OMNI GUANTANAMO NEWSLETTER #6, June 17, 2013.
Compiled by Dick Bennett, for a Culture of Peace and Justice. Guantanamo: A Disaster of the War on Terror and the US Culture of War. (#1 March 3, 2011; #2 Dec. 11, 2011; #3 January 21, 2012; #4 Jan. 16, 2013; #5 May 3, 2013)

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JUNE IS TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH. MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR JUNE 22 in Fayetteville, DAY OF PROTEST AGAINST US TORTURE and Assassination (the Saturday nearest to June 26, UN International Torture Victims DAY). 10 a.m. at Federal Bldng. We will be telling our leaders we abhor torture, assassination/murder, and the killing of innocent civilians. The action is called OMNI PROTESTS TORTURE AND MURDER.

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Kurnaz, Gitmo Survivor After 5 Years

Obama Signs “Battlefield Bill” for Indefinite Detention

January 11 Resistance Coalition

Witness Against Torture and Catholic Worker: January 11, 2012

Witness Against Torture and War Resisters League

In Addition to Gitmo: US Terrorism Prison Complex

Greenwald Book on Bush/Obama

Contents of #4, Jan. 16, 2013
Petition to Pres. Obama from Some Senior Democrats
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Obama: Walk Your Talk on Guantánamo

As the hunger strike approaches its 100th day on May 17, 100 prisoners are refusing food.

The Editors
May 1, 2013  |  This article appeared in the May 20, 2013 edition of The Nation.
“I will not eat until they restore my dignity.” That’s what **Samir Naji al Hasan Moqbel** told his lawyer by phone from Guantánamo Bay. On April 14, Moqbel’s cry became a harrowing *New York Times* op-ed, his message mixing despair, defiance and warnings of impending death. “One man here weighs just 77 pounds,” Moqbel wrote. “Another, 98. Last thing I knew, I weighed 132, but that was a month ago.”

**The Editors**

Days later, *The Guardian* published a letter from another hunger striker, **Shaker Aamer**, whose words cut to the heart of the protest. “As of today, I’ve spent more than 11 years in Guantánamo Bay,” he wrote. “To be precise, it’s been 4,084 long days and nights. I’ve never been charged with any crime.”

Moqbel and Aamer are among the eighty-six prisoners languishing at the prison despite having long been cleared for release. Moqbel, like most of these men, hails from Yemen; after the failed 2009 suicide attack by the so-called “underwear bomber,” who trained in Yemen, the White House implemented a policy of caging its Yemeni detainees indefinitely. The fact that fifty-six are apparently innocent of any crime is of little concern; in March, State Department adviser Michael Williams told the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that the Yemenis will stay in Guantánamo for “the foreseeable future.”
Such cruelty breeds desperation. Last year, Adnan Latif was finally sent home to Yemen in a coffin after almost eleven years; he had ostensibly overdosed on pills. Since the hunger strike began, at least two men have attempted suicide. “I do not want to die here,” wrote Moqbel, “but until President Obama and Yemen’s president do something, that is what I risk every day.” On April 1, Yemeni protesters held posters of their imprisoned loved ones outside the US Embassy in Saana.

The Pentagon, which once called prisoner suicides “asymmetric warfare,” has dismissed the hunger strike as a publicity stunt. Rather than “reward bad behavior,” the official response has been to throw the men into solitary confinement and keep the most weakened alive through torturous means. Moqbel described how eight members of the prison’s Extreme Reaction Force tied him to a hospital bed, forced an IV into his hand and left him there for twenty-six hours. More than twenty men are now slated for force-feeding, which means being strapped to a chair and having tubes carrying a liquid diet shoved into their noses. In late April, forty “medical reinforcements” arrived on the island to assist.

“I don’t want these individuals to die,” Obama told reporters on April 30, adding that “the Pentagon is trying to manage the situation as best as they can.” He also recommitted to closing Guantánamo, calling on Congress to “step up and help.”

It’s true that lawmakers on both sides have fought hard to make transfers impossible. But Obama’s words ignored how his own policies set the stage for the crisis. “He has said the right thing before,” Guantánamo lawyer Pardiss Kebriaei of the Center for Constitutional Rights told The Nation. “It’s time now for action.” The CCR is calling on Obama to end his “self-imposed moratorium” on releasing Yemenis and resume prisoner transfers. It has also called for Obama to appoint a senior official to “shepherd the process of closure.”

As the hunger strike approaches its hundredth day on May 17, more than 100 of Guantánamo’s 166 prisoners are refusing food. The president must start living up to his rhetoric about closing the prison, the CCR warns, or “the men who are on hunger strike will die, and he will be ultimately responsible for their deaths.”

