

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

January 11, 2022

The Honorable Nancy P. Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin O. McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

cc: All Members of Congress

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,

As members of the American faith community, we call on you to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and to ensure that all of the people held there are either released, agree to a plea deal, or receive a fair trial in a federal court.

The prison at Guantanamo was opened as part of an effort to hold suspected terrorists outside of the protections of U.S. law. This was wrong to begin with, however this immoral act was compounded by the decision to torture many of the prisoners. In the fullness of time we now know that many of the people sent to Guantanamo were never involved in terrorism in the first place.

Even today, 20 years after the prison was opened, most of the prisoners have never been tried or convicted of any crime. Guilty or innocent the right to a trial is a bedrock American value, yet it has been denied to those at Guantanamo. Allowing the government to claim a war-based authority to hold people for decades without charge or trial, in a conflict that has no clear end-state or conditions for victory, and for which the government does not recognize clear geographic boundaries, is an extraordinary and dangerous expansion of governmental authority.

While the sustained immorality of holding people without trial ought to be reason enough to close the prison, it is also unreasonably expensive – costing more than half a billion dollars each

year, or over \$13 million per prisoner per year. This is an utterly irrational figure to spend on a prison for only 39 people.

As our elected leaders, you are responsible for spending American tax dollars wisely. More importantly you are responsible for upholding American values. The prison at Guantanamo does neither. We pray that you will close it.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Union for Reform Judaism

The Episcopal Church

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Presbyterian Church, (USA)

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team

Franciscan Action Network

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

American Friends Service Committee

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Friends Committee on National Legislation

American Sikh Council

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries

ICNA Council for Social Justice

Alliance of Baptists

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Pax Christi USA

American Baptist Churches USA

Center on Conscience and War

Armenian Church of America

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

National Council of Churches

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)