



# National Religious Campaign Against Torture

## TORTURE IS A MORAL ISSUE

To NRCAT's Participating Members Council

Dear Friends:

NRCAT this morning sent a letter to all Members of Congress signed by 43 heads of faith groups and religious institutions and other senior leaders asking for their help in closing the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Guantanamo has been a powerful symbol of U.S.-sponsored torture. Closing it will contribute significantly to the task of ending U.S.-sponsored torture forever.

On our web site in a gray box is a model email that people can send to their Members of Congress urging them to work with the President to close Guantanamo. Please send an email to your Members of Congress and urge your constituents to do likewise. Soon we will put a new page on NRCAT's web site ([www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)) with materials that you can use in asking your constituents to work on this important issue.

Below our names is a press release that was sent to news outlets this morning. It includes the text of the letter and the names of the 43 who signed it. Please feel free to send the release to your communications staff and to reporters who you know.

Thank you for all you do to end U.S.-sponsored torture.

Linda Gustitus, President, NRCAT's Board of Directors  
Rev. Richard L. Killmer, Executive Director

### NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

#### **For Immediate Release:**

Thursday, November 12, 2009

**Contact:** Rev. Richard Killmer, NRCAT, 202-547-1920 or [rkillmer@nrcat.org](mailto:rkillmer@nrcat.org)  
Alanna Sobel, 202-789-7751 or [asobel@fenton.com](mailto:asobel@fenton.com)

#### **Faith Leaders Nationwide Call on Congress to Close Guantanamo Now**

*More than 40 religious leaders send a letter to Congress calling for immediate action*

WASHINGTON, DC - More than 40 senior leaders of major faith groups in the United States have joined together to sign a letter addressed to the leaders of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, with copies to Members of Congress, calling on Congress to do everything in its power to close Guantanamo now. In this letter, the text of which is included at the bottom of this release, the religious leaders express their belief that closing Guantanamo Bay is necessary for the nation to continue healing the wounds left by this sad chapter of its history. The letter states:

"Guantanamo is the symbol of our country's violation of our deepest values. Regardless of how it is operated now compared to how it was operated in earlier years, it stands, in the minds of hundreds of millions of people in our nation and around the globe, as a place where America broke faith with itself and used torture as an interrogation technique. Torture is immoral, illegal, and never justifiable -- without exception."

The letter was drafted by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), an interfaith organization of more than 260 religious groups that are committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture. NRCAT includes representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Sikh communities.

"We in the religious community believe that closing the detention center at Guantanamo Bay is a necessary step in the campaign to end U.S.-sponsored torture forever," said Rev. Richard L. Killmer, Executive Director of NRCAT. "Closing the detention center quickly can help restore the U.S. as a respected member of the global community."

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**The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)** is a growing membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 260 religious groups have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Roman Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

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**The following is the text of the letter calling for Congress to do everything in its power to close Guantanamo now:**

November 12, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Boehner  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

[Copies to all members of Congress]

Dear Members of Congress:

As leaders of major religious groups in the United States, we are very aware of the importance of symbols in one's spiritual life. So, too, are symbols important in the spiritual life of a country.

Guantanamo is the symbol of our country's violation of our deepest values. Regardless of how it is operated now compared to how it was operated in earlier years, it stands in the minds of hundreds of millions of people in our nation and around the globe as a place where America broke faith with itself and used torture as an interrogation technique. Torture is immoral, illegal, and never justifiable -- without exception.

Our government must close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay now to help us heal spiritually and to put an end to this dark and errant chapter in our history. For those detainees that must continue to be incarcerated, we believe that appropriate alternative sites can be identified.

We ask that you do everything in your power to help close Guantanamo -- now.

In faith,

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins  
General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer, President  
The Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

Rabbi Yael Ridberg  
President  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Rev. Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church, USA

Rev. Geoffrey A. Black  
General Minister and President

United Church of Christ

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos  
Chancellor  
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Joe Volk  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

J Ron Byler  
Acting Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership

Stanley J. Noffsinger  
General Secretary  
Church of the Brethren

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone  
Co-chair  
Rabbis for Human Rights-North America

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed  
National Director  
Office for Interfaith  
and Community Alliances  
Islamic Society of North America

Archbishop Nicolae Condrea  
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

Rev. Peter Morales  
President  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Dr. David P. Gushee  
President  
Evangelicals for Human Rights  
Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics  
Mercer University

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon  
General Secretary  
National Council of Churches

Suhag Shukla  
Managing Director  
Hindu American Foundation

Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo  
Executive Minister  
Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Church of Christ

Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ  
President  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Jane Burke, SSND  
Executive Director  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

The Most Reverend Michael Seneco  
Presiding Bishop  
North American Old Catholic Church

Steven Gerber  
Executive Director  
Rabbis for Human Rights-North America

Dr. George Hunsinger  
Professor of Theology  
Princeton Theological Seminary  
Founder, National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Marie Dennis  
Co-President  
Pax Christi International

Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser  
Executive Director  
California Council of Churches

The Rev. Russell L. Meyer  
Executive Director  
Florida Council of Churches

The Rev. Gary L. Harke  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

The Reverend Dennis D. Sparks  
Executive Director  
West Virginia Council of Churches

Rabbi Ellen Lippmann  
Co-chair  
Rabbis for Human Rights-North America

David Lamarre-Vincent  
Executive Director  
New Hampshire Council of Churches

David Leslie  
Executive Director  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

The Rev. Jill Job Saxby  
Executive Director  
Maine Council of Churches

Scott D. Anderson  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Council of Churches

Rev. Richard Cizik  
President  
The New Evangelicals, Inc.

Rick Love, Ph.D.  
Consultant for Christian-Muslim Relations

Dr. Ronald J. Sider  
President  
Evangelicals for Social Action

Dr. Glen Stassen  
Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics  
Fuller Theological Seminary

Timothy Floyd  
Director  
Law & Public Service Program  
Professor  
Mercer University

Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns  
Professor of Christian Formation

Pentecostal Theological Seminary

Rev. Peter Laarman  
Executive Director  
Progressive Christians Uniting

Rev. Peg Chamberlin  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Council of Churches  
President-Elect  
National Council of Churches

Archbishop Vicken  
Diocesan Legate  
Armenian Church of America  
Current President  
National Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Jim Antal  
Minister and President  
Massachusetts Conference  
United Church of Christ

Rev. Stephen Miller  
Acting Executive Director  
New Mexico Conference of Churches