstacles, which he made during [remarks at the National Defense University](#) [4]. The President's promise was prompted in particular by a prison-wide hunger strike at Guantánamo, undertaken by men who—according to SOUTHCOM Commander General John Kelly—were "devastated" that the administration had "backed off" closing the prison.

Since that speech, 44 men have been freed. However, 122 men remain at Guantánamo, even though almost all of them have never been charged, let alone tried, for any crime. It is time for President Obama, and Defense Secretary Carter, to take action to transfer the 57 men still held who have already been approved to leave Guantánamo, and to release or charge in federal court those who remain.

Today, just days before the anniversary of President Obama's promise, a delegation of British MPs is visiting Washington, D.C., to discuss the release of Shaker Aamer, one of the 57 and the last British resident in Guantánamo. This follows the creation of a cross-party Parliamentary Group, and [a motion passed by the British Parliament](#) [5] in March, calling for his release and return to his family in the U.K., and a similar call made by Prime Minister David Cameron in a meeting with President Obama in January.

As well as calling for the transfer of the 57 men cleared for transfer, including Shaker Aamer, we also call on the administration to speed up the [Periodic Review Boards](#) [6] (PRBs), designed to review the cases of the men who have not been cleared for transfer and are not facing trials. Since the PRBs began in November 2013, 14 men have been reviewed and nine have been cleared for transfer. If the process does not speed up, it will take until January 2021 to complete the reviews—19 years after Guantánamo first opened.

The prison at Guantánamo is an expensive mistake that—according to national security officials, and President Obama—harms U.S. security interests. The U.S. government must act to close the prison as quickly as possible.

[Amnesty International USA](#) [7]



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