Take Action: Implore President Obama to Close Guantánamo Bay

The Editors

May 1, 2013 | This article appeared in the May 20, 2013 edition of The Nation.


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- Key Issues
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Time to End the Despair at Guantánamo

By Zachary Katzenelson, Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU National Security Project at 5:29pm April 29, 2013

The hunger strike in Guantánamo continues to grow, even by the U.S. military's questionable count. The military states that 100 of the 166 prisoners there are on strike, 21 are being force-fed, and five have been hospitalized. Lawyers for the prisoners put the number of hunger strikers at over 130. So many prisoners are in need of medical care that the military has now brought some 40 additional Navy
"corpsmen, nurses, and other specialists" to add to the 100 already on duty. The prime motivator for the strike, as reported in a front-page story in The New York Times last week, is the prisoners' growing despair that they will never go home. General John F. Kelly, who as head of U.S. Southern Command ultimately oversees the prison, recently told Congress that the prisoners "had great optimism that Guantánamo would be closed. They were devastated apparently … when the president backed off — at least their perception — of closing the facility." The Director-General of the Red Cross tweeted this weekend that the "level of desperation amongst detainees is unprecedented."

The ACLU and a coalition of leading NGOs have called upon President Obama to 1) immediately direct Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to take the steps necessary to effect transfers from Guantánamo, and 2) to assign a senior official to lead the effort to close the prison. Senator Dianne Feinstein, chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has now made a similar call. The need for Obama administration action becomes ever more urgent; so far this year, there have only been steps backward.

First, in January, President Obama signed into law renewed restrictions on transfers from Guantánamo, reneging on a veto threat for the second year in a row. A few weeks later, the administration shut down the State Department office working to resettle Guantánamo prisoners. Responsibility was shifted to the State Department's Office of the Legal Advisor. However, the State Department's spokesman last week stated that the staff now assigned to the portfolio is taking no substantive action to resettle prisoners, because the administration has yet to authorize any actual transfers. The staff primarily spend their time answering letters. In last week's New York Times story, Buck McKeon, Republican chair of the House Armed Services Committee summed up the situation: "The administration hasn't taken any steps toward meeting the requirements of having anybody released." Indeed, Deputy Secretary of Defense Bill Lietzau stated in the same article that "even if the legislative restrictions were removed, I don't believe the numbers would change radically."

It is past time for the Obama White House to take charge and order immediate action that will help end the desperation of the men imprisoned in Guantánamo for more than 11 years without being charged or tried, men who are losing hope of ever being transferred out.

Learn more about the Guantánamo hunger strike and other civil liberty issues: Sign up for breaking news alerts, follow us on Twitter, and like us on Facebook.

04/29/2013
1. Time to End the Despair at Guantánamo | American Civil Liberties...
www.aclu.org/blog/national-security/time-end-despair-guantanamo

Apr 29, 2013 – The hunger strike in Guantánamo continues to grow, even by the U.S. military's questionable count. The military states that 100 of the 166 ...

2. Guantánamo Prison Revolt Driven by Inmates' Despair - NYTimes.com
www.nytimes.com/.../guantanamo-prison-revolt-driven-by-inmates...
by Charlie Savage - in 979 Google+ circles


3. United Nations Heads Growing List of Organizations Calling for ...
www.closeguantanamo.org/.../84-United-Nations-Heads-Growing-List-of...

As the hunger strike at Guantánamo enters its third month, the UN and the New ...editors proceeded to describe the hunger strike as "a collective act of despair," ...

4. Guantánamo hunger strike reflects growing despair - The Nation
www.nation.com.pk/.../international/.../guantanamo-hunger-strike-reflect...

Mar 24, 2013 – Chantal ValeryA growing number of Guantánamo inmates are going on... 1:59 pm; NATIONAL - Nine militants killed, three hideouts destroyed ...

5. Despair drives Guantánamo detainees to revolt — War in Context
warincontext.org/2013/.../despair-drives-guantanamo-detectives-to-revolt...

Despair drives Guantánamo detainees to revolt. by News Sources on April 26, 2013. The New York Times reports: In the early afternoon quiet, guards in ...

6. Obama: Walk Your Talk on Guantánamo | Common Dreams
https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/05/03-6

5 days ago – Obama: Walk Your Talk on Guantánamo. by The Nation Editors. Protest to demand the release of Yemenis detained at Guantánamo Bay, ...
In 2006 the United Nations called unsuccessfully for the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. Another New York Times editorial supported Friedman’s proposal, arguing that "have this incredible level of despair that they will never get ..."

