



Interfaith Communities United For Justice And Peace

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Religious Communities must stop blessing war and violence!

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For immediate release

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Interfaith and Human Rights Groups Join International Day of Protest; Mark 10th Anniversary of Guantánamo Prison As US Site of Torture and Abuse

Who: Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (ICUJP) and several other groups (list below)

What: Morning Vigil and Tableau, Press Conference; Afternoon Rally and Vigil

When: Wednesday, January 11, 2012; 9 AM Vigil and Tableau, 10 AM Press Conference

Where: AM: Downtown LA Federal Building (Temple and Los Angeles);

PM: Westwood Federal Building (Wilshire and Veteran)

Why: Demand Closure of Guantánamo Prison, End Abuses at Bagram and in CA Prisons

Visuals: Participants in Orange Jumpsuits and Hoods Create Silent Tableau of Images of Torture

Mohammed Ghanem of Yemen was taken into custody by Pakistan while crossing the border from Afghanistan in the wake of the U.S. attack there following September 11. He was turned over to U.S. authorities, although no terrorist activity on his part has ever been established. One of the first prisoners sent to Guantánamo in January of 2002, he was moved between cells and blocks every two hours over a six-month period, losing a lot of weight and almost losing his sanity. Refused treatment for his hemorrhoids unless he agreed to cooperate with his interrogators, he yielded to his captors' pressure, only to have prison doctors botch the operation. He has never been formally charged, given a trial or even a *habeas corpus* hearing and remains in Guantánamo to this day. He is one of 171 prisoners still illegally held by the U.S. government in Guantánamo.

To protest the torture, denial of *habeas corpus* and other lawless conditions that prevail at Guantanamo, members of Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (<http://icujp.org>) and other human rights organizations will don orange Guantánamo-style jumpsuits and black hoods and silently present themselves to arriving federal workers and members of the public on the morning of January 11 from 9 to 10 AM, in front of the downtown Federal Building at Temple and Los Angeles Streets

The tableau and vigil will be followed at 10 a.m. by a press conference at which three local lawyers representing Guantánamo prisoners will speak:

* **Michael S. Rapkin** of the Law Offices of Michael S. Rapkin in Santa Monica, representing Mohammed Ghanem;

* **Anne Richardson** of Hadsell Stormer Keeny Richardson & Renick LLP of Pasadena, representing Afghan citizen Obaidullah (no last name), also tortured at Guantánamo;

* **Victoria Don** of Schonbrun DeSimone Seplow Harris Hoffman & Harrison LLP of Venice and South Pasadena, which represents Syrian Kurd Abdul Rahim Abdul Razak Al Janko, tortured prior to his 2009 release from Guantánamo.

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Also speaking at the press conference will be **Stephen Rohde** of ICUJP, **Hector Villagra**, Executive Director of ACLU- So CA, **Virginia Classick** of the Los Angeles Region Religious Campaign Against Torture, **Julie Gutman** of Program for Torture Victims and **Stefan Ali**, a student at Southwestern Law School representing the National Lawyers Guild. Others may be added.

January 11 marks the 10th anniversary of the U.S. government's announcement it would use Guantanamo as a prison in the "war on terror." For the first time in the history of this country, the United States has systematically and deliberately engaged in torture, kidnapping (known by its euphemism "extraordinary rendition"), and indefinite imprisonment without trial, conviction or rational explanation as a matter of government policy.

Torture is illegal under the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, and the UN Convention Against Torture, to which the U.S. is a signatory.

And Guantanamo is just the tip of a torture iceberg that has included U.S. government black sites in Bagram Air Field in Iraq, Poland, Romania, Thailand and other locations.

We are deeply troubled that torture conditions that once thought to be confined to dark places like Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and Bagram are experienced on a daily basis in US prisons like the SHU at Pelican Bay, as the Prisoner Hunger Strikers have brought to public attention recently. It is fundamentally wrong to subject people to sensory deprivation, no human contact and prolonged solitary confinement whether they are labeled the "worst of the worst" in US prisons, or "terrorist suspects" confined overseas. The inhumanity of pushing human suffering beyond endurable limits that underlies both domestic and overseas treatment of prisoners must be ended.

ICUJP calls on President Obama and Attorney General Holder to investigate and, where warranted, prosecute high U.S. government officials who have designed and implemented policies of torture since the U.S. announced the opening of Guantanamo on January 11, 2002. If they cannot bring themselves to launch such an investigation, we call upon them to formally and officially declare they have no intention of doing so, in order that one can then be undertaken elsewhere under the principle of universal jurisdiction in a country still governed by the rule of law.

ENDORSERS (in alphabetical order):

Addicted to War * American Civil Liberties Union – So CA * American Friends Service Committee – LA * Amnesty International USA * Bill of Rights Defense Committee * Center for Constitutional Rights * CODEPINK LA * Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-LA) * Hadsell Stormer Keeny Richardson & Renick LLP * Law Offices of Michael S. Rapkin * LA Laborfest * LA Region Religious Campaign Against Torture (LARRCAT) * National Lawyers Guild – LA * National Lawyers Guild Campus Chapters- Loyola, Southwestern, UC Irvine, UC Los Angeles * Office of the Americas * Out Against War * Pax Christi – LA & So CA * Program for Torture Victims – LA * Revolution Books * Schonbrun DeSimone Seplow Harris Hoffman & Harrison LLP * Shura Council of So CA * School of the Americas Watch – LA * St. Camillus Center for Spiritual Care * WE Project * World Can't Wait

For more information:

<http://ccrjustice.org/illegal-detentions-and-guantanamo> (Center for Constitutional Rights)

<http://www.salon.com/topic/guantanamo/> (Salon)

"Guantanamo Bay detention camp" entry on Wikipedia