

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: January 14, 2022

SL: 20 Years of Imprisonment in Guantánamo Bay

The Takeaway:

- The prison at Guantánamo Bay (GTMO) turned 20 this week. That's 20 years of illegal kidnappings, of physical and mental torture, and of violations of both fundamental U.S. civil rights and inalienable human rights.
- GTMO is a deep stain on our national history. But it is not unique: rather, this grave abuse is one facet of a wider system of repression, surveillance, and warfare that has long been with us, and that took new, terrible form in the endless war era.
- We join in solidarity with other movements demanding to CLOSE GUANTANAMO BAY PRISON – and fight to dismantle the entire system it represents.

Guantánamo Bay Prison: 20 Years of Injustice

This week marks 20 years since the first detainees arrived at Guantánamo Bay prison, one of the many atrocities born from the post-9/11 'War on Terror' era. While the prison, commonly known as GTMO, was once the source of significant media attention, in the years since, it has slowly faded into the background. This week, we take this disturbing anniversary as an opportunity to break through that silence, reflect on 20 years of human rights abuse, and recommit to the continuing struggle for justice.

The Start: A Global War on Terror

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, much of the U.S. public — in their understandable grief and rage — were sold a misguided set of policy prescriptions that would only add to the toll of that day. These policies and practices would include the wars in Afghanistan and later Iraq, and an entire global system of U.S. military violence termed the "War on Terror," legitimized by a constructed exceptionalism and a stubborn resistance to international human rights norms. Emblematic of this larger project: on January 11, 2002, the first prisoners were brought to a military base in Guantánamo, Cuba — a piece of land [stolen](#) from the Cuban people in 1901 as a "price for their independence."

Life and Law

At this offshore military prison, those with suspected – but not necessarily legally proven – ties to terror were kidnapped, indefinitely detained without trial, and [tortured](#) outside of the bounds of the courts of the United States and the laws of the international community. Notably, many terror

WIN WITHOUT WAR



accusations set against detainees [were false](#). To function, GTMO relies on a dismissal of fundamental civil, and basic, human rights. All this is held together by a web of legally dubious justifications in the form of [executive memos](#), unconstitutional military commissions, secret evidence, and lies. Clearly, this was an experiment in creating *unlimited, unchecked* state power; its success was measured in its cruelty.

20 Years On.

In the words of [Mansoor Adayfi](#), a Yemeni native misidentified, falsely accused, held, and tortured in Guantánamo for 14 years, “Guantanamo hasn’t achieved any justice for anyone – not for the 9/11 victims, not for Americans, not for the detainees... Justice means reparation, means acknowledgement, means apologising.”

Since 2002, [779](#) Muslim men and boys have been held in Guantánamo; today, [39](#) remain in indefinite detention, with no end in sight; 27 have yet to be charged with a crime; and 14 remain stuck despite having been cleared for transfer or release. Those who have been released face [enduring problems](#); many face public stigma and a [lack](#) of economic opportunity; some lack [legal status](#) in third-party countries; others face [violence](#) when returned to their home countries; and most live with chronic psychological and physical health problems. The violence of GTMO is not in the past — it is ongoing.

The Call to Close GTMO

Former President Obama [promised](#) to close the prison; he did not. President Biden promised the same; in the 11 months of his presidency, [only](#) one person has been transferred out of the prison. The pressure to close the prison has been a decades-long fight. Today, we keep up this movement in solidarity with our partners. It’s time to close GTMO for good. Some specific demands from our partners can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

A Larger Web

We cannot look to the system of imprisonment in Guantánamo as an exception of the rule. This prison is one of many elements of an ongoing ‘War on Terror’ era. The establishment of [a surveillance state](#), fostered early on by [the PATRIOT Act](#) and continued now through [secretive FISA courts](#), continues to discriminately [target](#) Muslim Americans. Our participation in a series of [endless wars](#) (in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Niger, Somalia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and beyond) whether through on-the-ground troops or [sinister drone warfare](#), have wrought devastating human consequences. The most recent of these might be the aftereffects of our 20 year war in Afghanistan, a country which now faces economic collapse and [imminent famine](#) due in large part to the United States’ punitive economic attacks.

This prison is also a symptom of a much broader U.S. reality. The logic behind its inception is reflected throughout our nation’s history in our colonial tendencies, in the genocide of Indigenous peoples, and in the system of slavery. And in our present day, in the racial inequities

WIN WITHOUT WAR



of our 'justice' system, in our racist policing practices, in the detention and abuse of immigrants at the Southern border... and so on.

It is this system — this entire project of the “War on Terror,” of global policing, of unilateral violations of international law, of human rights abuses, of white supremacy — that our movement seeks to disrupt, and dismantle. 20 years on, the fight must continue.

TUNE IN WEDNESDAY:

SAVE THE DATE: Wednesday, January 19
3 pm ET/2 pm CT/12 pm PT

Can We Make Foreign Policy Work for the People?

For far too long, the U.S. foreign policy status quo has benefitted elites and special interests, while hurting everyday people at home and abroad. How can we reimagine the solutions to U.S. security challenges to see the change that we need in the 21st century?

winwithoutwar.org/fp4people

Join Win Without War in conversation with Rep. Jayapal (WA-7) and Rep. Lee (CA-13), followed by an expert panel featuring MADRE, Justice Is Global & more.

WIN WITHOUT WAR

BURIED LEDES

President Biden continues to approve the sale of weapons that are [inflaming](#) the tragic war in Yemen... Yeah - that's the same President Biden who promised to end U.S. complicity in Yemen *almost a year ago*.

U.S. [sanctions](#) are forcing millions of people in Afghanistan into starvation and freezing conditions without fuel. The ground war in Afghanistan may have ended, but the economic war is raging. Ending endless war must mean ending *both*.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Talks in Vienna are showing signs of some [progress](#) as the U.S., Iran, and others try to reach an understanding on a return to the nuclear deal. But they better move fast. The clock is ticking, and the choices are diplomacy now, or war later.

Speaking of the choice between diplomacy and war: **South Korean President Moon has called for an end-of-war declaration as a step toward peace.** As our partners at Women Cross DMZ [say](#), those against this declaration have offered *no viable alternatives*.

The poorer nations of this world deserve reparations for the climate crisis that the rich have caused. And **reparations does not mean a one-time apology payment — it means [rewriting the rules](#) of the global economy to work for everyone.**

In New Mexico, as in many parts of the world that were the subject of U.S. nuclear tests, the costs of nuclear war live on. **Officials [say](#) that the Los Alamos site won't be cleared of contamination until 2036... and even that schedule may be optimistic.**

You gotta make a choice: human rights or national security. At least, that's what the establishment says. We agree with DAWN's Sarah Leah Whitson that **"rights vs. security" is a [false choice](#), designed to protect the status quo.**

Another note on choices... Choosing to give the Pentagon a massive blank check every year is the wrong choice. Here's [why](#).

And finally, **we can't wait to try the new Yankee Candle scent: "[abstraction](#)."**