



Blame Won't Close Guantánamo

By: Nancy Talanian

Date: 01/22/2010

Previously appeared in the [Huffington Post](#) [1].

It's January 22, the anniversary of President Obama's executive order to close Guantánamo Bay prison within a year, and Guantánamo is still open for business. Whom can we blame? Hmm.... Let's see....

It's easy to blame the president, but his promise turned out to be 'mission impossible,' coming just days after the departure of the administration that took terrorism to the bank, ignored U.S. and international laws protecting the rights of detainees, and painted every single Guantánamo prisoner as a blood-thirsty brother of KSM.

The members of Congress who supported the Bush administration's gutting of the Constitution are still in office, opposing the prison's closure, banning the release of any former detainees to the U.S. except for prosecution, arguing for trials by military commission rather than federal court trials, and calling a halt to resettling Yemeni prisoners in their native country. They've even voted not to allocate one dime for closing the prison.

Considering all that, and an American public that fears the prison's closure, it's admirable to see the administration's Guantánamo team plodding along, begging allied governments to take the problem off their hands by offering homes to cleared detainees.

Of course many of us want our government to do much more. For example:

- Charge detainees with federal crimes and try them in federal court or release them. Don't hold anyone without charges, and don't offer a sliding scale of justice, such as federal trials for KSM and other surefire convictions, military tribunals for cases that could go either way, and continued preventive detention for cases in which the U.S. has no evidence but whatever it tortured out of the men.
- Release into the U.S. some of the cleared prisoners who can't safely return to their home countries.
- Help the men and their families rebuild their lives.
- Investigate the 2006 "suicides" of three prisoners who were allegedly killed while being tortured at a "black site" in Guantánamo Bay.
- Extend the writ of habeas corpus to prisoners at Bagram and other offshore prisons.
- End rendition.
- Prosecute the architects of the U.S.'s torture policy.

We can have all those things—when we have the majority of Americans' support. After all, politicians like to be praised for their work, not vilified. This election year, don't expect our president and Congress to sacrifice their careers to take care of men whom their voters still view as "terrorists." Especially not the politicians who are still campaigning on the terrorism platform.

I'm sure Guantánamo Bay prison will close eventually, possibly when the moving van transports the whole mess to Thomson, Illinois. But that's not the change we've been waiting for—if it's change at all. If we want justice for all detainees in U.S. custody, we have to first correct our neighbors' misperceptions fostered by eight years of scare mongering.

That is already starting to happen. Last November, Amherst (MA) Town Meeting overwhelmingly approved the [nation's first municipal resolution](#) [2] (1) urging Congress to repeal its ban on releasing



Blame Won't Close Guantánamo

Published on No More Guantanamo (<https://www.nogitmos.org>)

cleared detainees into the U.S. and (2) welcoming a few cleared detainees into the community. Other communities are 'adopting' detainees, telling their stories locally, and advocating for their rights to be charged and tried in federal court or released promptly. Where people's fears and prejudices block their support for justice and human rights, stories of human beings in trouble offer a means to reawaken their humanity. And once they recognize there is one human being in trouble sitting in Guantánamo, deserving fair treatment, they will see that there are others. They may even notice other unjust laws and policies adopted in the heat of the moment that can harm the lives of innocent people.

It's true we need leadership at the federal level to close our country's illegal, offshore prisons with justice. But let's not blame the politicians until we've shown leadership in our own communities.

Source URL: <https://www.nogitmos.org/blamewontcloseguantanamo0>

Links:

[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nancy-talanian/blame-wont-close-guantnam_b_430082.html

[2] <http://www.nogitmos.org/resolutiontownamherstmaassistsafere settlementclearedguant%C3%A1namodetainees>