Apr 24, 2013 – With any decision about closing down the prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, put on ... Updates from the Republican National Committee. WSJ Editorial: “Rarely has a bureaucracy taken such joy in inconveniencing the public.

DALE SPRUSANSKY, “CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING ON INDEFINITE DETENTION AT GUANTANAMO,” THE WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS (June/July 2013). Excellent account of a briefing on May 10 by Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) on the i.d. of 166 individuals still held at Gitmo.

Two Guantánamo Prisoners Released in Mauritania
By Andy Worthington
In news that has so far only been available in Arabic, and which I was informed about by a Mauritanian friend on Facebook, I can confirm that two prisoners from Guantánamo have been released, and returned to their home country of Mauritania. The links are here and here. The two men are Ahmed Ould Abdul Aziz and Mohamedou Ould Slahi, and they were accompanied by a third man, Hajj Ould Cheikh Hussein, who was apparently captured in Pakistan and held at Bagram in Afghanistan, which later became known as the Parwan Detention Facility.

According to one of the Arabic news sources, US officials handed the men to the Mauritanian security services who took them to an unknown destination. They have also reportedly met with their families.

I have no further information for now, but this appears to be confirmation that President Obama’s promise to resume the release of prisoners from Guantánamo was not as hollow as many of his promises have turned out to be. It also follows hints, in the Wall Street Journal (which I wrote about here), indicating that he would begin not with any of the 56 Yemeni prisoners out of the 86 prisoners cleared for release by the inter-agency task force that he established in 2009, but with some of the 30 others. One of these 30 is Ahmed Ould Abdul Aziz, a teacher, and an educated and cultured man, who was seized in what appeared to be a random house raid in Pakistan in June 2002, but the other is a surprise. Mohamedou Ould Slahi was, notoriously, handed over by the Mauritanian authorities to the US in November 2001, He was then rendered to Jordan, where he was tortured, and was then subjected to a specific torture program in Guantánamo, where he arrived in August 2002, after which he became an allegedly helpful informant, although his torture was so severe that it prompted his assigned prosecutor, Lt. Col. Stuart Couch, to resign rather than continue with the case.

Although he had his habeas corpus petition granted in March 2010, this was then vacated by the court of appeals, after an outcry from numerous Republicans, who believed, as had been alleged, that he had been some sort of mentor to the 9/11 hijackers, while he was living in Germany, even though it seems clear that, although he had met them, he had not done anything to assist them in their plans, and nor did he have any knowledge of the 9/11 attacks.
I wrote extensively about the injustice of Slahi’s case — including the self-defeating absurdity of indefinitely detaining someone who had allegedly become an important informant — following the publication of a revelatory article in the Washington Post in March 2010, and his case recently came to light again when Slate published excerpts from an astonishing autobiography that he wrote in Guantánamo. I will write about further developments when I have them, but for now this appears to be very good news indeed, not just for Ahmed Ould Abdul Aziz and Mohamedou Ould Slahi, but also for the other cleared prisoners in Guantánamo.

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SOLIDARITY WITH GUANTANAMO PRISONERS

The Nuclear Resister (June 5, 2013).

Indefinite detention, hunger strikes, forced feeding have inspired protests around the US and world. This article describes several of the actions—Witness Against Torture April 22(witnessstorture.org), CodePink May 1, vigil at White House May 17.

Guantanamo Is Not an Anomaly - Prisoners in the US Are Force-Fed Every Day

Ann Neumann, Waging Nonviolence, Truthout, May 11, 2013: The fact that force feedings are being discussed in the context of Guantánamo is dangerously misleading; it obscures the routine use of feeding tubes in American prisons.

Read the Article

1. News for Guantanamo

Five 9/11 accused appear in Guantanamo court

Aljazeera.com - 3 hours ago

Suspects charged with terrorism and nearly 3000 counts of murder could face death penalty if convicted.
23 hours ago – Clifford Sloan is the pick to reopen the State Department's Office of Guantanamo Closure, shuttered since January and folded into the ...

9. **Guantánamo Bay | World news | The Guardian**
www.guardian.co.uk › World news

Latest news and comment on Guantánamo Bay and the Guantánamo detainees from guardian.co.uk.

10. **Guantanamo News and Video - FOX News Topics -**
FOXNews.com
www.foxnews.com/topics/iraq/guantanamo.htm

Watch breaking news videos and read news updates about Guantanamo on FOXNews.com.

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