



Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission Recommends Guantanamo Resolution to City Council

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Berkeley, CA. Last night the Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission passed a Recommendation asking the Berkeley City Council to adopt a Resolution called "Resolution to Assist in the Safe Resettlement of Cleared Guantanamo Detainees".

The vote was nearly unanimous; only one commissioner voted "no", Gordon Wozniak appointee Ms. Thyme Siegel.

Seven Berkeley citizens spoke in favor of the Resolution, including members of Codepink Women for Peace, the Gray Panthers, and leaders of the Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists Social Justice Committee. The Resolution was proposed to the Commission by Cynthia Papermaster, who is the Director of the National Torture Accountability Action Network and Golden Gate Codepink Women for Peace. It was prepared and presented to the Commission by Rita Maran, who is Berkeley Vice-Mayor Linda Maio's appointee and a lecturer and author on human rights. The Resolution was seconded by Commissioner Phoebe Sorgen.

Said Papermaster, "It is particularly significant that Berkeley, the home of torture policy architect John Yoo, is considering welcoming two of the many innocent detainees caged at Guantanamo. Yoo advised the government that torture and inhumane treatment of these innocent men was legal. Not only is torture illegal under U.S. and international law, but it is also immoral. We are making but a small gesture of compassion tonight, but we are standing up for justice and truth. These men were cleared long ago by the Bush and Obama administrations for release but can't return to their home countries of Russia and Algeria, because they are afraid they will be persecuted, tortured and possibly killed. We would like them to come here, where we can provide jobs, housing, transportation, medical care, and a loving community -- basically all the support they need to heal from their ordeal. Today there is news that all Guantanamo detainees were the subjects of medical experimentation with psychotropic drugs. This is a shameful stain on our nation's heritage, and Yoo, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice and others responsible should be held to account for breaking the law, torturing human beings, and destroying our country's moral standing and our national pride."

The next step for the Resolution is consideration and passage by the Berkeley City Council, which is expected to make its decision this month.

Nancy Talanian, the executive director of No More Guantánamos, commended the Commission and



the resolution's supporters. She said, "Dozens of innocent men remain in Guantánamo simply because they cannot safely return to their home countries, and U.S. allies rightly question why they must welcome all of them when the U.S. refuses to take any. Berkeley's resolution is a necessary step toward closing the prison with justice and restoring our country's commitment to human rights. We look forward to its passage, and many more throughout the U.S."

The Berkeley coalition supporting the resolution is one of several No More Guantánamos chapters throughout the U.S. The resolution, if passed, would make Berkeley the third U.S. municipality to welcome cleared Guantánamo detainees. The town meetings of Amherst and Leverett, in Massachusetts, approved resolutions in November 2009 and April 2010, respectively.

Papermaster assures Berkeley residents that this Resolution won't cost the City of Berkeley one cent. "All of the support will come from Berkeley's compassionate citizens. This is Berkeley at its finest--Yoo hates our humanitarian Berkeley values, but we're proud to say that his unethical, immoral, and illegal actions don't belong in our community."

"Passage is urgent," says Papermaster, noting that January 2011 marks the tenth year of Guantánamo operations and adding "we'd like to give all of the cleared Guantánamo detainees hope that they will be free and resettled soon, in communities that will care for them. We anticipate that what Berkeley does will quickly spread across the country as more communities decide to correct the record and right the wrongs that have been done to these innocent men in our names."

"This is an opportunity to bring healing not only to the victims of torture, but to the American people" said Holly Harwood, Coordinator of the Golden Gate Chapter of Codepink.

More information about the Berkeley effort, the resolution text, and other efforts on behalf of detainees nationwide can be found at <http://www.nogitmos.org> [3].

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